

IMAGES IN PREMODERN SOCIETIES

A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE STATE OF THE FIELD
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF «ICONOGRAPHICA»

edited by
Michele Bacci, Fabrizio Crivello, and Vesna Šćepanović



FIRENZE

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EDITORS' NOTE

In the last thirty years, many books have been devoted to images and many new theoretical frameworks have been worked out to add an extra dimension to their understanding. Therefore, it can be wondered to what extent another volume should be needed to approach the different dynamics whereby images were used, perceived, approached, and experienced in pre-modern societies. Admittedly, after the collective infatuation for images in the wake of the so-called “iconic turn”, art historical research has largely turned toward other topics, even if an impressive number of publications dealing with the interpretation of visual forms is still being produced every year. Indeed, images lay at the core of the research made throughout the world by scholars with expertise in art, visual studies, history, anthropology, and many other fields of knowledge: depending on the approach, emphasis is laid on such factors as iconography, composition, style, materiality, context, function, seriation, use, dissimilarities and similarities, placed-ness, or the involvement of figural objects in social, religious, political, experiential, individual and collective, practices. Our aim in this book is not so much to propose a new theory, but rather to explore the multiple ways in which the image-notion is being used, approached, and understood in the everyday work of visual researchers.

With this goal in mind, we asked several image-scholars from throughout the world, irrespective of their specialization, academic age, training, and cultural origins, to express their ideas not so much as to the theory and *ontology* of images, but rather as to the ways in which the image-notion has been negotiated and made use of in their own research work. A list of sixteen questions was sent to the twenty-five scholars from different countries who accepted our invitation: their answers are themselves a clear witness to a diversity of approaches that cannot be simply traced back to major trends, fashions, and traditions of the art-historical discipline, but should be understood as constructs of each scholar's autonomous experience in its dynamic interaction with the surrounding (cultural, political, academic) realities.

In addition to these interventions, the volume includes another two important texts. Herbert Kessler's dense essay offers not only a state of the art, but also envisages the future perspectives of iconographic studies. In examining the shadow-notion in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Hans Belting provides clues as to his own understanding of “images” and their role in the art-historical discourse, thirty-two years after *Bild und Kult* and two decades after *Bild-Anthropologie*. Hans left us on January 10th, 2023, to the regret of so many scholars whose research activity owes so much to his thoughtful and ground-breaking works. We are especially proud to honour his memory by publishing here one of his last contributions to the art-historical discipline.

The book has also been conceived of as a tribute to the journal *Iconographica*, which, in its twenty years of life and despite its limited means, never stopped promoting an unbiased, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural study of images in their multiple cultural, material, performative, spatial, and visual dimensions. In addition, this volume inaugurates a new Sismel series, which, drawing inspiration from the journal but expanding its perspectives, aims to welcome innovative and unconventional studies on the multiple ways in which pre-modern societies experienced, shaped, and conceptualised those complex, multifaceted and multi-layered phenomena that, in the absence of a more precise expression, we are used to reducing to the ambiguous category of 'art'.

Warm thanks are due to all authors for their enthusiastic engagement in giving shape to this odd and definitely idiosyncratic, but probably long-wished-for, book.

Michele Bacci
Fabrizio Crivello
Vesna Šćepanović

IMAGES IN PREMODERN SOCIETIES

Herbert L. Kessler

ABOVE ICONOGRAPHY

For Walter S. Melion at seventy

“God is ‘above grammar’”
Erwin Panofsky, letter to the editor
of *ARTnews*, April 1961

When I was a graduate student at Princeton University, I sat in on Erwin Panofsky’s iconography seminar. It must have been 1964. During one rambling, seemingly endless, student report, Panofsky, like others in the room, had trouble staying awake. When the presenter realized that his long recitations of texts were losing the audience, he asked whether he should read the entire passage from the Book of Kings pertinent to his iconographic argument or just summarize it. Noticing that the master had dozed off, he rephrased his query in a louder voice: “Dr. Panofsky, should I read the Bible?” Jolted awake, the esteemed professor replied: “Of course, the Bible is an excellent iconographic source!” Known for his quick wit, Panofsky was clearly being self-parodic. He knew well that any text, Sacred Scripture in particular, could engender distinctly different visual expressions even within a single cultural environment; and he was aware that many “illustrations” actually preceded the texts they accompany. Iconography was only a first step in a process of interpretation he called “iconology.”

The Princeton episode reveals aspects of the iconographic method worth considering sixty years later. At the moment when online versions of such essential tools as Migne’s *Patrologia Latina*, Ducange’s *Glossaries mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, and the *Corpus Christianorum* enable the shattering of texts into single words independent of the ideas they were composed to express and Artstor, the Index of Christian Art, and numerous other image databases array depictions by subject, the constructing of art’s basic iconographic contexts is relatively easy to accomplish. More even than in Panofsky’s day, iconography therefore risks deciphering art outside time, intellectual place, context, and reception, a problem his “corrective principles” based on forms, historical conditions, and world views were drawn up to solve. For those reasons and others, many scholars now dismiss “icono-

graphy” and also “iconology” as fundamentally reductive, maintaining that the methods ignore such conditions of art as matter and manufacture, scale, situation, reception, performance, and ambience.¹ Most important, these critics contend, the venerable methods neutralize the experience of art in the present. Attention to textual and pictorial sources deployed to recover a work’s imagined original moment ignores medieval art’s continuing affect, beauty, and aura.

Iconography too had a history, of course, both during the Middle Ages and in modern research.² In Byzantium, the Iconoclastic controversy was determinative (ca. 726-843);³ and the Turkokratia later led to codification and retrospective re-interpretations. In the Latin West, papal reaction against eastern Iconoclasm was significant; the Gregorian Reform (ca. 1050-1200) was influential; and the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) became a turning point.⁴ Although Renaissance art’s self-reflexivity is usually taken to mark a fundamental break, medieval iconography persisted well into the early modern period.⁵ Nineteenth-century historicism and the emergence of scientific art history during the twentieth century engendered a golden age of iconographic study. Prompted by developments in modern art, pictorial semiotics’ stress on art’s capacity to communicate independent of textual referents, phenomenology’s interest in the production of experiences not just meaning, and object studies’ concern with materiality, movement, and exchange, the conceptions of how medieval art operates and what its proper domain should be are questioned.

This brief Introduction can hardly cover every aspect of iconography’s current status. It seeks only to renew the claim that iconography remains the primary methodological tool for the study of medieval art because medieval art was fundamentally a system for making visual God’s presentations that were believed also to be manifested in text, sacraments, and even nature. Whereas some scholarship might accomplish little more than to identify the written and pictorial underpinnings of complex works of art, most recent studies accommodate the field’s new interests and techniques,⁶ including the implications of textual fluidity and reception, the ways matter inflects subjects, the production of meaning through objects’ function and movement, and the diverse roles that exchange, ornament, abstraction, and artistic license play. Medieval art is never mere illustration; but dismissing its complex intermingling with textual and pictorial “sources” bypasses its essence. To make that point, this essay returns over and again to a few selected works of different periods, origins, media, and character to examine how the interplay of words and images constructed meaning(s).⁷ Among other topics, it considers the relationship of images to texts that were themselves unstable and contained visual allusions, the nagging questions of models and copying, and the ways that hybrids of letters, written and spoken words, diagrams, and pictures, worked together to fashion visual experiences. It also underscores how medieval art’s poetic structures engaged Christ’s incarnation, the perfect wedding of matter and spirit that was orthodox Christianity’s foundation and aesthetics, and how, at the same time, they proved inadequate to the central mystery of the Trinity. The Introduction examines the synergies of artisans, *concepteurs*, and beholders as well, and the impossibility of either a truly apophatic Christian art or a rigid code of interpretation. Classic studies and recent publications are

privileged in the references, the former to afford proper recognition of past scholars and the latter to facilitate access to current discussions.

Spreading the Peacock's Tail

Unlike Jews who transcribed the words of Torah according to rituals that ensured copies' accuracy and whose Talmud sought to excavate from holy writ *God's* intended meaning, Christians worked to disclose what Bede called the "*multifarie et multis figurarum modis eadem Christi et ecclesie mysteria repetuntur*."⁸ Augustine had understood the process of interpretation as a fragmenting of scripture and the blending of something new from its pieces.⁹ Cassiodorus compared reading Psalms to a "beautiful peacock which is adorned with round eyes and a rich and lovely variety of colors."¹⁰

Texts themselves were not stable, not even the Bible. The foundation of Christian mission, first to Jews and then pagans, sacred scriptures were continuously received by cultures with their own diverse written or non-literary traditions and artistic (or aniconic) legacies. Most writings were revised, translated, edited, occasionally emended, paraphrased, glossed, fragmented and reassembled in florilegia, quoted in new contexts, spoken (and misspoken), performed, rewritten, and misunderstood. Guyart-des-Moulins' fourteenth-century *Bible historiale* assimilated a millennium of commentary that inevitably generated iconography quite distant from the Vulgate.¹¹ Even seemingly insignificant variations introduced during the processes of reception and recirculating sometimes had great consequences. Based on the Latin suffix *que* attached to *filio* in the Nicene Creed, for instance, the debate about the procession of the Holy Spirit led ultimately to schism between the Orthodox and Latin churches. Minor differences mattered for iconography too. The horns that became standard features of Moses' physiognomy are probably the best known example. Derived primarily from Jerome's translation of Ex. 34.29-30, the earliest surviving witness in the twelfth-century Ælfric Hexateuch in London accompanies the vernacular rendering *gehyrned* (on the folio's recto) and may be related to commentaries on Moses' glorification in liturgical drama and the Old English poem *Exodus* (British Library, Cotton Ms. Claudius B.iv, fol. 105^v; Fig. 1).¹² Within a picture cycle that is overall rather traditional and may, in fact, have derived from a pictured Vulgate appropriated, at least implicitly, to authorize the vernacular translation, the iconographic interpolation gained particular potency.¹³

Prefaces and other paratexts also suggested iconographies.¹⁴ In the case of the Ælfric Hexateuch, St. Paul's mode of reading the "Old Testament" as prophecy of the "New" (condensed in Jerome's widely-circulated Bible preface *Frater Ambrosius*) inspired the illustrator to portray Moses shielding his radiant face behind a purple curtain draped on a pole: "The Law is spiritual; it needs to be unveiled so that it can be understood and its face revealed, and we may contemplate God's glory." Commentaries were themselves fitted with pictures. Beatus of Liebana's eighth-century *Commentaria in Apocalypsin* was more frequently illustrated during the early Middle Ages than the scripture itself and, in the new textual context, with greater panache.¹⁵ Poetic paraphrases and hymns intensi-

fied scriptures' "rich and lovely variety." The fifth/sixth-century Akathist Hymn (translated into Latin in the eighth century) offered myriad visual metaphors for the Virgin.¹⁶ The mid-twelfth-century German *Arnsteiner Mariengebete* assembled Old Testament passages traditionally interpreted as prophecies and introduced them into a peon to the Virgin's virtues.¹⁷ Alfonso el Sabio's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* comprehended Gautier de Coincy's *La Vie et Miracles de Notre Dame* and gave it a new authorial voice; many illustrations of the four-volume *Cantigas* manuscript in Madrid and Florence portray the King himself, like a troubadour, singing the hymns.¹⁸

Art, in its turn, entered literature. In the *Timaeus*, Plato likened Venus' double appearance in the morning and at sunset to an acanthus coil, a motif ubiquitous in Hellenistic art.¹⁹ A millennium later, the ninth-century transcriber of Calcidius' fourth-century Latin translation figured the planet's orbit "*velut sinuosum acanthi volumen*" as three interlocking spirals (Lyon, Bib. mun., MS 324, fol. 44r; Fig. 2).²⁰ The classical ornament had also been used to set off the ending of one text from the beginning of the next and so would have been intelligible to contemporary readers as simultaneously an illustration and a functional reading device.

Scripture is also replete with references to crafted objects, the brazen serpent Moses raised in the desert, the golden calf, the tabernacle fashioned by Bezalel with its sacred contents, including the Ark of the Covenant containing the tablets of the Law and looked upon by cherubim, Solomon's Temple, as well the things used to torture and kill Christ, most notably the cross. These acquired special importance as scripture was read and reread, integrated into performances, and entered art. Perhaps not surprising, Karaite Jews in Palestine or Egypt, who maintained a strict adherence to the law God delivered to Moses on Mt. Sinai, adorned a Pentateuch in 929 with only the things God had authorized the artisans Bezalel and Oliab to make (Ex. 31.1-6) (St. Petersburg, National Library, Firk. Hebr. II B 17, fol. IVr; Fig. 3).²¹ The desert tabernacle with its outer courtyard featuring the menorah and other sacred objects described in Exodus 25.18 seems to be entirely literal, so too the  with the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments hovered over by leaf-like cherubim. Even the Karaite originalists, however, turned to contemporary artistic traditions to realize the scriptural descriptions. The gate into the outer courtyard is a horseshoe arch and the vessels recall Abbasid metalwork; the pediment is a grill of acanthus coils that applies the ubiquitous convention for suggesting ascent toward the Ineffable. Conversely, the tabernacle/temple in the ninth-century Greek Psalter on Mt. Athos (Pantokrator Monastery, MS 61, fol. 165r; Fig. 4), which may, in fact, have been based on a Jewish model, gives prominence to the curtain blocking the entranceway to reflect the importance the Gospels gave the temple veil's rending in the crucifixion narrative and the Epistle to the Hebrews's use of it as a metaphor of Christ who "entered, not that sanctuary made by men's hands but heaven itself ... to bear the burden of men's sins and will appear a second time, sin done away, to bring salvation to those who are watching for him" (Hb 9.1-28).²²

Like their pagan predecessors, medieval authors composed ekphraseis that re-contextualized art, both real and imagined, and transmitted interpretations.²³ Photios, the patriarch of Constantinople, expounded art's cognitive value in the homily he delivered at

the time the mosaic was installed in the apse of Hagia Sophia after Iconoclasm (867).²⁴ Baudri of Bourgueil described a room decorated for Adela with a zodiac on the ceiling, a *mappa mundi* on the floor, and narratives on the walls that traced sacred and secular history from the Creation of the world to the conquest of England (based probably on the Bayeux embroidery).²⁵ Other types of descriptions, including such traveler's accounts as Gerald of Wales', which describes the various sacred images he saw in Rome, and Nicolaus Maniacutius' *Historia imaginis Salvatoris*, which incorporates reports by Eusebius and other sources, passed on valuable information about art imbricated in inherited texts.²⁶ Churchmen glossed pictures in their sermons and served as ad hoc tour guides. Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, pointed to a Last Judgment as an inducement for confession;²⁷ the thirteenth-century Dominican Friar, Stephen of Bourbon, adduced users' punishment against sin.²⁸ Homiletics, including vernacular sermons, are sources for and also witnesses to medieval iconography.²⁹

Picture captions were circulated in compendia that were fluid rather than programmatic. Manuel Philes composed Greek epigrams, of which some were compiled in such collections as the *Anthologia Palatina*.³⁰ Poems by Prudentius, Paulinus of Nola, Venantius Fortunatus, Alcuin, Ekkehard IV of Sankt Gallen, Baudri of Bourgueil and Hildebert of Lavardin, Peter Damian, the anonymous author of the *Pictor in Carmine*, and others rendered the meaning of pictures comprehensible and were themselves assembled and re-assembled ad hoc.³¹

An extensive literature, including Maniacutius' *Historia*, described miraculous "births" of sacred images.³² The tenth-century *Narratio de imagine Edessena* (itself a composite of apocrypha responding to evolving attitudes toward images during the early Byzantine centuries) constructed a biography for the *mandylion*, an ἀχειροποίητον that re-enacted the Savior's own powers by toppling idols, performing miracles, and converting pagans. After the miraculous image gained importance during Iconoclasm, it was incorporated into the Byzantine liturgy and came to be illustrated in manuscripts of the *Narratio* and on icons. The composite legend was figured on the fourteenth-century frame of the important replica in Genoa (San Bartolomeo degli Armeni; Fig. 5),³³ which authorizes the Holy Face it frames by picturing how the leprous King Abgar dispatched his servant Ananias with a letter imploring Christ to come to Edessa cure him. Unable to comply, the Savior offered instead to send a portrait; but Ananias could not capture his radiance so Christ washed his face and, when he dried it, an image appeared on the towel (mandil). The "mandyion" in turn, re-enacted Christ's own miraculous powers, on the way back to Edessa toppling idols and converting pagans, reproducing itself on a clay tablet (keramion), guiding a ship to port, defeating demons, and ultimately curing Abgar (who converted). Art and literature were collaborators.

A similar account had St. Luke failing adequately to record the Savior's appearance before Christ disappeared at the Ascension and needing an angel's assistance to complete the work; and the "*Acheropita*" became Rome's paladin.³⁴ The Latin *Cura sanitatis Tiberii* followed a course parallel to the *Narratio*'s but, punning *vera icona*, it featured St. Veronica (Berenike, the Gospels' woman with the issue of blood). The text, too, evolved over the course of centuries in response to diverse artistic and literary pressures.³⁵ An eighth/ninth-

century version known as the *Vindicta Salvatoris* came to be translated in the thirteenth century as *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur* which, in turn, reintroduced passages of scripture and survives in a recension comprising more than fifty manuscripts. This means that when Jacquemart de Hesdin included St. Veronica displaying the *Veronica* in a depiction of Christ Carrying the Cross around the turn of the fifteenth century (Paris, Musée du Louvre; Fig. 6),³⁶ he not only tapped the Bible for such details as the “daughters of Jerusalem” (Luke 23.28) and incorporated a replica of the *Veronica* by then in general circulation, but also drew on diverse texts that had recycled and elaborated the various written accounts. Among them, the *Mystère de Semur*, a Passion play that emphasized Jewish alleged complicity in Christ’s death and made Judas a chief protagonist,³⁷ explains Jacquemart’s pictorial focus on two Jewish priests and Caiaphas’ dramatic counting gesture near the center, as well as the theatrical staging. Composite texts, pictures, and performance all together constitute a complex visual culture.³⁸

To fashion images even for relatively simple subjects, illustrators had latitude to choose which textual sources and pictorial realizations to engage. Only a few years after the Lyon Calcidius was transcribed and illustrated, for instance, a different French scribe pictured the same passage not as an acanthus coil but as a Zodiac within which Venus’s orbit is tracked by a single tightening curve (Valenciennes, Bib. mun., MS 293, fol. 62r).³⁹ The alternative diagrams draw on different artistic traditions to comment on the same text, the one on the planet’s track the other on Plato’s simile. Each, in turn, was replicated in later manuscripts. To determine whether one or the other Carolingian version is an ad hoc variant and if they convey differences in the Calcidian archetype or even in the transmission of Plato’s Greek original,⁴⁰ some art historians might construct “picture recensions” based on stemmata of the kind philologists use to comprehend text variations. The method (codified by another Princeton iconographer, Kurt Weitzmann) has now largely been abandoned because it attends more to hypothetical lost models than actual works of art and subverts (anachronistic) notions of artistic creativity. It nonetheless remains useful for pinpointing digressions and interpolations within established traditions, especially in such manuscripts with illustrations closely tied to relatively stable texts (and interpretations) as Terence’s comedies, the *Physiologus*, Beatus’ *In apocalypsin* and Hrabanus Maurus’ *De laudibus Sanctae Crucis*. It is a productive tool, for instance, for thinking about the relationship of the tenth-century Vatican Joshua Rotulus (BAV, Pal. gr. 431) to the five surviving Middle Byzantine illustrated Octateuch manuscripts and their pre-Iconoclastic models.⁴¹

By diminishing the significance of individual variations in a search for hypothetical *Urtypen*, the so-called “Weitzmann method” undercuts its own value as an instrument for diagnosing significant innovations.⁴² A short tract on the Eucharist written at Corbie ca. 845 and assigned to Eldefonsus of Spain, for instance, has come down in two illustrated versions both nearly contemporary with the original text (Paris, BnF, MS. lat. 2855; fol. 63v; Fig. 7 and Vatican, BAV, Cod. lat. 1341, fol. 187v; Fig. 8).⁴³ The principal illustrations adhere closely to the adjacent description of the circular Host, including the milling dots that render the author’s characterization of Eucharistic wafers as “the celestial king’s money” that surpasses coins of earthly rulers.⁴⁴ Each rendering, however, also digresses

from Eldefonsus' precise specifications. The Paris diagram includes four not "*quinque punctae*" on the obverse (intended to stand for Christ and the four evangelists) and two, not "*trio*", on the reverse – an inexplicable deviation given the explanation that the row of dots "*Trinitas est.*"⁴⁵ Made at Corbie itself, the Vatican version is reliable in these details; but it, too, includes divergences, most notably "VITA" at the base of the cross rather than the text's (and Paris version's) "VIA." As Eldefonsus explained, *via* stands for Christ's feet, *lux*, *pax*, *gloria*, and *vita* symbolize life within his breast, and *veritas* his head in heaven. According to picture-criticism's privileging of textual fidelity, both schemata should therefore be considered defective versions of a lost and unflawed original that needs to be "reconstructed." Doing so is surely worthwhile, but so is considering the deviations to be intentional assertions that even signs and diagrams are insufficient to convey Christ's invisible presence in the Host and the Trinity's incomprehensibility. They might be a kind of blurring of the text/picture relationship. Eldefonsus was, after all, transcribing what had been conveyed to him in a "revelation" comparable to Ezekiel's, that he cites, of the living creatures and wheels within wheels (Ez. 10). Visions are another form of word/image compacting,⁴⁶ deployed especially for the fugitive themes of Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*, for instance,⁴⁷ and the Rothschild Canticles in New Haven Connecticut (Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 404).⁴⁸ The "errors" in the Eldefonsus manuscripts would, then, be a form of dissimulation.

"Copying" was always rereading. Variants therefore merit particular attention. Even before they were recast as Marian *figurae*, illustrations in the related Hrabanus manuscripts, for example, betrayed subtle stylistic adjustments and iconographic reinterpretations, and also actual mistakes.⁴⁹ When ninth-century illustrations accompanying the Gallicanum translation of David's psalms in the Utrecht Psalter (Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Bibl. Rhenotriactinae I Nr 32; fol. 1^v; Fig. 9) were reproduced at Canterbury during the sixth decade of the twelfth century in a volume containing all three of Jerome's translations and Old English and Anglo-Saxon versions (as well various commentaries), the text-picture relationship changed, de facto, and the imagery was interpreted (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 17.1).⁵⁰ The Carolingian imagery had, itself, been assembled from diverse components that were so successfully integrated in a coherent classical style and embellished with ancient *staffage* that some scholars have taken it to be a facsimile of a lost Late Antique model.⁵¹ The "Beatus vir," for instance, sits lost in thought before a classical edicule opposite an enthroned ancient ruler in a landscape irrigated by a convincing river god personification. A deeper Jewish origin has even been suggested based on details traceable to midrashic texts.⁵² Iconographic source-hunting notwithstanding, Carolingian theology permeates the Utrecht illustrations;⁵³ and the successive replicas display a thick texture of subsequent exegetic and pictorial glossing. The inspired author of the ninth-century "original" for example, becomes Christ between two angels in the Cambridge version and enthroned in the late twelfth-century copy in Paris (BnF, MS lat. 8846, fol. 5^v; Fig. 10); the anonymous men personifying the just and impious are converted into the Savior pointing toward the true path confronting a twisting man tugging at his serpentine cloak, whose seductive beauty reflects a shift in rhetoric set out in Matthew of Vendôme's discussion of antithesis in the *Ars versificatoria*.⁵⁴ In turn, details

from the illustration of the Apostolic Creed in the Utrecht manuscript (fol. 90^r) were re-assembled in new compositions, of which some retained allusions of the original iconographic context.⁵⁵

The diagrams of inner experience in Heinrich Seuse's (Suso) *Exemplar* follow a pattern similar to that of more venerable iconographies, differing slightly but tellingly from one another in the surviving manuscripts.⁵⁶ The earliest, produced within a decade of Seuse's original composition, renders the soul's penultimate destination in the form of a triptych and the apophatic Trinity beyond as three concentric silver disks enclosing an empty circle (Strasbourg, Bib. nat. et unit., Cod. 2929, fol. 82^r; Fig. 11). Its mid-fifteenth-century counterpart in Einsiedeln pictures a Crucifixion on the triptych and the Trinity as alternating red and gold rings (Stiftsbibliothek, MS 710[322], fol. 106^r). And a 1473 version in Wolfenbüttel converts the triptych into a chapel-like building, its door flung open to reveal a silver lattice screen blocking entranceway to a blue celestial sphere (Herzog August Bibliothek, MS. 78-5, fol. 121^v). Seuse himself may have experimented with ways to render the climactic nexus of material props and unfathomable concepts; copyists mapped their own versions onto those.

The paradigm of medieval copying ever since J. J. Tikkanen argued they were derived from the fifth-century Greek Genesis in London (BL, Cod. Cotton B. VI),⁵⁷ the thirteenth-century mosaics in the atrium of San Marco in Venice are now being interpreted less as facsimiles of the nearly-totally destroyed manuscript and more within the physical and cultural contexts in which the venerable imagery was transferred, supplemented, and reinterpreted (Fig. 12).⁵⁸ A (now reconstructed) mosaic of the Virgin and Child above the Porta da Mar leading into the vestibule cued the vast Old Testament series as a typology. However accurate the nearly 100 borrowed narratives from the Late Antique Genesis may be, those viewing them would have processed the Paradise and the expulsion's immediate aftermath through the accompanying inscription's claim: "The fall of humankind came through the mouth of a woman. /The worthy Mother of God is the World's redeemer."⁵⁹ In its turn, the reconfigured Byzantine iconography was decontextualized in a French *Histoire universelle* (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 2576), and also quarried for motifs in commercially-produced beakers.⁶⁰ If someone recognized the origin of the camel excerpted from the scene of the Brethren Selling Joseph to the Ishmaelite merchants on one of the glasses, she or he might have understood it as a reference to Venice's mercantile ties to the eastern Mediterranean (which included importing sand and ash imports to make the glass).⁶¹ Most users would have read the "ship of the desert" simply as an exhortation to drink up when one can.

Like Plato's reference to acanthus in the *Timeaus*, medieval texts also incorporated pictorial allusions. A *Maestas Domini* ghosts the symbolic Christ and names of the four Evangelists on the Eldefonsus Host, simultaneously asserting Christ's physical invisibility in the wafer and engaging his presence in the viewer's mind.⁶² When a contemporary Spanish bishop, Prudentius of Troyes, embedded references to images in his *Sermo de vita et morte gloriosae virginis Maurae*, his readers would easily have recognized the depictions of the Virgin and Child, Crucifixion, and the Lord enthroned in Majesty before which the woman prayed and, in so doing, appreciate the claim fully that the corporeal eye was

insufficient to discern God until each of the renderings on “dry wood” emitted a sound that reinforced the “wonderful mysteries of our faith in the minds of the faithful.”⁶³ Honorius Augustodunensis’ *Speculum ecclesiae*, composed at Canterbury, includes a parallel between Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and Christ guiding his people to eternal life, which the author would have known from the windows Archbishop Anselm had installed in the cathedral’s choir (preserved in late twelfth-century replicas; Fig. 13).⁶⁴ In his *De altera vita*, Luc of Tuy cited the “*non contort[us]*” *Volto Santo* of Lucca as a proof-text against the iconography of the twisting three-nail Crucifixion that had become popular in his day.⁶⁵ He could do so because the *Passio imaginis* conferred special authority on the Luccan crucifix, assigning it to Nicodemus, whom Christ himself had converted and who afterwards witnessed the Crucifixion and helped to bury the Savior.⁶⁶

Art commented on accompanying texts and images in some of the same ways glosses written directly into the margins of manuscripts did. The depiction of David, the Psalm’s author, and Moses’ artisan Bezalel in the Pantokrator Psalter precisely at the phrase *ἐργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων* (Ps. 115.4) presents powerful *visual* proof against any literal reading of the scripture: “Their idols are silver and gold made by the hands of men” of the sort that Iconoclasts had mustered against Christian art.⁶⁷ The Savior portrayed at the start of the Paris Psalter leaves no doubt that the Psalms that follow are prophecies of Christ. Moses’s horned headdress in the Aelfric Hexateuch suggests pharaonic imagery that evokes the story’s Egyptian venue and hence its historicity even though it was conceived through the diverse Anglo-Saxon heritage which included Roman art in which the priests of Isis wear similar headgear.⁶⁸ The purple curtain the Prophet uses to shield his face faces the other direction; suspended from a gold cross, it assimilates the vexillum from ancient representations of victory mapped onto the tabernacle curtain to realize Paul’s declaration in 2 Corinthians 3.13 that followers of Christ “are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.”⁶⁹ Such overlaying of exegetic features directly onto text illustrations typified medieval iconography from the beginning.⁷⁰ Negotiating the tension between Old Testament words and the New Testament’s spiritual realization, it bears a whiff of negativity there that may account for why the horns appeared for the first time almost half a millennium after Jerome’s Vulgate (mis)translation.⁷¹

Composites of actual objects (*spolia*) constructed iconographies. Stones and pieces of wood gathered from sites in the Holy Land, all properly labelled, are formed as a cross in sacred soil from Golgotha inside a seventh-century box from the Sancta Sanctorum at the Lateran in Rome (Museo Vaticano; Fig. 14).⁷² A Hellenistic cameo representing the enthroned Zeus supporting his eagle substitutes for John and his (eagle) symbol at the top of a fourteenth-century gold cross in Gerona Cathedral,⁷³ simultaneously marking Christianity’s triumph over pagan gods and the Evangelist’s ascent into the ether.⁷⁴ *Spolia* on a reliquary in Basel compose the assembly’s meaning asserted in the couplet the figure proffers (Fig. 15):

+ *David* * *rex* * *manu* * *fortis* * *aspectu* * *desiderabilis* * *ecce*
 * *stirps* [*] *mea* * *et* * *sal[vator]* * *mu[n]di* * *qua[m]* * *divinit[us]* * *p[ro]p[he]thavi*

The amalgam of an Augustan Medusa head, twelfth-century cameo, and thirteenth-century figure of the Virgin and Child, bonded by six Old Testament prophets in translucent enamel when the object was fashioned in the early fourteenth century,⁷⁵ structure Christ's lineage from Judah to David through Mary. Inspired by Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, allusions to Genesis, the Song of Songs, major and minor Prophets, and the Book of Revelation, as well as the Tree of Jesse, the very ingredients enact the transformation from one theological condition to another.

Like the phylacteries David displays on the reliquary, texts, interpretations, signs, and images ran along parallel tracks that continuously crisscrossed one another. When modern iconographers fragment texts and pictorial sources to expose the "lovely colors of a peacock" and then reassemble them in new coherent readings, they actually mimic medieval processes.⁷⁶

A Twisting Acanthus Coil

Deferring to Horace, Venantius Fortunatus had stressed crisscrossing already in the sixth century when he introduced his *carmina figurata* by asking why, if a painter or a poet "intermingles whatever he wants, should not their two practices be intermingled, so that a single web be set up, simultaneously a poem and a painting?"⁷⁷ The interweaving of word and image in medieval art was prompted not primarily by the classical *ut pictura poesis*, however, but by scripture. John's prologue starts "In the beginning was the Word" (Jn.1.1) and Christ declared: "I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 1.8). Christians developed *nomina sacra* that Jews had invented to *avoid* rendering God's name, the tetragrammaton (יהוה) for instance, for the opposite effect of iconizing and personizing writing in ornamented and historiated letters and monograms to establish a relationship to its prototype.⁷⁸ They found iconographic significance even in letter shapes. Isidore of Seville understood the **T** as the "figure of the cross of the Lord," the **X** which "until the time of Augustus did not come into existence," and the **Y** "a symbol of human life ... the branching into two begins with adolescence."⁷⁹ And he parsed the meaning of the "mystical letters" which "by moving towards each other the **A** rolls all the way back to **Ω**, and **Ω** bends back to **A**, so the Lord might show in himself both the movement of the beginning to the end, and the movement of the end to the beginning." Ludic figuring of letters persisted throughout the Middle Ages.

In contrast to ancient practice, Christians also enlarged initials to organize texts visually in the codex form of book they preferred. From modest experiments in ornamenting initial letters and using them as kinetic lead-ins to the words that follow (as in the [symbolic?] red **T** at the start of the penultimate line of the Pantokrator Psalter page and the **A** and **I** on the Eldefonsus pages), words came to be implicated with visual ornamentation. The twelfth-century French theologian John Belet, for instance, explained how letter forms, geometric shapes, and images are iconographically inextricable from one another in the intersecting **V** and **D** of *Vere Dignum* in Sacramentary manuscripts that, since the eighth century, had been configured as the Calcidian form generated by "bending [the *chi*] around to make two interconnected circles":

This is not without deeper meaning. The Delta, enclosed on all sides, signifies the divine nature, which has neither beginning or end; V stands for Christ's human nature, which originated in the Virgin but is without end. The hyphen in the middle, which links the two parts, is the cross, signifying the tie between mankind and God.⁸⁰

A Bible produced during the first third of the twelfth century for Kuno, abbot of Weingarten, develops the earlier tradition of kinetic initials by deploying the **I** of Genesis to frame the page and guide the reader visually into the text's body through letters of decreasing size **N PRINCIPIO CREAVIT D[EU]S C[A]ELU[M] ET TERRA[M]** (London, British Library, MS Add 14791, fol. 6^r; Fig. 16).⁸¹ Mapping Platonic notions of origins onto the biblical account,⁸² the straight line intersected by an **X** is Calcidius' "neither matter nor body" that forms the letter *chi* halfway down; and the oculus at the top sprouts acanthus tendrils, *silva* (matter) from which, in both the ancient and Christian ontologies, the world came into being. Wrapped around the Creator's hands (one pointing heavenward and the other downward toward the world being brought into being),⁸³ the acanthus operates iconographically, quite as a tenth-century gloss on Martianus Capella has Venus' coil do, "the end and the beginning, the end of the murkiness of the air here below, the beginning one of pure ether."⁸⁴ The hexameron is pictured underneath; and, beneath the *tetragonus mundi* formed by the **X**, scenes of humankind's fall lead to the expulsion from Eden amid disordered acanthus. While the acanthus gloss begins "*ambifarum*" like most works of medieval art, the Kuno Bible frontispiece confounds the binary oppositions of word and image, Old Testament and New, ancient science and biblical truth, geometry and vegetal growths, matter and spirit. In a dynamic of falling and reuniting, it descends from Word-Made-Flesh to human sin and then rises back again to Him.⁸⁵

Christianity's emblem par excellence, the cross effected the transition between word, sign, and image by turning the history of Christ's passion into a mark of salvation and a quasi picture.⁸⁶ It is the focus of the lid of the Sancta Sanctorum box (Fig. 17), where the cross engages simultaneously the themes of travel and therapy underlying medieval pilgrimage that is also embodied in the wood box's rounded nautical sides. Punctuated at the four corners with **IC** and **XC** (Jesus Christ) and **A** and **Ω**, the lid presents the instrument of Christ's Passion as a tree with branches lopped off and surfaces streaked with gold planted on a mound of earth and surrounded by a deep blue aureole crossed by flashes of light. Like similar depictions on flasks (*ampullae*) that pilgrims used to transport oil from Golgotha inscribed "oil of the wood of the tree of life which guides on earth and on sea,"⁸⁷ the rough-hewn cross evokes the tree at the center of Eden (depicted with the four rivers of Paradise on the Kuno Bible initial for example and flanking the central portal of San Marco), the aureole conjuring up a billowing sail held in place by the mast-cross.⁸⁸ The condensed image on the Palestinian relics box also recalls monograms associated with rulers since Late Antiquity and, hence, reinforces Christ's kingship.⁸⁹

No monogram was more important than the Chrismon fashioned from the **IC XC** epithet that, in a powerful visual elision of letter sign and figure, captured the essence of the "Word-Made-Flesh."⁹⁰ Constantine had adopted the Chrismon as his talisman and his court poet Optatian constructed a *carmen figuratum* around it, which Venantius Fortu-

natus and Hrabanus Maurus later expanded. Paulinus of Nola (a friend of St. Augustine) decoded complex ideas in the Chrismon's geometry, vegetal forms, and words, including the letter **T**, a ship's mast and royal scepter, the world divided into four regions with sky above and depths below, and Christ's victory over Hell and ascent to the Father in heaven (Carmen 19).⁹¹ The late twelfth-century tympanum of San Miguel de Estella engaged some of the allusions (Fig. 18).⁹² Embossed within a circle on the square book Christ displays (the two perfect geometric shapes), the cross stem is transected with an **X**, supports the alpha and omega, and is wrapped by the terminal **S**. The quasi-pictorial device simultaneously asserts the Incarnate God's presence and absence, his identification as the Logos, his two natures and eternity, and his redeeming death, emblemizing medieval iconography's fundamental elision of the differences between word, sign, and image.

The Chrismon is a kind of diagram of the type used since antiquity to organize information and to render arguments comprehensible, in this case, how the mystery of Christ's two natures inheres in his epigram. Diagrams were a major component of medieval iconography.⁹³ For example, the so-called Tree of Porphyry that "DIA[LEC]T[I]CA D[OMI]NA" grasps in her right hand on a frontispiece in the mid-twelfth-century manuscript of Boethius' translation of Porphyrius' *Isagoge* to Aristotle's *Categories* represents how Substance generates the Body, then the Animate Body, followed in order by the Living Creature and finally the Rational Soul (Darmstadt, Hessisches Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, MS 2282, fol. 1^v; Fig. 19).⁹⁴ The espaliered plant harvests vegetal energy in offshoots sprouting from each category, ending in the pairing of man and God, while the orderly arrangement contrasts with the knotted sharp-tongued serpent in *Dialectica*'s left hand serpent (which in a typical crisscrossing reverts to Martianus Capella, one of the textual sources). Through an allusion to Gospel frontispieces, the personification's cross-crown and footstool and the four authors in the corners (Plato and Aristotle above, Socrates and Adam of Petit-Pont below) figure *Dialectica* as the basis of logic.

The geometric armature that holds the glass in place at Canterbury is also a kind of diagram,⁹⁵ the middle column branching into genera and species. Albeit freeform, Seuse's schema is, too, with its (*Mittelhochdeutsch*) words and images tethered together by a red thread of the sort that Ariadne famously used to navigate the labyrinth.⁹⁶ Emerging from a circle symbolizing the soul of the large figure at the bottom left (most likely Seuse's disciple Elsbeth Stigel), the *fil rouge* tracks a series of choices – toward Stigel asleep on a choir stall in the left corner envisioning in her mind's eye the spiritual ascent or to the persona praying the rosary at the right (the new device promoted by the Dominicans). The thread skirts the flirting man and woman in the right corner who are about to be mowed down by death (inspired by the descending devil who drops the fruit he used to tempt the first couple); as the caption reports, "worldly love ends in grief".⁹⁷ Dream and silent prayer begin the spiritual liberation that continues through the crucifix the nun holds (recalling images of the suffering Mary at the Crucifixion at the base of the cross).⁹⁸ The diagram then plots a course upward through to the Son and Father in Heaven and the Trinity, where the path forks, descending on the right to a praying angel and praying man inspiring Stigel and ricocheting toward the Trinitarian abstraction in upper left, first passing through apophatic declarations and triptych.

Like the Lateran and Basel reliquaries and Canterbury glass, not to mention the illustrated manuscripts, Seuse's diagram is filled with writing. Words are ubiquitous in and near medieval art; indeed, they are an essential element of iconography. Some, like the PHARAO REX EGIPTI, are simply identifying, intended to preclude confusion of the kind the iconoclastic Theodulf of Orleans famously proffered of Venus and Virgin Mary.⁹⁹ Others interact effectively with the pictures and other words. Death (TOT) is labelled in the Seuse diagram while the other figures are intentionally ambivalent to reinforce the notion of incrementally lost individuality as one approaches the fathomless Deity.¹⁰⁰ Tiny circles embroidered above Christ's cross nimbus on a twelfth-century silk panel in Halberstadt (Cathedral, Fig. 20) include the *nomina sacra* **IC** and **XC** not only to identify the protagonist (who would be easily recognized by context and cross halo) but also to confirm the portrait's authenticity as a true likeness. The passage from Matthew 26.26: ΛΑΒΕΤΕ ΦΑΓΕΤΕ, ΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΤΟ ΣΩΜΑΜΟΥ asserts the historicity of the pictured Communion of the Apostles.¹⁰¹ The monotony of saints' portraits required names, monograms, or attributes to secure identity, at the same time making the point that holy figures are all *personae Christi*. St. John in Jacquemart's painting bears Christ's features and the women Mary's to subsume them into sanctity.¹⁰² At Sta. Prassede in Rome where "the bones of many saints are buried under these walls;" as on the cathedral façade at Amiens and elsewhere, population is itself iconographic, constituting the Heavenly City.¹⁰³

Some words functioned more as title labels do in post-medieval art, not only to identify and authorize depicted subjects, but also to tie together seemingly disparate elements. The inscription that separates the Pantocrator (flanked by the **IC XC**) from the Nativity in the south transept of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, for instance, figures the way in which the one generates the other (Fig. 21). Christ displays a codex inscribed with the Greek text of John 8.12: "I am the light of the world. The person who follows me will not walk around in the darkness, but on the contrary, he will have for himself the light of life." The words get filtered through a Latin titulus: STELLA PARIT SOLEM/ ROSA FLOREM/ FORMA DECOREM,¹⁰⁴ with the divine light entering the world as a flower-like star that takes form in the Christ Child embraced by his mother below. The sun (Christ) in the mosaic generates the star, the rose (Mary) the flower (Jesus), and the art the beautiful representation of the totality.

Inscriptions were often visually encoded. Variations not only in language but also in letters' character, sizes, grounds, and color played pictorial roles in what have been called "iconotexts" or "epiconography."¹⁰⁵ Following the practice that Venantius Fortunatus described in which the *carmen cancellatum* is distinguished from the larger inscribed matrix, Eldefonsus' Paris codex renders the words and signs bearing on the incarnate God in vermillion, the lesser names in brown ink (another difference from the "better" Vatican copy). Especially during the Gregorian Reform period, words were visually differentiated to stratify the rhetorical levels of accompanying themes. The key-hole shaped wood panel from San Gregorio Nazianzeno in Rome, commissioned by the nun Benedicta and the Benedictine abbess Constantia during the papacy of Leo IX, deploys hexametric tituli to help organize a vast depiction of the Last Judgment, a subject with no single biblical ref-

erent (Pinacoteca Vaticana; Fig. 22).¹⁰⁶ Texts inscribed on black and red bands section the enormous cosmic circle comprehending dozens of figures into celestial, sacred, mundane, transitional, and affective realms. One figure alone transgresses the textual strata, the sacrificial Christ at the altar whose head parts the VENITE from VOBIS of Matthew 25.34 to offer entryway to heaven not only through his sacraments but also his person.¹⁰⁷

The very inclusion of texts in pictures manifests the belief that Christ himself had superseded Hebrew scripture. A couplet accompanying the cross in the acanthus-filled apse of San Clemente in Rome make the point explicit: "That which the law makes to be arid, the cross makes to flourish."¹⁰⁸ Words and pictures in medieval art are indeed like vines, generating iconography, splitting and grafting, exchanging significances, and waxing with a vigor of their own. A gilt-copper flabellum of ca. 1160-80 in Kremsmünster (Benedictine monastery; Fig. 23) juxtaposes depictions of Christ's resurrection and ascension in a lattice of acanthus that comprehends a lion suscitating his cubs and eagles flying to the sun and diving for fish, elucidated with pairs of ascending and descending lines of verse.¹⁰⁹ The Resurrection on the left is framed by MYSTICVS ECCE LEO SVRGIT BARATRO POPVLATO (Here the mystical lion rises from the abyss that he destroyed) and QUID VEL LEO CATULUS SIGNENT VIX EXPRIMET ULLUS (What both the lion and the cub symbolize can hardly be portrayed). According to the bestiary, lions are born dead and after three days the father breathes life into their faces; the cub is pictured with open mouth and still-unpupilled eyes while an already-enlivened sibling looks on. The Ascension on the right matches HIC VOLVCRUM MERSVM SAPIAS SVP[ER] ETHRA VERSVM (Know that the flying creature has here returned above the aether) with HIC AQVILE GESTVS IH[S]V TYPVS EST MANIFESTVS (The movement of the eagle here is Jesus' prefiguration). Eagles were noted for the acute vision that enabled them to fly close to the sun to discern fish beneath the sea.¹¹⁰ Other iconographic associations complicate the movement established by the tituli and symbolism. The cub's cave and eagle's plunge beneath the water conjure up not only the elements but also a third episode in Christ's post-Passion life, the Descent into Hell. The two creatures are also evangelist symbols.¹¹¹ Cued by the acanthus scrolls, the imagery opens up myriad interpretive paths rather than a linear "program."¹¹²

Beautiful Notions

Rhyming *MANIFESTUS* with *MYSTICUS* in images as in words, the Kremsmünster flabellum is more poetry than history or theology. It mirrors Anselm of Canterbury's likening of scriptural exegesis to "beautiful notions . . . to be viewed like pictures," and continuing at the start of his widely-read *Cur deus homo*:¹¹³

For it was appropriate that, just as death entered the human race through a man's disobedience, so life should be restored through a man's obedience; and that, just as the sin which was the cause of our damnation originated from a woman, similarly the originator of our justification and salvation should be born of a woman. Also that the devil, who defeated the man whom he beguiled

through the taste of a tree, should himself similarly be defeated by a man through tree-induced suffering which he, the devil, inflicted.¹¹⁴

Hugh of St. Victor, too, saw typologies as pleasing and playful,¹¹⁵ and hoped that because “in an image the mystical understanding is painted, and through accessible similitudes, of those things that are understood spiritually, a clear demonstration is figured,” a “greater beauty that would replace the desire for temporal goods.”¹¹⁶ Honorius Augustodunensis went so far as to maintain that the four Doctors of the Church were painters and that the job of living theologians was to renew their work.¹¹⁷ Windows from Arnstein that correlate with the *Mariengebete* portray the Premonstratensian brother Gerlach who painted them holding a brush as a scribe would a quill (Münster, Landesmuseum; Fig. 24).¹¹⁸

“Ut littera monstret quod manus explicuit” was how Paulinus of Nola characterized the picture captions in his church of St. Felix; and so it is noteworthy that many tituli are poetic,¹¹⁹ deploying metaphor, symbolism, personification, allegory, parataxis, and narrative and rhyming, e.g. terram with aethram or the stringing “colligere,” “trahere,” “regere,” “pungere,” to explicate and activate the accompanying imagery.¹²⁰ Hildebert of Lavardin embedded Augustine’s argument about fragmenting Hebrew scripture into a couplet intended for a depiction of Christ’s appearance at Emmaus (Luke 24.30-31):

To break the bread is to explain Scriptures. For then Christ is known, opened through the spiritual sense.¹²¹

He also expanded the veil trope (integrated into the Ælfric Hexateuch) into a reflection on exegetic art itself:

While God speaks [on the smoking mountain], the masses remain below. Moses is the teacher of everyone, the unlearned masses are ignorant, the smoke is the unintelligible parable, the mountain is Scripture. God makes known the mysteries in smoke. The unindoctrinated stay afar, grasping only external things; the learned approach, examining the interior things.¹²²

Poetic form, itself, attracted special attention.¹²³ Among the dense descriptive captions in the atrium of San Marco in Venice, two Leonine couplets single out Abel as Christ’s persona and Joseph as a type of the doge.¹²⁴

At Estella, a couplet articulates the point conveyed visually through the Chrismon, namely, that Christ is the perfect amalgam of human and divine. Running from bottom to top along the left of the quatrefoil aureole, the first verse reads: “It is neither God nor man that I discern in the present figure;” descending at the right: “But God and man that the sacred image signifies.”¹²⁵ Composed perhaps by Baudri of Bourgueil, the verses were widely circulated in texts and art, accompanying various iconographies including the Crucifixion and Deposition, Christ in Majesty, and even Moses’ epiphany on Mount Horeb. One transcription even strings the couplet out as a diagram of contraries, starting with the opposition of *nec* and *sed* and terminating in *imago* (Vatican, BAV, Cod. Reg. lat. 1578, fol. 45^v). In an earnest search to nail down medieval art’s meaning, modern iconographers too often lose its poetic blossoming.¹²⁶

So-called “emblematic narratives” facilitated the pairing of narrative histories, with the second continuing the first but modifying it as in a couplet. The opening of the *Song of Songs* illuminated at Reichenau ca. 1000 is a good example (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Msc. Bibl. 22, fols. 4^v-5^r; Fig. 25).¹²⁷ Starting at the center of the left page with half-naked men approaching Peter who baptizes one of them, a procession of kings, clerics, and saints winds along a serpentine path at the top of which Ecclesia offers a chalice while pointing to the crucified Christ (the actual body). The flow continues on the facing page but now through a vision of the celestial Deity within the opening **O** of the text that follows, serving as a *mandorla* for an ecstatic vision. Isolated eleventh-century narratives in the lower church of San Clemente and the thirteenth-century frescoes in the Sancta Sanctorum rearrange historical order of the events depicted on a monumental scale to create allegorical readings through their physical placement.¹²⁸ The Psalter made for King Louis IX (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 10525) assembles a range of pictorial sources and added captions that guide the reader in a step-by-step fashion.¹²⁹

An illustration facing Song 60 in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* made for Louis' cousin Alfonso X creates Anselm's “beautiful notions” through elaborate antitheses of gardens and buildings, chastity and sins, open and closed doors, book and image (Escorial, Real Biblioteca, MS T-I-1, fol. 88^v; Fig. 26).¹³⁰ As already on Bernward of Hildesheim's eleventh-century bronze doors and Anselm's exegetical example, the frontispiece sets the fall of Adam and Eve in parallel with the Incarnation and life of Christ,¹³¹ chiming the Annunciation with the Fall just as Gabriel's “*Ave*” above rhymes with “*Eva*.” In the one, God is enthroned above the clouds while his messenger emerges from the flesh-like velum (his wings barely discernible). In the other, Eve offers Adam a piece of forbidden fruit within a lush Paradise of date palms, vines, and fruit trees, even as she reaches for another from the serpent's maw. Then, engaging the circularity of troubadour songs,¹³² the sword-bearing angel casting the couple out of the gates of Eden morphs into Maria-Ecclesia dressed in the same blue cloak trimmed in gold returning everyman to Paradise though a nearly identical portal. The moral is drawn at the bottom where great doors rest atop paired compass-drawn rainbows framing the celestial blue heaven. Echoing her sinful act above, Eve tugs at the pulls while Adam, mirroring the nostalgic glance back to Paradise, turns away. Humankind's perfect naked flesh almost disappears into the unpainted parchment, the woman's labia miming the closed gate from which the man averts his gaze.¹³³ At the right, Gabriel reappears as in the Annunciation, but here addressing crowned Maria-Ecclesia who unlatches the heavenly gates and opens them a crack for the devout reader who, however, nevertheless remains unable to penetrate the dark shadow.¹³⁴ Opening the volume of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* thus coordinates with *Ecclesia's* opening the *porta coeli* for the reader singing Mary's praises in the songs on the facing folio.¹³⁵ In Paris about the same time, Peter of Limoges summed up the poetic trope: “As often as the life's vain pomp delights you, as often as you see some worldly conceit, ascend to paradise in your mind.”¹³⁶

Poets may have worked hand-in-hand with artisans or themselves have practiced both forms of artistic expression. The verses on the Canterbury windows, like the imagery, were apparently composed under Anselm's supervision, recorded, and then reused after the

1174 fire.¹³⁷ Ten lines of original poetry are so closely connected to the visual layout and understanding of the imagery on an enormous Byzantine diptych in Chambéry (Cathedral Treasury), which pairs the Virgin and Child with the Ascension and the Transfiguration with the Crucifixion to figure Christ's dual nature, that they must have been composed together with the iconography.¹³⁸ Verses written by Audradus Modicus assert that the dedication portrait in the First Bible of Charles the Bald (in which the monk appears) "actually shows how the noble warrior/ Vivian with the company now presents this book" (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 1, fols. 422^v-423^r);¹³⁹ but, in a classic instance of poetic dissemblance, they subvert the overt pictorial record. The couplet running along the base of the mosaic of Sta. Maria in Trastevere reveals the message of the appropriated images in language and syntax associated with Bruno of Segni (Fig. 27).¹⁴⁰

Like the internal rhymed Leonine verses favored in works of art, iconographic structures were seldom binary. The *tertium comparationis* is transcendent beauty, as Hildebert boasted of his picture tituli, they "sparkle with majesty and in some of the interpretations, shine and glow like gold."¹⁴¹

Iconographic Cargo

Pictorial notions depended on conventionality, that is, on recognizable semantic units that enabled familiar iconographies to function even in refashioned contexts. Much as Plato and Calcidius could assume that their readers would conjure up acanthus coils, medieval iconographers too took advantage of familiarity with iconography, the way Prudentius of Troyes did in his sermon, just as later, Peter Comestor could suppose that the readers of his *Historia Scholastica* were iconographically as well as textually literate when he explained the presence of the ox and ass at the Nativity.¹⁴² Likewise, the Canterbury glass was painted when the central themes would have been identifiable by those with even rudimentary religious training who, prompted by the inscriptions and perhaps speculating with their comrades might then puzzle out the subsidiary iconographies.¹⁴³ The Kremsmünster fan drew on bestiary illustrations for its symbolic animals, bridging "scientific" lore to theological precepts.¹⁴⁴

As it continues to be today, iconography was a subject for discussion. When Peter Damian responded to Desiderius of Montecassino's 1069 query about why Paul and not Peter was traditionally shown on Christ's right in representations of the *Traditio legis*, he cited depictions of the theme sanctioned by Constantine and Pope Sylvester, assuming that the learned protagonist of the Gregorian Reform's return to the origins of the Church understood venerable artistic traditions as well as Hebrew etymology, Paul's rapture (2 Corinthians), and various Church doctrines.¹⁴⁵ Pictorial heritage carried authority, as in the classical ingredients of the Utrecht Psalter and the epic vision of the end of time constructed in the Vatican Last Judgment panel, not only from scripture and written commentary, but also from ancient, Byzantine, and earlier Roman images.¹⁴⁶ Atop the rectangular "predella" in which the promise of Paradise is paired with the (greater) threat of Hell, the all-encompassing cosmic orb tracks the ascent from earth to heaven, beginning

with the buried dead and animals disgorging accidental victims (including a resuscitating lion in a cave). Bare-breasted personifications derived from classical art lift two naked souls upward toward the “innocents under the altar” (Rev. 6.9-11) flanked by Mary the intercessor and Stephen protomartyr and, at left and right, the good thief, Dismas followed by Paul and other saints and the three acts of mercy.¹⁴⁷ Engaging Isaiah 66.1 and Acts 7.49, the apostles’ footstools form the orb’s horizontal diameter, like God’s *scabellum* (Mt. 22) dividing earth from heaven and breached by an altar marked with the *tetragonus mundi* on which the instruments of the Passion are displayed. The Church on earth provides a way to the triumphant cosmic ruler holding an enormous cross staff and an orb inscribed “ego vici mundum” (Jn. 16.33). By doubling the figure of Christ, first as the suffering man behind the altar and then as the heavenly almighty, the image engages the sometimes contentious issue of his dual nature.

Many iconographies followed geographic channels, some carrying significance. The major events of Christ’s infancy, Passion, and post-Resurrection on the Sancta Sanctorum box were constructed from images associated with the Holy Land, widely distributed on the flasks, tokens, and encolpia that pilgrims picked up and brought home (Fig. 28).¹⁴⁸ These included such topographical markers as the grotto of the cave where Mary gave birth (among them the little relic niche) and the edicule beneath the dome of the Holy Sepulcher church that Constantine had allegedly constructed on the site where his mother had found the True Cross.¹⁴⁹ Mutatis mutandis, the distinct Holy Land iconography is perpetuated in the Palermo mosaic where Mary lies on a mattress within the framing cave and directs attention to the Child atop a stone manger with the ox and ass looking on from behind and the flower-like star in a blue orb above. Joseph seated in the foreground with his head resting on his hand puzzles over the event’s meaning. In far off Canterbury, Mary seated on cushioned throne with the downward-curving back and holding Christ on her lap, who blesses and presents a globe, is flanked by symmetrical trios of magi and shepherds derived ultimately from a composition at the Church of the Nativity that circulated on ampullae and was then perpetuated on ivories and other media and is also preserved in French stained glass.¹⁵⁰ Holy Land traditions were revived during the Crusader period and again transmitted abroad. A mosaic depicting the *Incredulity of St. Thomas* from the 1160s in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem,¹⁵¹ for example, bears a striking resemblance to its counterpart in San Marco in Venice and, even more, to the depiction of the event at the top of the left panel of the late thirteenth-century diptych of Andrew III of Hungary manufactured in Venice (Bern, Historisches Museum, Fig. 29).¹⁵²

Constantinople and Rome also generated distinctive traditions. The Halberstadt embroideries’ symmetrical juxtaposition of Christ offering the chalice and Christ offering the paten to the Apostles can be traced back to the Rossano Gospels and sixth-century Byzantine silver plates.¹⁵³ Icons venerated in Constantinople, particularly portraits of Christ and the Virgin, were particularly conservative and distinctive, the idea being that each replica preserved the essence of the sacred archetype, but also depictions of the liturgical feasts and other iconographies. The Pentecost mosaic at in the Basilian (Greek rite) church of San Nilo at Grottaferrata overlooking Rome (Fig. 30) depends on Byzantine conventions,

albeit transmitted through South Italy; a nearly identical grouping of the enthroned apostles, led by Peter and Andrew and receiving the Holy Spirit as rays emitted from a starry blue arc is preserved at Monreale and the traditional composition also appears in miniature on the Andrew III diptych.

Rome advanced particular imagery and disseminated programmatic schemes. Imitating the Holy Land, it produced ampullae and also replicas of the *Veronica* stenciled onto pieces of parchment which pilgrims carried throughout Europe. Copying Roman works conveyed papal authority, de facto. To decorate his church at Wearmouth Jarrow (Northumbria), Bede, for instance, brought “imagines ... de concordia veteris et novi Testamenti” from Rome to manifest an allegiance to the papacy; the Greek word for pictures as *ζωγραφία* in his account seems directed specifically toward emerging Byzantine iconoclasm.¹⁵⁴ Eleventh-century ceiling paintings in Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe evoke the basilicas of Old St. Peter’s and Old St. Paul’s in their unfolding of the Old Testament story from Genesis through the Sinai exodus.¹⁵⁵ The *Traditio legis* painted in the twelfth-century apse of *Chapelle des moines* at Berzé-la-Ville inserted Cluniac interests into Roman authority.¹⁵⁶ When the Abbess Sybil of Montreuil-les-Dames asked her brother Jacques Pantaléon to send her the “Sancta Veronicam, seu veram ipsius imaginem et similitudinem,” however, he provided her with a mid-thirteenth-century east European *mandylion* instead (still preserved in Laon).¹⁵⁷ Jacquemart’s reliance on works by Pietro Lorenzetti and Simone Martini roots his inclusion of St. Veronica with her cloth in the Italian milieu of the *Veronica*’s veneration in St. Peter’s. The *Acheropita* and *Avvocata* icons attributed to Luke were paired with one another on numerous copies, some as papal gifts that made their way as far as Mughal India.¹⁵⁸ The *Avvocata* marries the *Acheropita* in the Santa Maria in Trastevere apse.

The Vatican Last Judgment panel is explicitly Roman. Heavenly Jerusalem’s gemmed walls derive from Sta. Prassede’s triumphal arch; Christ is depicted in the guise of the Lateran icon;¹⁵⁹ and, portrayed in three-quarters in the third register with hands raised in intercession, Mary is the *Avvocata*.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, a second Roman Mary icon is quoted at the bottom left, as well, the Virgin flanked by the sisters Praxedes and Pudentiana (as pictured in an eighth-century painting in Sta. Susanna and the ninth-century apse mosaic in Sta. Prassede), offering the two female benefactors visual entrance to the entire ensemble.¹⁶¹ The pictorial quotations figure the City itself as the Heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁶² The assembling of local images to assert Rome’s centrality was repeated in the “Aula Gotica” which, in addition to a Zodiac and constellations based on an *Aratea*, labors of the months, and personifications, includes such local antiquities as a seascape with erotes and a lion mauling a deer.¹⁶³

Conventionality intensified the significance of minor changes and asserted new significance, for example, which apostle had pride of place in depictions of the *Traditio legis*, at Pentecost, or in the Last Judgment. Whether the dove of the Holy Spirit is enclosed within the rays emanating from the Creator in the First Day of Creation (as in the Cappella Palatina in Palermo) or hurling downward in the “replica” at Monreale is a small deviation albeit with Trinitarian meaning and, hence, implications for the different audiences.¹⁶⁴ On the Darmstadt *Isagoge* frontispiece, Dialectica’s fashionable Parisian dress

with hanging sleeves and narrow-waisted pleated long skirt inserts the ancient arguments into contemporary debates by Adam of Balsham and others on the Petit-Pont.

A seventh/eighth-century fresco in the apse of the monastic church at Deir el-Surian south of Alexandria in Egypt's western desert builds a local pictorial topography into the standard formula (perhaps imported from Syria) of Gabriel appearing to Mary (Fig. 31).¹⁶⁵ While God's messenger "speaks" Greek, the prophets display typological passages inscribed in Bahairic Coptic. Among the four Old Testament figures, Moses is featured and the epiphany to him on Mt. Horeb that traditionally symbolized Mary's virginity: "I saw the bush while fire was blazing in it without being consumed" (Ex. 3.2). The shrine referred to by pilgrims on the spot of Moses' epiphany may be recognized as the fortress filled with trees in the background; and the column of fire that guided the Prophet and ancient Israelites from the land of the pharaohs occupies the center. Both the Burning Bush (as in the Arnstein windows) and Column of Fire (as in the Canterbury glass) were Marian metaphors in the Akathist Hymn; nonetheless, they would have had a clear local resonance.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the particular form of the censer atop the column seems to tether the painting to Egyptian liturgical practice.¹⁶⁷ Egypt was a point of exchange between Asia and Europe before, and again after, the disruption of art production during the seventh- and eighth-century Islamic conquests by iconoclasm in territories controlled by Byzantines. The contemporary ivories from the so-called Grado throne were influential in eleventh-century Salerno and other parts of Italy.¹⁶⁸ Vice versa; across the Red Sea at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai, the red ermine-trimmed hat worn by one of the magi on an iconostasis beam identifies the wise man as a Frank; and the almond eyes, drooping moustache, and exotic bowler characterize one of his companions as a Mongol (Fig. 32). Certainly a response to the Mongol presence in the Holy Land when the beam was painted, the variations within the set iconography are in this case not a parochial variant but an ecumenical gesture.¹⁶⁹

When the roof of San Nilo at Grottaferrata was raised in the thirteenth century to let windows into the clerestory, a new iconographer transformed the center of the existing Pentecost mosaic into a demonstration of the Nicene Creed by introducing a Trinity from a Byzantine illustration of the Creed (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. suppl. gr. 52) and adding Isaiah at the left displaying the Trisagion (Is. 6.1-3).¹⁷⁰ The revision was intelligent and concerted; according to tradition, the Creed had been proclaimed at Pentecost.¹⁷¹ The painter seems to have chosen a Greek model precisely to root his conception in the Byzantine world, but he was careful to tip the Trinitarian iconography toward Rome on the controversial *filioque* doctrine by cleverly adjusting it. Whereas the source image encloses the three persons of the Triune God within one another like Russian nesting dolls, the fresco has the dove overlap the Father and be overlapped by him, making the Father *and* Christ the source of radiation for the Pentecost in accord with Western theology. Substituting a Crucifixion for the veiled triptych of the Strasbourg Seuse diagram, and picturing the cross-disc at its summit actually piercing the outermost Trinitarian sphere, the Einsiedeln copy asserts a claim that the Sacraments, not just the mind's eye, can transgress the celestial boundary.

Mingling and blurring diverse traditions had purpose. The tabernacle of apparently Jewish origin in the Pantokrator Psalter with its aniconic implements “made by hand” simultaneously refutes John the Grammarian’s assertion that any crafted object violates scriptural prohibitions and advances Christian “ἄχειροποίητα” promoted after Iconoclasm. The illustrator of the First Bible of Charles the Bald was surely attracted by the fifth-century Vatican Vergil’s classical style (BAV, MS 3225) when he incorporated elements from it into his biblical narratives, but he also understood the significance of translating the Golden Age pagan iconography into Christian biblical subjects.¹⁷² The Norman King Roger II conspicuously integrated Byzantine, Roman, North European, and Islamic conventions to create a global environment in his Cappella Palatina in Palermo. Based generally on the Bible, Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*, various commentaries, and liturgical enactments, the tympanum of La Madeleine at Vézelay depends on no single programmatic text. The layered references to the Pentecost, Ascension, and Last Judgment framed by bands of cosmological signs, calendrical symbols, and exotic figures is at heart an ad hoc assembly from Early Christian monuments and more recent Rome art that asserts the church’s place in pilgrimage and the crusader agenda.¹⁷³

Iconography was (mostly) very precise. Before any detail is dismissed as conventional, irrelevant, whimsical, or erroneous, it merits full scrutiny and investigation.

The same is true of changes and erasures. Christ with short curly red hair (known as the “semitic type”) was replaced after Iconoclasm with the more Zeus-like bearded alternative;¹⁷⁴ and in the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels, it was actually overpainted (Florence, Bib. Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Plut. 1.56).¹⁷⁵ An illuminator in ninth-century Tours censored the Binitarian creator he came upon in a fifth-century Italian Pentateuch by painting over one of the persons to make it conform to Trinitarian doctrine (Paris, BnF, MS Nouv. acq. Lat. 2334, fol. 1^v; Fig. 33).¹⁷⁶ In a self-referential act without a trace of irony, an unknown iconophilic reader of the pro-image Pantokrator Psalter miniature not only rubbed away the pictured pagan idol but also obliterated John the Grammarian’s portrait beside it.¹⁷⁷ Stained-glass windows were successively restored and, at various stages, adjusted to later conceptions.¹⁷⁸

While some iconographies were banished, others died natural deaths and were superseded by new creations. Hrabanus Maurus noted that when paintings fade, they are no longer faithful transmitters of the truth.¹⁷⁹ The *Traditio legis*, popular in early medieval art ceded to subjects that attended to Trinitarian and Eucharistic matters. The so-called “Throne of Mercy” was pieced together in the twelfth century in order, as Sicard of Cremona explained, “the majesty of the Father and the cross of the crucifix are portrayed so that it is almost as if we see present the one we are calling to, and the passion that is depicted imprints itself on the eyes of the heart.”¹⁸⁰ A fifteenth-century tabernacle (repainted in the sixteenth century) at Sankt Olof in Sweden represents the iconography in which the Crucifix nearest the viewer evokes a compassionate response and a dove bridges the figure to the Heavenly King (Fig. 34).¹⁸¹ The newly-devised *Mass of St. Gregory* provided a narrative for the complex conceptual relationship about outer vision and inner spirit in the sacraments.¹⁸² The Deposition from the Cross, Entombment, Man of Sorrows, Harrowing of Hell, *arma Christi*, Tree of Jesse, *scutum fidei*, Francis Receiving the

Stigmata, “Sunday Christ”, and other themes were constructed from existing subjects to articulate new theological interests. Personal iconographies were developed in the same way, most notably by Hildegard of Bingen as in the Rupertsberg *Scivias* manuscript of ca. 1165 lost during the second World War but known in a twentieth-century copy (Wiesbaden, Landesbibliothek, fol.14r; Fig. 35). Hildegard assembled recognizable elements from this world and art – fire, sun, moon and stars, personifications of winds – to construct a macrocosmic egg superimposed on the rectangular grounds representing earth and aether and bursting the conventional frame to convey her vision of the splendor of the “omnipotent God, incomprehensible in his majesty and inestimable in His mysteries.”¹⁸³ Iconography could also be private and particular, as in the case of the Prayerbook of Charles the Bald (Munich, Residence, Schatzkammer) or the late-twelfth-century Weingarten leaf in Chicago (Art Institute).¹⁸⁴

Innovations engendered attempts to legislate images, by the Cistercians, for instance, including the Bishop of Olomuc who destroyed depictions of Francis’ stigmatization and was in turn condemned by Pope Gregory IX for his act.¹⁸⁵ Even Luc of Tuy, who opposed iconographic experimentation, correctly understood its underlying causes:

Since the aim of religious art is to arouse the emotions of the spectator, the artist must have liberty to compose his works, so as to assure to them the greatest effectiveness. The representation should not always be forced into traditional patterns. In order to avoid the dullness of accustomed formulas, the artist needs to devise unusual motifs and to invent new ideas as they seem appropriate to him with respect to the location of the work of art and to his period, even if they contradict the literal truth and only serve to deepen the love for Christ through the emotion they arouse.¹⁸⁶

Such reasoning notwithstanding, Ralph Baldock, the Bishop of London banned the making and display of Y-shaped versions.¹⁸⁷

Incarnography

The Virgin Mary embodied iconography. Writing in the ninth century, Christian of Stavelot had argued that before he entered flesh, God had manifested himself only through such ephemeral things as sound, dreams, and clouds.¹⁸⁸ Merging God’s word with matter when Gabriel spoke to her, Mary was, like art itself, an intermediary between humankind and the Divine. She was the subject in myriad works.¹⁸⁹ Bonaventure, extending the exegesis of Anselm of Canterbury and others, summed up Mary’s importance as a fully human but sinless “new Eve” who, through art, offered entrance to a new Paradise:

Since through sin the rational creature had clouded his eye of contemplation, it is most courteous that the eternal and invisible be made visible that he might lead us home. Therefore, considering the light of mechanical art with respect to the production of the work, we will witness the incarnation and generation of the Word, that is divinity and humanity and the health of all the faithful.¹⁹⁰

A poem attributed to Peter Riga conceived God as a celestial painter who had depicted the Virgin “inside and out,” and had angels complete the polishing.¹⁹¹

The Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, and Adoration were central themes of iconography from the beginning; and Mary was also featured in pictures of the Crucifixion, such related subjects as the carrying of the cross and, following pious tradition if not scripture, in depictions of the Ascension.¹⁹² The Virgin is present in four of the five events pictured on the Sancta Sanctorum box lid, for example (the same as Christ). As her importance intensified over centuries, moreover, Mary was raised in both writings and art to a position virtually equal to her Son’s.¹⁹³ Debates about images, especially during the Iconoclastic controversy, elevated the “forma Dei,” and, by the turn of the eighth century, the Virgin herself had come to occupy a place in the iconography of heavenly ascent.¹⁹⁴ She, too, was a particular subject of iconographic expansion, for example, in the Tree of Jesse, Madonna of Humility, Pietà, Mater Dolorosa, Dormition, *Vierge ouvrante*, and Coronation.¹⁹⁵ Berthold of Nuremberg refigured Hrabanus’ *carmina figurata* in her honor.¹⁹⁶ The Virgin was identified with the bride in the Song of Songs,¹⁹⁷ and hence with *Ecclesia*, as in the apse mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere in Rome which shows her displaying a verse from the scripture seated on the same throne with Christ, who embraces his *sponsa*.¹⁹⁸ At Chartres cathedral, Christ crowns Mary, his *cothronus*.¹⁹⁹

Mary was intercessor. St. Maura, for instance, prayed first in front of a Virgin and Child at Troyes before moving to the Crucified and then to God. She is literally the *avvocata* beneath the altar of the Vatican Last Judgment and in many devotional pictures because Mary’s inspirited body, like Christ’s, served as a channel from the world of matter to heaven. An ivory knob from a twelfth-century bishop’s crook in Lyon (Musée des Beaux-Arts) figures Mary with the Christ Child borne by angels inscribed: “O star, mother of the sun, direct the favor of your Son to the worshippers” as the buffer between God in Majesty on one side and the faithful.²⁰⁰ Belet gave Mary almost equal consideration with Christ in his analysis of the *Vere Dignum* initial. Tethering Mary to Venus, the *Cantigas* praised her as the morning star that heralds the arrival of the sun and extends the idea: “Because of our sinful nature, we would never have seen the face of God, who is our light and day, without you (Mary) who is our dawn”. A twelfth/thirteenth-century Spanish tract known as the *Advocaciones de la Virgen* likened her to the constellations, the classic exemplars of beauty and heavenly images; and Juan Gil de Zamora wrote: “When you conceived a Sun of Justice, as the moon also illuminated by beneficent action of the brilliant sun.”²⁰¹ Mary holding Christ in front of the Medusa’s face on the Basel reliquary functions like Perseus’ mirror, deflecting earthly temptations, including David’s lust alluded to in the titulus.

Metaphoric likening of the Virgin to diverse things in the world in the Akathist Hymn, *Mariengebete*, and other texts enabled intermedial iconography.²⁰² A widely-circulated poem on the Annunciation compared the Virgin to rivers of honey, gold, roses, dawn, clouds obscuring the sun, and a rainbow. Mary is pure white ivory, the mirror of Paradise, the fountain of grace, the door of heaven, a port in a storm.²⁰³ According to an eleventh-century homily in the Vatican (BAV, Fondo S. Maria 122), the apostles commissioned the (early seventh-century) Madonna di San Sisto in Rome precisely to pre-

serve the Virgin's beauty.²⁰⁴ Juan Gil de Zamora maintained that "when [Mary] reached her adolescence she was clothed in such a beautiful appearance that she attracted God Himself and turned the divinity back to her eyes."²⁰⁵ The so-called "crypt" of the Epiphanius at San Vincenzo al Volturno of 824-42 realized the trope by portraying the Virgin garbed in exceptionally rich attire and decked out with a crown, prominent earrings, and garments bejeweled with fictive and inserted gems.²⁰⁶ Pairing of *pulchrum* and *sepulchrum* in the Annunciation above the abbot's tomb, Mary serves as a "limen" between heaven and earth.²⁰⁷

Most important, the Incarnation through Mary established the fundamental justification of art as the demonstration and recapitulation of Christ's two natures. The chronological narrative arranged along the central spine in the Canterbury windows (beginning at the top with the magi traveling to Bethlehem) affirms the belief that the Gospels narrative is true history that needs no allegorizing, with Jewish typologies and pagan idolatry sprouting from it like branches of the Tree of Porphyry.²⁰⁸ Equally pertinent, Mary personified Christian art's status against heresies that disputed Christ's dual natures.²⁰⁹ Extending Gregory the Great's classic defense of art that images can teach illiterates, Gerard of Cambrai adduced images of Mary at the Synod of Arras in 1025 to argue (against some kind of Manichaeism) that art enabled movement from what he termed carnal mortality to life in heaven, thereby redeeming Eve's sin.²¹⁰ Baudri of Bourgueil may have written the "nec Deus" titulus in response to heresy; and, in one version, he appended "true man and true God, notwithstanding both are one" to the core assertion that sacred images signify both God and man. A twelfth-century gloss asserts that the same couplet serves against the "opinio Judaeorum, hereticos et Saracenorum contra Christianos, quia Christiani habent imagines in ecclesiis."²¹¹ Durandus felt the need to preface the nec Deus, nec homo couplet with a caveat: "Adore not the image itself but that which it signifies: It is not rightly a God who can be touched, only a hand-worked stone object".²¹² Incorporating Aristotelean ideas into an expanded defense of images, Thomas Aquinas maintained, among other things, that the devout could distinguish the physical object from the "rational creature" represented on it and, therefore, could be led to venerate not the representation but God himself.²¹³

Light passing through glass offered the perfect metaphor for the mystery of incarnation and Mary's purity. One of the earliest examples of stained-glass, a medium that would dominate art of the high Middle Ages, pictures Christ as **A** and **Ω** and "LUX".²¹⁴ The medium seemed especially well-suited to capture Mary's chastity as in *Arnsteiner Marienbetet*:

When you bore the child,
you were in all ways
clean and pure
from congress with men.
Whoever thinks that impossible,
should consider glass, which is similar to you:
the light of the sun shines directly through the glass,
it is intact and clean as it was before.²¹⁵

Citing such confirmatory Old Testament typologies as Moses at the Burning Bush and Aaron's flowering rod in the Tabernacle (still preserved in the Arnstein windows), the poem's lyrics extend the trope also to the entire heavenly court where angels, prophets, apostles, and saints sing the Virgin's praise in God's presence. The *Pictor in Carmine* expanded the vitreous allegory with distichs to be inscribed on paintings: *Sol vitream massam penetrat non fragmina passam/ Nec matris fractus pudor est a numine tactus* and *Cum per id intratur, non sole vitrum violatur/ Nec defloratur virgo dum prole beatur*.²¹⁶ The Canterbury glass incorporates the metaphor and articulates it with subtlety. Above the iconic Virgin and Child being adored, the aniconic column of fire leads the Jews to the Promised land, a star directs the pantheistic magi to Bethlehem, and the "Light of the World" unfurling a golden scroll, in person, redirects those converted to the faith from idol-worship to the life-giving sacraments.²¹⁷ Stained-glass' otherworldly beauty risked the distracting vanity such windows were intended to ward off,²¹⁸ which Bernard of Clairvaux feared such art would engender. That, in part, explains why, whether or not they were legible, epithets and histories were deemed fundamental in windows.

First Corinthians 13.12 incorporated an allegory based on another analogue of art, the mirror:²¹⁹ "What is a dark manner and what is a mirror in which the image is seen until the thing itself can be seen? The dark manner is Sacred Scripture, the image in the mirror is the faith in your heart."²²⁰ Sicard of Cremona had the author, St. Paul, in mind, who had risen to the third heaven and contemplated the Light when he described "window glass, through which the rays of the sun reach us, is the mind of the Teacher who looks at the heavenly things through an obscure mirror, or through which obscure mirror the true Sun enters into us."²²¹ Jacques de Vitry applied Paul's mirror metaphor to images, forms, examples, and enigmas of creation put forth like images in a mirror to lead the mind toward knowledge and ignite passion to love God lead from the material to the spiritual.²²² In his Massa Marittima altarpiece, Ambrogio Lorenzetti ingeniously introduced the personification of Fides holding a silvered mirror painted with a Janus-like head on which a dove perches to assert that the mystery of the Triune God is understood only through faith and in a reflection (Fig. 36).

Bruno of Segni made clear that beauty was not enough; as in the Incarnation itself, materialization also mattered:

Whatever is figured in either Testament, all this is figured in an ornament . . . it does not suffice to see only its beauty; they ought to ask about each aspect of it, why those colors, why the gold, why those stones, what does the rest signify?²²³

Although orthodox image theory held that the specific matter in which images were realized was not important, materials nonetheless inflected iconographies.²²⁴ Not only does the gold studded with precious stones and pearls on the Andrew III diptych attract the eye, but it also evokes the "omnis lapis pretiosus" that Ezekiel inventoried (Ez. 28.13-14) which the Book of Revelation recapitulated.²²⁵ And the checkerboard of red marble, portraits of saints, and New Testament narratives construct a micro-heavenly Jerusalem like the transitional precinct pictured at the lower left of the Vatican Last Judgment. The

black cameos depicting the Crucifixion and Ascension, moreover, pair Christ's human and divine natures,²²⁶ the lack of color and relief technique themselves affecting a transition from painting to sculptural presence that conveys the subjects' intermediacy and constructs the central mystery of faith as apophatic.²²⁷

Moreover, materials are not always separable from iconography. When the illuminators of the Karaite Bible rendered the tabernacle implements in gold, they were inserting themselves into the lineage of the biblical artificers Bezalel and Oliab. The gold background of the recto in the Bamberg *Song of Songs* is an element of the vision. Dressed so lavishly that her body disappears beneath an armor of ornament that dissolves into the mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Mary becomes the Church itself and, hence, a personification of *Ecclesia*. The silver disc at the end of Seuse's mental itinerary not only reflects the reader's image but also engages her/his physical and spiritual effort to maintain its luster.²²⁸

Painted on crystal-covered vellum, the narratives on the Andrew III diptych engaged a trope that understood the material of scripture to be Christ's flesh and its embellishments his spirit.²²⁹ The colophon of the Godescalc Lectionary (Paris, Bib. nat., Ms. nouv. acq. lat. 1203), richly adorned between 781 and 783 and long studied as the earliest extant witness to Charlemagne's revival of art, asserts that the golden letters are to be understood as the shimmering eternal life provided by Christ's sacrifice symbolized by the red-dyed parchment.²³⁰ Mechthild von Magdeburg went further still, seeing Trinitarian meaning in the very body of the manuscript—its parchment, physical words, and meaning symbolizing the Son, Father, and Holy Ghost respectively.²³¹ The painter of Cantiga 60 staged the Annunciation against blank vellum. Wood had particular iconographic significance because of its origin in the Tree of Life and the cross.²³² The gold and white streaks atop the cross pictured on the Sancta Sanctorum box express the belief that Christ's sacrifice restored the desiccated Edenic tree (St. Maura's "dry wood") and made it flourish again;²³³ the fusion of the blue with the brown encaustic of Golgotha realizes the doctrine of incarnation.²³⁴ Other materials were given meaning, too. In an elaborate materialist iconography, the dedication titulus of the Halberstadt embroidery compares its own materials to the tale of the harlot who wiped Christ's feet at the house of Simon (Lk. 7.36-50), the pearls standing in for the woman's tears and the gold for her ointment, invoking the hope that the art will provide the patron, too, with remission of sin.²³⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux had called Christ himself a "marvelous mixture" of flesh and spirit; and juxtaposing and mixing of materials was also iconographic, with words constructing meaningful "webs of intertwined interdependencies."²³⁶ For Hildebert and others, electrum, the amalgam of gold and silver symbolized "Christe Jesu ... Deus est et homo";²³⁷ the silver and gold halos at Palermo may realize the same iconographic trope.

The overall success of the incarnational justification had negative consequences for the iconography of Christianity's greatest mystery, the Trinity.²³⁸ To the extent that images realized in matter figured the incarnate Son, they failed adequately to convey the Father's nature and the Holy Spirit's and, even more important, the *relationship* between the three persons. In the context of the Cathar heresy, Luc of Tuy attacked (triandric) depictions of the Trinity; and Durand of Saint Pourçain continued to insist that art could only rep-

resent the incarnate person.²³⁹ Despite numerous experiments, no standard iconography ever emerged that satisfied the desire to imagine the three while subsuming them to monotheistic tenets. Eldefonsus rendered it on the Host's reverse with PAT[ER] FILIVS SP[IRITUS] S[ANCTUS] written between two horizontal bars and large dots between ALT[ISSIMUS] D[EU]S and OM[NI]P[OTEN]S D[OMI]N[U]S, as three points of a triangle, and as three circles within a circle.²⁴⁰ About the same time, tellingly, the corrector of the Ashburnham Pentateuch obliterated the second agent of creation using amorphous pink daubs of paint that, as elsewhere in Carolingian art, figure the blending of body and spirit, and so may have been an experiment in representing the Trinity.²⁴¹ Something of the same effect is created by the clouds that fill the upper part of the TRINITAS VNVS ET VERVS D[EU]S PATER ET S[P]I[RITUS] S[AN]C[TUS] (written in intricately interwoven letters) in the Benedictional of Ælthelwold, animating the crowned and cross-nimbed God with the Holy Spirit's energy (London, BL, Add. MS. 49598, fol. 70r).²⁴² Petrus Alfonsi merged the triangle, circle, and tetragrammaton which then engendered the *scutum fidei*.²⁴³ Seuse likened his concentric silver rings around a blank vellum circle marked by a dot to ripples generated by a pebble in a pond.²⁴⁴

Objects, too, actively engaged iconography. Ordained by scripture, even the tablets of the Law containing the prohibition of images and most of all, the cross on which Christ died were cited to justify medieval art. Tellingly, Paulinus of Nola began his interpretation of the Chrismon's iconographic fluidity with a fixed thing that a thief "unfastened from its hanging hook and carried away from the holy basilica with defiled hand." Venantius Fortunatus explicitly countered Ovid's cautionary tale of Arachne's web by referring to the priestly garments described in Exodus 38.23. In the Pantokrator Psalter, the tabernacle and its precious contents directly refute any literal reading of the adjacent words of Hebrew scripture of the sort iconoclasts against Christian icons (and the Karaites embraced); and the prominent purple curtain framed like an icon serves as a trope of Christian art's capacity to penetrate the Sancta Sanctorum closed off to the Israelites. Bruno of Segni adduced Aaron's breastplate as powerful argument for interpreting Christian art:

as you seek in both Testaments a double understanding. It does not suffice to understand it according to the letter alone. Jews see this *rationale* but they do not understand what is signified by it ... These are living stones, which revolve above the earth; which arranged in the breastplate of the High Priest teach silently, and preach. For they preach not by speaking out loud but by signifying. We must always bear them on our chests, with which our heart is taught and protected.²⁴⁵

Actually portrayed in glass the north transept of Chartres, the breastplate made the relationship between gems and stained glass visual; and carved on a console in the choir of St. Remi in Reims, it provided a type for the New Testament fulfillment in the stained glass Crucifixion above.²⁴⁶ The Brazen Serpent Moses raised in the desert to test the Israelite's faith was adduced in John's Gospel and became a powerful Old Testament type of the Crucifix, even its material hybridity.²⁴⁷ At Arras, Gerard argued that "appropriately, a bronze serpent is suspended on wood; in the serpent is death, in bronze eternity is signified, as in the Lord, clearly death is in his humanity and eternity in his divinity."²⁴⁸ Actual objects inserted into larger works operated iconographically too. Wood panels held

in place by iron hooks in the frescoed Crucifixion and Last Judgment in San Giovanni a Porta Latina distinguish levels of sanctity, so do the (lost) icons on the apsidal arch of San Pietro in Valle near Ferentillo and Giotto's panel in the Arena Chapel in Padua depicting Christ sending Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, a material expression of the principle of iconography that becomes fulfilled in the frescoes.²⁴⁹

Such ordained crafters as Bezalel and Solomon, Luke, Nicodemus, and Veronica imbued manufacturing with special meaning.²⁵⁰ As a consequence, making art was considered a redemptive activity.²⁵¹ Calcidius' detailed instructions of how to construct a spiral using a compass notwithstanding, the transformation of the essential geometric shape into a quasi-organic form is rendered freelance in the Carolingian manuscripts, the ink traces on vellum enacting the process by which spirit enters matter through the artisan's hand. Vice versa, it might return the reader to pure form.²⁵² One inscription on the Vatican Last Judgment panel declares that the painters who literally transformed dust into a vision of heaven shall themselves "at the trumpets' blast ... rise from the dust of the earth." When Gerald of Wales considered the miraculously refined ornament in an illuminated manuscript that must have resembled the Book of Kells, he could only imagine that the scribe had copied it from drawings an angel had showed him and had needed a saint's intervention "to open both [his] bodily and mental eyes to see the [models] more keenly and understand the more subtly, and direct [his] hand to draw correctly."²⁵³ The interplay in this text is notable, between harmony and variety, erasure and focus, surface and penetration, discrete numbers and infinity.

Paulinus had uncovered meaning in the intricate process of transforming the *Chi rho* into a monogram:

Both letters with the three strokes achieve their separate shapes in a threefold way, the creation of a single Mind but triple Powers. ... The symbol used in Latin calculation for ten is written by the Greeks as the letter chi, and the rho splits it. The top of the rho also forms a sigma, for it curves back on the upright and forms a complete circle. Then the upright when bent makes a Greek iota. The same stroke when drawn back with a short spear point makes a tau. In this way the six letters which fashion the name higher than all names are gathered in one symbol, the monogram being fashioned by three strokes. The one symbol renders six letters at once. With its three strokes the one symbol shows that the Lord is both three and one, and God is in Christ whom the harmony of the threefold Mind willed to take a body and be born for us. There is further symbolism in the fact that the twin strokes bend back their summits symmetrically as though they are separate, and below they rest on similar supports set apart; yet they are joined fast together with a central link, as they gaze on identical but separated extremities.

In much the same fashion, the stitching of precious metal threads on the Halberstadt Host cloth not only constitutes an exchange of spirit and matter but also symbolizes art's status as an imitation of God's act that created prelapsarian beauty.²⁵⁴ The refined rendering of Eden's plants on the *Cantigas* frontispiece asserts the same claim. When Jacquemart introduced the *Veronica* into the narrative of Christ Carrying the Cross, he was historicizing the miraculously made image and identifying his own crafting with "scriptural" precedents.

Artistic talent also being a gift from God, crafting's transformative power is explicitly figured on the baptismal font at St. Bridget in the eponymous Bridekirk (outside Cockermouth) made in the 1140s (Fig. 37).²⁵⁵ Adjacent to depictions of the Tree of Life and Christ's salutary baptism and opposite a depiction of Adam and Eve expelled from Eden (on the sides), the relief facing those entering the church features the mason/carver Richard holding a mallet and chisel (its point of contact a spiral) fashioning an enormous acanthus scroll, inscribed in runes and Roman book hand: "Richard wrought me and carefully brought me to this splendor." The tool overlaps the coil in such a way that the curl Richard chisels up with his first hammer blow is simultaneously the sculpture and the planetary plant it represents.²⁵⁶ As on the font in which Christ is bathed in the Palermo Nativity,²⁵⁷ the acanthus symbolizes spiritual regeneration here, setting up an analogue to the redemption baptism itself offers the sinners. Iconography and function reinforce one another.

Placement constructed objects' meaning as well.²⁵⁸ The Crossing of the Red Sea and desert tabernacle copied in the eleventh century from the Ashburnham Pentateuch to above the exit from the church of Saint Julien at Tours converted the historical narratives into a reminder to the faithful leaving that they, too, are wanderers in a spiritual desert. Whether the Vatican Last Judgment panel was originally positioned on the counterfaçade of San Gregorio Nazianzeno (as in a version of its iconography at Ceri)²⁵⁹ or suspended near the altar as the imagery itself suggests, would have determined whether a viewer focused on the donors outside the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem (with whom they would identify) or on Christ behind the altar pictured in the center. The inscription likening the Halberstadt cloth to the veil on Moses' face (as in Hexateuch) implicates the dazzling sanctity of the Host beneath and enacts the donor's hope for redemption in acts of reciprocal seeing and not seeing:

If no Israelite might look directly upon the countenance of Moses, when he came down from the mountain of divine contemplation how shall I look upon the [...] body unveiled, how to gaze upon it? Thus, with fear I offer an intermediary to it, to the body that is superior to all heavenly hosts. I, *sebastos*, Alexios Palaeologos, your pious servant. And you, *Logos*, grant that I may look upon your countenance on the Day of Judgment."²⁶⁰

These verses sum up the theory of medieval iconography. While not rejecting the Old Testament events and promises, material images elevate them because the Incarnation had abrogated the written Law and replaced the blood sacrifices. Mere interim devices, however, they too serve only until Christ returns as judge at the end of time.

Moving objects also interpreted iconography. Recalling the brazen serpent, a candle inserted into a snake-shaped staff was deployed to relight church candles on Holy Saturday.²⁶¹ Air caused to flow through the Kremsmünster's *à jour* decoration when it was waved over the priest performing eucharistic transubstantiation animated the pictured soaring eagles and suscitating lion and propelled the cloth at Christ's tomb, the smoke rising from Mary's censer, and the fluttering banner of triumph. Actual currents, in other words, transfigured the material images into Christ's two natures. Moreover, when a deacon inserted the flabellum's prong into the base adorned with Old Testament cruci-

fixion typologies, he transformed the image-bearing object into a vexillum (as in the *Ælfric Paraphrase*).²⁶²

The image on the lid of the Sancta Sanctorum box offered a matrix for discerning the pattern of the amorphous contents inside which, in turn, are pictured in the *loca sancta* narratives on its interior. The very process thus recapitulated, on a small scale, Helena's discerning the True Cross among the others on Golgotha that, according to legend, confirmed faith; according to legend, only the Christian believers were able to perceive the True Cross among the three that the Empress unearthed.²⁶³ Opening, closing, and repositioning thus enacted diverse and intricate elements of the Christian religious economy: the redemption of Adam and Eve's sin and loss of Paradise, the transfer of God's covenant with the Jews to a new Chosen People, the Holy Land's translocation to Rome, and the promise of salvation through the Church. The stones and dirt from the Holy Land secreted in the Lateran altar beneath the feet of the *Acheropita*, "the image of the Savior wonderfully painted on a certain tablet, which Luke the Evangelist sketched out, but the power of the Lord completed it through the angelic obedience," also made allusion to the Ascension completed in a mosaic above of angels bearing Christ's upper torso to heaven, and, in so doing, dramatized the belief that Christ's feet remained on earth even after he ascended to the Father.²⁶⁴ Once a year, moreover, the people would have followed the box as it passed through the Arch of Titus beneath the reliefs depicting the Ark of the Covenant and the other spoils from Solomon's Temple, the public liturgy reinforces Rome's status as the new Jerusalem on the banks of the Tiber.²⁶⁵

The Iconographer's Share

Using an art metaphor, Anselm of Canterbury explicitly acknowledged that "just as in the same passage of Scripture the [foolish man] will commend the color or the form of the figures, so [the wise man] will praise the sense and the signification."²⁶⁶ The same was even truer of art itself. Meaning depended on the artisan's experience, learning, and training but also the viewer's knowledge and circumstances. The iconographer's task was to transform foolish lookers into wise ones. St. Maura summed up her experience at Troyes by stating that the images' primary function was to reinforce faith in a way that moved the beholder's reaction beyond the *oculo corporali* toward the ineffable Deity,²⁶⁷ a goal reiterated in various ways by most other medieval commentators.

Iconography is contingent. Monograms, for instance, required readers' participation to stabilize specific references. "Seeing" Christ in Eldefonsus' Host diagram depended on a viewer's recollection of depictions of the *Maiestas Domini*. Moving beyond physical seeing required cognitive shifting. Pacificus of Verona had noted in his ninth-century astronomical guide that even a viewer of the heavens had to surpass corporal perception to see with the mind's eye what was signified, in a constellation, for instance, discerning "the position of the nails of the cross of Christ ... on which his flesh hung for the salvation of mankind."²⁶⁸ Bruno of Segni noted how a beholder's mental state transformed the meanings of ornaments:²⁶⁹

Not all are seen together at once. At one time, we observe that [the church] is clothed in the ornament of faith, at another in that of hope, and at another in that of charity. All the rest are invisible, hidden, in some way, under a single one ... When the ornament of hope comes into view and is clearly seen, the whole Church rises up into a state of contemplation, and she is lifted out of the earthly realm into the heavenly, so that even though she remains physically in the world, she may say with confidence: “our citizenship is in heaven.” ...²⁷⁰

Visual movement underlay the apprehension of much medieval imagery, as Gerard of Arras already recognized: “We adore truly Him whom we invoke. We bow down in our body before the cross, mentally before God; we venerate the cross through which we were redeemed, but we entreat Him who redeems us.”²⁷¹ Gerald of Wales applied a similar subjectivity to the “angelic” sketches:

Look at them superficially with the ordinary glance, and you would think it is an erasure, and not tracery. ... Look more keenly at it and you will penetrate to the very shrine of art. You will make out intricacies, so delicate and so subtle, so full of knots and links, with colors so fresh and vivid, that you might say that all this were the work of an angel, and not of a man.²⁷²

Anchoring his argument in the brazen serpent story, Giordano of Pisa went still further in a 1305 sermon, noting that the viewer’s perception affects meaning and also the effectiveness of crucifixes:

If you stare at the cross only with the bodily eye, the cross will not heal you; even if you stare at it for a long time with the mind’s eye, it will not heal you. It is better to stare at the cross so that you have a likeness of Christ within you and feel the pain of the cross of Christ. Immediately, when you start to feel it in yourself, and when that form and image grows inside you, you free yourself from all poison.

The issue was proper guidance. Iconographers had to “keep under control the license of painters” so that, as the *Pictor in Carmine* put it, artisans “seek God’s glory, not their own.”²⁷³ Viewers, in turn, had to struggle to understand what they saw.²⁷⁴ Already in the early fifth century, Paulinus of Nola noted that, even in his modest basilica, a visitor had to “take the slight trouble of bending his neck backwards, taking stock of everything with head thrown back so that she or he would acknowledge the truth within these empty pictures, which nurtures his believing mind with representations by no means empty.” For Bruno of Segni, parsing meaning required serious effort: “all the people look at these things and what they signify, and they diligently interrogate them.”²⁷⁵ The high-up inscriptions on the Canterbury glass cannot be discerned without straining nor their captions comprehended (though it is possible that interlocutors used “crib-sheets” to explain iconographies beyond visibility).²⁷⁶ The wriggly couplet inscribed around Christ at Estella is impossible to read though its very presence activates effort which itself elevates the mind.²⁷⁷

Modern iconographers, too, must reckon with iconography’s slipperiness and struggle hard to assess the implications. They need to submit the texts they use to rigorous historical and codicological analysis.²⁷⁸ The tenth-century illustrated Maccabees in Leiden, for

instance, is bound with Vegetius' tract on military practice so that it becomes a new treatise about spiritual battle.²⁷⁹ The binding of Theophilus' *Diversarum artium schedula* in the twelfth century with Vitruvius' *De architectura* made an argument about art's continuity.²⁸⁰ Most important, art historians need to *read* their textual "sources" as closely as they do their "images." The most satisfying experience I have had as a scholar was working together with the learned and subtle Latinist on the poetry and illustrations in the First Bible of Charles the Bald.²⁸¹ Examining the texts and pictures first hand in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, I discovered consequential mistakes in the authoritative *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* transcriptions and also codicological evidence of significant modifications made during the process producing the ninth-century manuscript, including translocation of the Apocalypse frontispiece, obliteration and rewriting of textual passages, and iconographic supplements that transformed the understanding of the volume. Most important, as Paul Dutton and I worked together to puzzle out the meaning of a few particularly opaque written locutions and especially elusive pictorial details, we arrived at an inevitable realization: a single creator must have composed both the pictorial poems and the poetic pictures. Iconography, in this instance, was not a matter of sources but of subtle personal ambition.

At the same time, iconographic research is, itself, historically determined.²⁸² Dismissing it is easy. Applying it productively requires knowledge, thought, hard work, historical sensitivity, and creative skepticism.

How were iconographies read during the Middle Ages? Distinguishing Hildebert's "unindoctrinated who grasp only external things from the learned who examine the interior things," art's location stratified audiences. For monastics, Bernard of Clairvaux would have banned art altogether.²⁸³ Anselm's windows were in spaces frequented by clergy; the scale of iconographic units in the San Clemente mosaic differentiated clerics within the choir from the laity outside.²⁸⁴ The multiplication of Pantocrator icons in the Cappella Palatina in Palermo and possibly the positioning of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem were directed to the royal viewers.²⁸⁵ The *Pictor in Carmine's* decorations were recommended for places "where public stations take place ... to suggest divine things to the unlearned and stir up the learned to the love of scriptures," implying a temporal aspect of iconography that is too often ignored. The various altarpieces in Sankt Olof, set beneath murals, offered worshippers choices. Viewed over a lifetime, a single work of art acquired shades of meaning "like the lovely colors of a peacock."

Perspective also conditioned meaning. While the conventional Zodiac picturing the entire universe in the Valenciennes Calcidius asserts objective distance, for instance, its counterpart in Lyons moves the reader inside the solar cone and imagines how the circling Venus appears on the revolving Earth (X). Like many works of art, the Vatican Last Judgment establishes a viewpoint that constructs its visual grammar and syntax; beginning outside the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem occupied by the humble donors and the distracting details of tortured sinners in Hell, it forces viewers to make choices as she or he looks up. In the Lateran Aula Gotica, movement through the space that never furnishes a complete view creates a tension of temporality embodied in viewing and the theological truths that are beyond the human condition.²⁸⁶ Jacquemart's quoting the Veronica in the

Paris painting reminded viewers that they see Christ only through images and vestiges left behind when he returned to the Father. While the faithful depicted within the narrative all look at Christ (even the praying donors in the foreground) the *acheiropoieton* alone is turned outward, the miraculously-made icon providing a contrast to the Jews in the background who turn away to gaze at the devil absconding with Judas' soul.²⁸⁷

The Angel column at Strasbourg has God at the top watching the penitents who entered the south transept on Maundy Thursday.²⁸⁸ Christ's point of view from above on the Hereford Map effects dual vision with the Annunciation once pictured on the wings viewed straight on.²⁸⁹ Such oscillation between looking from afar and looking up close, from a tower (*specula*) or in a mirror (*speculum*),²⁹⁰ created medieval art as a space of contemplation made possible by the Incarnation.²⁹¹ In Ambrogio's Massa Marittima altarpiece, the Trinitarian mirror breaks the insistent progression upward toward Mary and Christ intended to figure the complex play of physical seeing and spiritual imagining.²⁹² Distance engendered desire for close examination,²⁹³ even fictive distance; but, as Gerald of Wales noted, minute detail also tested the limit of apprehension. I myself discovered the need for bifocal eyeglasses when I made a special trip to Vienna – once and for all to resolve a scholarly debate about the Trinity in the manuscript model of the Grottaferrata fresco – but was unable to discern the precise configuration of the manuscript's Trinitarian iconography without borrowing a magnifying glass from the curator. The modified detail is likewise impossible to discern from the floor of the monastic church; it was, however, important for the iconographer.

Near-sighted in one eye and far-sighted in the other, Panofsky cited his visual anomaly as a paradigm for art historical research that needed to attend to details while never losing sight of the overall presentation.²⁹⁴ *Mis-en-abîme*, the duplication of an iconographic motif on a different scale within a work of art, engendered cognitive oscillation. The Chrismon embossed on Christ's book in the Estella tympanum, for example, cues the entire composition which radiates to Christ enthroned on a *sella curulis* (a sign of kingship) surrounded by a quatrefoil mandorla framed by the four evangelist symbols and Mary and John who witnessed his crucifixion, and then censuring angels and the elders of the Apocalypse as the Holy Spirit descends. Eldefonsus' circle "quod nec initium habet Deus in medio manens nec finem" is simultaneous a globe, a wafer, and a coin.²⁹⁵ Opening a shrine Madonna, Candide of Maubuisson discovered that "it was not a Virgin, but a world – more than a world, a paradise, purgatory, and hell were there with all the mysteries of the Old and New Testaments, from the creation of the universe through the Last Judgment, and all represented in figures no larger than a finger." The nun could have been describing the Vatican Last Judgment, which comprehends myriad elements within an orb measuring 288 X 243 cms, that is scaled by the tiny *mundus* Christ holds in one hand at the top, the sole object in the painting that is itself labeled.

Superabundance of iconographies and materializations had a similar effect of obliterating iconographic details in a kaleidoscopic blur, a kind of dissimulation that is a feature especially of most stained-glass windows. The Andrew III diptych overwhelms the viewer with gems, pearls, and filigree ornaments holding in place stones and portraits of myriad saints, as well as the evangelist symbols, twelve narratives rendered on parchment covered

in rock crystal to emulate enamel, and two cameos with additional narrative elements.²⁹⁶ At first look, its virtuosic craftsmanship and material luster stupify the viewer and the geometric grid, anchored only by the cameos, scatters movement as on a checkerboard (an object for which the Venetian workshop was also famous). An attentive viewer may home in on individual iconographies and study the inscriptions, narratives, and saints, but the reading taxes physical apprehension and remains beyond full comprehension. Iconographic opulence in *Aula Gotica* is intentionally encyclopedic.

Engaging beholders in processes of discovery, interpretation, and choosing,²⁹⁷ iconography does not impose meaning on passive viewers.²⁹⁸ Rather, it negotiates relationships of matter and spirit, carnal perception and the mind's eye for those who afford it deserved attention.

Modern technology actually diminishes some essential aspects. While iconography could hardly have evolved without reproductive printing and then photography, those very tools have not only dulled art's aura but have also elided the differences of such important iconographic elements as material, color, surface, size, and placement. Moreover, by being assertively made frontal in imitation of easel painting, they destroy contexts that affect iconographic readings.²⁹⁹ It still remains difficult to acquire photographs such as the one included here of the San Marco atrium that relates iconographic elements to one another within their spatial contexts, in this case the perspective on Adam and Eve's sin in Eden and Cain's rebuke together with the Church's promise of return figured by the Corinthian column, vine scroll, and Tree of Life. Smartphones enable scholars to zoom in on frescoes or sculptures when visiting a cathedral and three clicks on the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek website solves the iconographic problem that only three decades ago required considerable effort to travel to Vienna and to acquire a pair of bifocals, but such gains need to be reintegrated into what can be learned of actual conditions of medieval viewing.³⁰⁰ And while scholars now rightly take into account the dramatic effects electric lights and museum displays have on the perception of iconographic forms,³⁰¹ the struggle to see and the possibility of not seeing close-up details and the reading of texts and complexes of images that recede into the miasma of a cathedral must still be reckoned with. Had Gerald of Wales worn eyeglasses, he probably would not have thought of angelic model books. An important aspect of medieval iconography is believing that sacred things are above the senses and beyond human ken.

Throughout the Middle Ages there was, in fact, a continuous pushing back *against* material iconography. Theodulf of Orléans offered an aniconic alternative in his chapel at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire to images of Christ he had seen in Roman churches, the Ark of the Covenant with an inscription inviting the spectator to penetrate its meaning.³⁰² That is the explicit message also of the ultimate vignette of Seuse's diagram, the triptych at the end of the red thread that both bends the vertical ascent and marks art's limits (Fig. 38). Its hinged doors thrown open,³⁰³ the gold center is rendered as a sculptural recess that flattens into a panel at the top, covered by a *Fastentuch*, the human form with slippers edging out of the bottom and suggestions of a leg, torso, shoulders and head.³⁰⁴ Transforming a material image into mental contemplation in the way Elsbeth Stägel's "Ave Marias" and "Pater Nosters" do counted out on rosary beads, the veiled sculpture meta-

morphosing into a painting brilliantly realizes Seuse's claim that that one must "drive out images with images" in order to "form images of what entails no images."³⁰⁵ The silvered Trinity beyond is geometric, reflective, mental. It develops age-old principles of art, manifested already in the ninth century, for instance, through the language of image theory in the Pantokrator Psalter and even more explicitly, the copy of Cosmas Indicopleustes' *Christian Topography* in the Vatican (BAV, Cod. Gr. 699, fol. 89r).³⁰⁶

For all the unexamined assertions of medieval art's *horror vacui*, absence in fact functioned powerfully.³⁰⁷ Two compass-drawn circles on the empty verso of Eldefonsus' diagram in Paris anticipate the determined iconographic realization that succeed them. Devoid of content, the perfect (cosmic) forms awaiting realization perhaps engage the contemporary debate at Corbie between Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus on the issue of real presence, a theological dispute embedded in how, by manifesting scripture, the Host activates the eyes of the heart.³⁰⁸ A similar use of emptiness anticipates the *Maiestas domini* in the contemporary First Bible of Charles the Bald where the double mandorla surrounding Christ and the lozenge figuring the four major prophets are overlain with a poem before they rendered visible making explicit the claim that the picture that follows hinges Old Testament words to the New Testament fulfillment: "Behold you have now read the Old Testament prepared for you/ But the New one that rightly follows [it] reveals things to be read."³⁰⁹ As in an old iconophilic trope, the Old Testament is but an underdrawing, the New Testament painting in full color.³¹⁰ Leaves on the versos of portraits of Christ in eleventh-century Gospel books from Echternach also engage debates about real presence and an ongoing dialogue between artistic abstraction and Eucharistic theology.³¹¹ More or less pure painted fields in such Ottonian manuscripts as the tenth-century Gospels of St. Andrew (Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum, KG 54) raise questions about the relationship of artistic creation to God's,³¹² while the alternation of blank vellum with pictures of the creation story in the Stammheim Missal illustrated at Hildesheim in the seventh decade of the twelfth century offers a sophisticated realization of contemporary discussions of art, perception, and cognition (Malibu, CA, Getty Museum, MS 64).³¹³

The two lowest fields in Cantiga 60 contrast the emptiness of white parchment with the resplendent celestial blue fields studded with gold separated with rainbows. Metaphors of humankind's striving to restore an image of God, the pure geometry and color of the perfectly arced illusions made when light passes through clouds, the rainbows are iconographic. Already in his *In Apocalypsim*, the ninth-century exegete Haymo of Halberstadt interpreted John's vision of the Lord enthroned in heaven (Rev. 4.3) in terms of the signs God had provided as proof of his covenant with Noah and his children, Moses receiving the Law in a cloud, Isaiah, Luke, and John.³¹⁴ Emphasizing the two principal colors, red and blue-green, he conjured up judgment for Adam and Eve's sin and the redemption through Christ's blood. Created by the (unseen) sun (Son), the rainbow in the Escorial manuscript figures art's capacity in its basic elements to mediate between earth and heaven, tantalizing humans with facsimiles of the Paradise Adam and Eve had lost through sin and opening heaven's door as Maria-Ecclesia does to provide an oblique glimpse into a restored world of beauty.³¹⁵ Even the "abstract" form is iconographically (over)determined.

Pro gloria Dei

A few years before I sat in on his Princeton seminar, Erwin Panofsky had been entangled in an ugly quarrel with the artist Barnett Newman that engaged many of the same issues that still dog the field of medieval art.³¹⁶ The spat was triggered by the *Vir heroicus sublimis* painted a decade earlier in which Newman had sought to create an artistic experience independent of iconography (New York, Museum of Modern Art). Robert Rosenblum (at the time, a Princeton professor) had included the painting in his "The Abstract Sublime," which, by chance, had appeared in the same issue of *ARTnews* as George Kubler's review of Panofsky's *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*. Taken aback by the Latinity of Newman's title, incorrectly given in the picture caption as *Vir heroicus sublimus*, the iconographer shot off a letter to the editor in which he chided the artist: "does Mr. Newman imply that he, as Aelfric [of Einsham] says of God, is 'above Grammar'?"³¹⁷ Coached by Meyer Schapiro, the great artist responded by citing ancient usages of "sublimus;" and then, in a perfect modern recapitulation of the "impious presumption of painters" that the twelfth-century compiler of iconography had railed against in the *Pictor in Carmine*, he turned the knife: "the tenth-century monk had a greater sensitivity for the meaning of the act of creation than Panofsky ... for a work of art to be a work of art it must rise above grammar and syntax *pro Gloria Dei*."

Four secular Jews entangled in a battle over a painting's Latin title lay bare the choice art presented during the Middle Ages between (Jewish) word and (Christian) image,³¹⁸ which itself raises the question of why so many iconographers have been Jewish? Not all, to be sure, not Émile Mâle nor Francis Wormald nor André Grabar nor Kurt Weizmann nor Florentine Mûtherich nor Michael Camille, to name a few of the most prominent, but Adolph Goldschmidt, Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl, Rudolf Berliner, Ernst Kitzinger, Hugo Buchthal, Adolf Katzenellenbogen, Millard Meiss, Meyer Schapiro, Ernst Gombrich, Robert Deshman, Rosalie B. Green, Enrico Castelnuovo, Walter Cahn, and many still at work today. It is a question worth pondering. Judaizing haunts medieval aesthetics.³¹⁹

In my own case, study of Talmud when I was an adolescent, with its examination of the significance of minutiae, was surely formative.³²⁰ So, I conclude this Introduction by applying the talmudic mode to the Panofsky/Newman contretemps, which was, after all, at heart a debate about iconography and the "pure" experiencing of art that is very much still alive.³²¹ Had Newman been the philologist he presents himself to be, the sublime painter might have been more understanding of Panofsky. His staccato "for the glory of God" as justification for expressing "the idea of an object without expressing its name" takes the biblical phrase out of context. Newman seems not to have known that the scripture comes from Vulgate's account of Christ's raising Lazarus, which gives as the miracle's reason: "so that the Son of God might be glorified" (Jn 11.4). Surely, he was ignorant of the Evangelist's source in Hebrew scripture: "It is to the glory of God to conceal a word, and it is to the glory of kings to investigate speech" (Proverbs 25.2). Rosenblum intuited the underlying message in his review, noting that in *Homo heroicus sublimis* and other canvases, Newman "produces awesomely simple mysteries that evoke the primeval moment of creation ... conveyed by paint alone."³²²

Iconography “investigates speech,” insistently plotting medieval art’s *via media* toward “gloriam Christi querant non suam.”³²³ Mixing word and image in art might imagine things not yet seen, as in the Vatican Last Judgment panel.³²⁴ It might create “playful fantasies” in the words of the *Pictor in Carmine*, and monsters. It is capable even of transgressing the limits of materiality in stained glass, for instance, and other semipermeable membranes.³²⁵ To the extent that it negotiates the invisible God’s presence in *this* world, however, medieval art intentionally remains not only a means but also an barrier. Like the framed curtain before the Holy of Holies in the Pantokrator Psalter, the veiled stanchion in the Ælfric Hexateuch, and most explicitly, the white cloth framed by gold that is the penultimate image in Seuse’s diagram, art by its very material presence, closes off direct experience of the celestial realm. The interweaving of text and image and the sensual pleasure of its color and rich materials engender a longing to return to Paradise and the direct vision of God. Like the mist that covered Moses on Mt. Sinai, it also impairs the face-to-face apprehension. As Hrabanus Maurus underscored in his exegesis of John’s vision, the Evangelist related not a *vision* of God’s glory itself in the Book of Revelation but a *similitude* of it; and citing Paul’s mirror simile, he made the point clear in his exegesis of the rainbow.³²⁶ Barnett Newman did something of the same when he discussed the title of *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* as a “metaphor” of the painting’s research.³²⁷

Iconography assures that comprehending medieval art always remains an asymptotia to the Kremsmünster flabellum’s “vix exprimet ullus”. As the spiral and the parabola in transfinite number systems, Plato’s planetary plant and Hildegard’s egg imagine the infinite; but as soon as beautiful images dupe viewers into believing they are approaching the *gloria Dei*, they redraw boundaries to caution the faithful that humankind will enjoy divine presence only at the end of time.³²⁸ To rise above iconography is to trespass into a domain reserved for angels and saints.³²⁹

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1. See M. A. Holly, *Iconology and the Phenomenological Imagination*, «Ikon. Journal of Iconographical Studies» 7 (2014), pp. 7-16.

2. D. Méhu, *Augustin, le sens et les sens. Réflexions sur le processus de spiritualisation du charnel dans l'Église médiévale*, «Revue historique» 317 (2015), pp. 271-302.

3. L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclastic Era, c. 680-850: A History*, Cambridge 2011; J. Elsner, *Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium*, «Art Bulletin» 94 (2012), pp. 368-394.

4. A. Kumler, *Translating Truth. Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England*, New Haven, CT and London 2011, pp. 5-6; ead. *Whose Iconography?*, P. A. Patton, C. A. Fernandez (eds.), *Iconography Beyond the Crossroads*, University Park, PA 2022, pp. 35-58.

5. Walter S. Melion, to whom this essay is dedicated, is a master of tracing the continuities and disruptions; see, for example, his three-volume *Annotations and Meditations on the Gospels by Jerome Nadal*, Philadelphia PA 2003-2005 and *The Meditative Art. Studies in the Northern Devotional Print, 1550-1625*, Philadelphia PA 2010.

6. Useful overviews include: J. F. Hamburger, *Introduction, The Place of Theology in Medieval Art History: Problems, Positions, Possibilities*, and *The Medieval Work of Art: Wherein the "Work"? Wherein the "Art"?*, J. F. Hamburger, A.-M. Bouché (eds.), *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, Princeton 2006, pp. 1-10, pp. 11-31, and pp. 374-439; J. Baschet, *L'iconographie médiévale*, Paris 2008; P. S. Patton, H. D. Schlib (eds.), *The Lives and Afterlives of Medieval Iconography*, University Park, PA 2021. J. Baschet referred to "super-iconography" in R. A. Maxwell, K. Ambrose (eds.), *Current Directions in Eleventh and Twelfth-Century Sculpture Studies*, Turnhout 2010, pp. 23-46.
7. The contribution builds on material and arguments presented in my book, *Experiencing Medieval Art*, Toronto 2019, while adding some recent bibliography.
8. *Commentary of the Song of Songs*, chap. 4; C. Winterer, *Das Fuldaer Sakramentar in Göttingen*, Petersberg 2009, pp. 407-414.
9. *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus*, 24.5.
10. *De institutione divinarum litterarum*, 4; PL 70.1115; see L. Kendrick, *Animating the Letter. The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Columbus, OH 1999, pp. 74-75. John Scotus Erigena reiterated the metaphor; *Periphyseon*, 4.4; *Periphyseon. The Division of Nature*, I. P. Sheldon-Williams, John J. O'Meara (eds. and trans.), Washington, DC 2020. For a particularly subtle demonstration, see B. Fricke, *At the Threshold of Painting: The Man of Sorrows by Albrecht Dürer*, P. Bokody, A. Nagel (eds.), *Renaissance Metapainting*, London 2019, pp. 209-238.
11. Cf. J. C. Schmitt, *Animal Farm: une image du tabernacle de moïse dans la Bible historique de Guiart des Moulins* (BnF, Français 9, Fol. 63r, vers 1412-1415), «Codex Aquilarensis» 37 (2021), pp. 49-64.
12. R. Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1970; J. L. Koosed, *Moses: The Face of Fear*, «Biblical Interpretation» 22(4-5) (2014), pp. 414-429; H. Broderick, *Moses the Egyptian in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch* (London, *British Library Cotton MS Claudius B.iv*), Notre Dame, IN 2017.
13. B. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B.iv. The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England*, London 2007.
14. J. Elsner, *Beyond Eusebius: Prefatory Images and the Early Book*, A. Bausi, B. Reudenbach, and H. Wimmer (eds.), *Canones: The Art of Harmony. The Canon Tables of the Four Gospels*, Berlin 2020, pp. 99-132; B. Kitzinger, *Eusebian Reading and Early Medieval Gospel Illumination*, *Canones*, pp. 133-169; J. H. Hamburger, *The Birth of the Author*, Toronto 2021.
15. P. K. Klein, *The Valenciennes Apocalypse and the Pictorial [sic] Tradition, Apocalipsis carolingio de Valenciennes, Ms. 99*, Madrid 2012, pp. 175-189; id. *The Role of Prototypes and Models in the Transmission of Medieval Picture Cycles: The Case of the Beatus Manuscripts*, M. E. Müller (ed.), *The Use of Models in Medieval Book Painting*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2014, pp. 1-28.
16. On the abundance of Marian epithets, see; R. Fulton Brown, *Mary*, M. Ruben, W. Simona (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, pp. 283-296. <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/histories/>.
17. D. Parello, *Fünf Felder eines typologischen Zyklus aus Arnstein, Kulturstiftung der Länder u. LWL-Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Münster: Die Glasgemäldeammlung des Freiherrn vom Stein*, Münster 2007, pp. 22-39 and 92-94; H. L. Kessler, *Consider the glass, it can teach you*, B. Kurmann-Schwarz, E. Pastan (eds.), *Investigations in Medieval Stained Glass*, Leiden 2019, pp. 143-156.
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44. On Carolingian iconography and coins, see A. Kumler, *Where Your Treasure Is, There is Your Heart Also: a Kesslerian View from the Soissons Gospels*, «Codex Aquilarensis» 37 (2021), pp. 109-125.

45. The dot was intended to work together with the two horizon bars framing the names of the three persons which, in the Paris version, confusingly includes AND[rew], IER[u]S[a]L[em], and IAC[obus].

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63. Michele Ferrari has questioned the medieval authenticity of this text, but the scholarly consensus is that it is Carolingian: J.-C. Schmitt, *Le corps des images: Essai sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Âge*, Paris 2002, pp. 167-198; T. Noble, *Images, a Daydream and Heavenly Sounds in the Carolingian Era: Walahfrid Strabo and Maura of Troyes*, G. de Nie, T. F. X. Noble (eds.), *Envisioning Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Dynamic Patterns in Texts and Images*, Farnham 2012, pp. 23-45; W. Diebold, *The Attitude towards Images in Prudentius of Troyes's Sermo de Vita Maurae*, S. Fozi, G. Lutz (eds.), *Christ on the Cross. The Boston Crucifix and the Rise of Monumental Wood Sculpture, 970-1200*, Turnhout 2020, pp. 348-359.
64. Anselm's windows were destroyed in the 1174 fire, but late twelfth-century replacements, almost certainly based on them, include the same unusual juxtaposition; M. H. Caviness, *The Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral*, Princeton, NJ 1977; T. A. Heslop, *St Anselm, Church Reform and the Politics of Art*, C. P. Lewis (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies, Proceedings of the Battle Conference for 2010* (Vol. 33), Woodbridge 2011, pp. 103-126.

65. P. Henriët, *Lucas de Tuy et les images. Tradition et modernité, monde hispanique et monde exterior*, «Codex Aquilarensis» 36 (2020), pp. 65-90.
66. C. Schleif, *Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemen-schneider*, «Art Bulletin» 75 (1993), pp. 599-626. Bacci, *Nicodemo*.
67. Bede noted the alleged Jewish pedigree of a similar diagram in the copy of Cassiodorus' *Explanation of the Psalms*. S. Dufrenne, *Une illustration 'historique' inconnue du psautier du Mont-Athos, Pantokrator* 61, «Cahiers archéologiques» 15 (1965), pp. 83-95; K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters*, Cambridge 1992, p. 34; M. Evangelatou, *Liturgy and the Illustration of the Ninth-Century Marginal Psalters*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers» 63 (2009), pp. 59-116.
68. At that point, however, iconography risks going aground on the shoals of pseudomorphism; see Y.-A. Bois, *On the Uses and Abuses of Look-alikes*, «October» 154 (2015), pp. 127-149.
69. Cf. B. E. Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels, and the Work of Art in the Carolingian Age*, Cambridge 2019.
70. V. Debiais, *Le chant des formes, L'écriture épigraphique entre matérialité du trace et transcendance des contenué*, «Revista de poética medieval» 27 (2013), pp. 101-129.
71. See J. H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, Kortrijk 1979; D. Nirenberg, *Aesthetic Theology and Its Enemies: Judaism in Christian Painting, Poetry, and Politics*, Waltham, MA 2015.
72. G. Mietke, *Wundertätige Pilgerandenken, Reliquien und ihr Bildschmuck, Byzanz. Die Macht der Bilder* (cat. of an exhibition), Hildesheim 1998, pp. 40-55; B. Reudenbach, *Reliquien von Orten. Ein frühchristliches Reliquiare als Gedächtnisort*, B. Reudenbach, G. Toussaint (eds.), *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, Berlin 2005, pp. 21-41; id. *Loca sancta. Zur materiellen Übertragung der heiligen Stätten, Jerusalem, du Schöne: Vorstellungen und Bilder einer heiligen Stadt*, Bern 2008, pp. 9-32; A. Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art Out of Time*, London 2012, pp. 116-132; H. L. Kessler, *Arca Arcarum: Nested Boxes and the Dynamics of Sacred Experience*, «Codex Aquilarensis» 30 (2014), pp. 83-107; B. Fricke, *Tales from Stones, Travels through Time: Narrative and Vision in the Casket from the Vatican*, «West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture» 21 (2014), pp. 230-250.
73. M. Sureda I Jubany, *Faithful Crosses. On the Survival of an Early Type of Goldsmith's Cross in Late Medieval Catalonia*, «Convivium» 8(1) (2021), pp. 143-165.
74. J. H. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA 2002; H. L. Kessler, *St. John's Word and Images Beyond Time*, P. Carmassi, C. Winterer (eds.) *Text, Bild und Ritual in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft* (8.-11. Jh), Florence 2014, pp. 287-309.
75. P. Cordez, *La chasse des rois mages. Cologne et la christianisation des pierres magiques aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, L. Burkhart et al. (eds.), *Le trésor au Moyen Âge: Questions et perspectives de recherche*, Neuchâtel 2005, pp. 315-332; id., *¿El arrepentimiento de un mago? Los camafeos de la estatua del rey David en la catedral de Basilea (hacia 1310-1320)*, «Codex Aquilarensis» 33 (2017), pp. 127-136.
76. Debiais, *Croisée*, p. 265; B. Pentcheva, *Performative Images and Cosmic Sound in the Exultet Liturgy of Southern Italy*, «Speculum» 95(2) (2020), pp. 396-466; C. Bynum, *Dissimilar Similitudes. Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe*, Brooklyn, NY, 2020, pp. 17-57.
77. M. Roberts (ed.), *Poems. Venantius Fortunatus*, Cambridge MA and London 2017, pp. 314-315; B. Brennan, *Weaving with Words: Venantius Fortunatus's Figurative Acrostics on the Holy Cross*, «Traditio» 74 (2019), pp. 27-53.
78. P. D. Vasileiadis, N. Gordon, *Transmission of the Tetragrammaton in Judeo-Greek and Christian Sources*, «Cahiers Accademia» 12 (2021), pp. 85-126. Translated into Latin iot/heh/loh/heh/ on a twelfth-century lead amulet, the tetragrammaton is fitted into the corners of a cross and framed by the Trinitarian names; D. Vavřík et al., *Unveiling Magic from the Middle Ages: Tomographic Reading of a Folded Lead Amulet from Dřevíč Fortress (Czech Republic)*, «Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences» 12 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-019-00976-4>. Petrus Alfonsi used the tetragrammaton as the foundation of his Trinitarian diagram thereby overlaying Christianity's own dual origins in Judaism and paganism onto greatest theological mystery; Hamburger, *Diagramming Devotion*, pp. 224-225.
79. B. C. Tilghman, *The Shape of the Word: Extralinguistic Meaning in Insular Display Lettering*, «Word & Image» 27(3) (2011), pp. 292-308.

80. Cf. the late twelfth-century version in Tours (Bib. mun. MS 193, fol. 71^r). S. Waldhoff, *Synagoga im Sakramentar. Zur revelatio synagogae in der Handschrift 193 der Bibliothèque municipale in Tours*, «Frühmittelalterliche Studien» 43 (2009), pp. 215-270; C. Voyer, *L'allégorie de la Synagogue: Une représentation ambivalente du judaïsme*, C. Heck (ed.), *L'allégorie dans l'art du Moyen Âge: Formes et fonctions. Héritages, créations, mutations*, Turnhout 2011, pp. 95-109; T. Frese, *Aktual- und Realpräsenz: Das eucharistische Christusbild von Spätantike bis ins Mittelalter*, Berlin 2013; H. L. Kessler, *Dynamic Signs and Spiritual Designs*, B. Bedos-Rezak, J. Hamburger (eds.), *Sign and Design. Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300-1600 CE)*, Washington, DC 2016, pp. 107-130.

81. L. Ayres, *An Italianate Episode in Romanesque Bible Illumination at Weingarten Abbey*, «Gesta» 24(2) 1985, pp. 121-128.

82. The earlier St. Hubert Bible is explicitly Calcidian (Brussels, Bibl. Royale, MS II. 1639, fol. 6^v); H. Bober, *In Principio. Creation before Time*, M. Meiss (ed.), *De artibus opuscula XL Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, New York 1961, pp. 13-28; C. Rudolph, *In the Beginning: Theories and Images of Creation in Northern Europe in the Twelfth Century*, «Art History» 22(1), pp. 3-55; I. Weinryb, *The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2016, pp. 64-65; H. L. Kessler, *The Montalcino Bible's Steep Mountain of Mysteries*, «Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome» 65 (2020), pp. 308-372.

83. Vandi, *Trasformazione*; N. Van Deusen, *The Cultural Context of Medieval Music*, Santa Barbara, CA 2011; J.-P. Caillet, *Et magnae silvae creverunt... Observations sur le thème du rinceau peuplé dans l'orfèvrerie et l'ivoirerie liturgiques aux époques ottonienne et romane*, «Cahiers de civilisation médiévale» 38(149) (1995), pp. 23-33; Weinryb *Bronze Object*, pp. 56-73.

84. In Martianus Capella; H. Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany. The View from Cologne*, Oxford 2007, pp. 215 and 226.

85. J.-C. Schmitt, *Penser par figure. Du compas divin aux diagrammes magiques*, Paris 2019, p. 116.

86. C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, Brooklyn, NY 2011 pp. 112-121; Kitzinger, *Cross*, pp. 106-120.

87. A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte*, Paris 1958; K. Weitzmann, *Loca Sancta and the Representational Arts of Palestine*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers» 28 (1974), pp. 31-55; G. Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, rev. ed. Washington, DC 2010; J. Elsner, *Replicating Palestine and Reversing the Reformation. Pilgrimage and Collecting at Bobbio, Monza and Walsingham*, «Journal of the History of Collections» 9 (1997), pp. 117-130.

88. A. Iacobini, *L'albero della vita nell'immaginario medievale: Bisanzio e l'Occidente* in A. M. Romanini, A. Cadei (eds.), *L'architettura medievale in Sicilia: la cattedrale di Palermo*, Rome 1994, pp. 241-290; H. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden 2004, pp. 115-117 et passim.

89. I. H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World*, Leiden 2008, pp. 161-260; J. F. Hamburger, J. O'Driscoll, *Imperial Splendor. The Art of the Book in the Holy Roman Empire, 800-1500*, New York 2021, p. 60. A short Carolingian tract attributed to Hrabanus Maurus (now titled *De inventione linguarum*) considers linkages between letters and pictorial representations to be a form of art; Tilghman, *Shape of Words*.

90. V. Debiais, *From Christ's Monogram to God's Presence. Epigraphic Contribution to the Study of Chrismons in Romanesque Sculpture*, Hamburger, Bedos-Rezak (eds.), *Sign and Design*, pp. 135-151; id., *Croisée*, pp. 84-85.

91. Eldefonsus would have known Paulinus' *carmina*.

92. R. Favreau, *L'inscription du tympan nord de San Miguel d'Estella*, «Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes» 133 (1975), pp. 237-246; J. M. Martínez de Aguirre, *Portada de San Miguel de Estella. Estudio Iconológico*, «Príncipe de Viana» 45, no. 173 (1984), pp. 439-461; J. del Hoyo Calleja, *Nec deus est nec homo: a propósito de la inscripción de la portada norte de San Miguel de Estella*, *Actas [del] III Congreso Hispánico de Latin Medieval (León, 26-29 de septiembre de 2001)*, León 2002, vol. 2, pp. 797-802; P. Skubiszewski, *Maestas Domini et liturgie*, C. Arrignon et al. (eds.), *Actes du Colloque à l'occasion du cinquantenaire du CESC, Poitiers, 1-4 septembre 2003*, Turnhout 2006, pp. 309-408; H. L. Kessler, *Neither God Nor Man. Words, Images, and the Medieval Anxiety about Art*, Freiburg i. Br., 2007.

93. C. Meier, *Malerei des Unsichtbaren: Über den Zusammenhang von Erkenntnistheorie und Bildstruktur im Mittelalter*, W. Harms (ed.), *Text und Bild. Bild und Text: DFG-Symposium 1988*, Stuttgart 1990, pp. 35-65; B. Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art*, Regensburg 2003; K. Müller, *Visuelle Weltaneignung. Astronomische und kosmologische Diagramme in Handschriften des Mittelalters*, Göttingen 2008; F. Wallis, *What a Medieval Diagram Shows: A Case Study of Computus*, «Studies in Iconography» 36 (2015), pp. 1-40; J. F. Hamburger, *Mindmapping: The Diagram as Paradigm in Medieval Art and Beyond*, M. Kupfer, A. Cohen, and J. H. Chajes (eds.), *Visualization of Knowledge Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Turnhout 2021, pp. 61-86; L. Safran, *A Prologomenon to Byzantine Diagrams*, *ibid.*, pp. 361-404; A. S. Cohen, *Diagramming the Diagrammatic: Twelfth-Century Europe*, *ibid.*, pp. 383-404.

94. Hamburger, *Diagramming Devotion*, p. 235; Kumler, "Whose Iconography". I wish to thank Dr. Martin Schwarz for discussing his work on this important manuscript, which will be the subject of his forthcoming article, *Maestas Dominae*. See also: A. R. Verboon, *The Medieval Tree of Porphyry: An Organic Structure of Logic*, P. Salenius, A. Worm (eds.), *The Tree. Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, Turnhout 2014, pp. 95-116.

95. M. H. Caviness, *Templates for Knowledge: Geometric Ordering of the Built Environment, Monumental Decoration, and Illuminated Page*, Kupfer, Cohen, and Chajes (eds.), *Visualization of Knowledge*, pp. 405-428.

96. Labyrinths were important iconographic devices; see: A. S. Mittman, *Forking Paths? Matthew Paris, Jorge Luis Borges, and Maps of the Labyrinth*, «Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture» 4 (2013). A labyrinth at the start of Otfrid of Weissenburg's Gospels (Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. Vind. 2867, fol. 1^r), explicated by an accompanying poem and bookended by a cross, figures the difficulty but also the possibility of deploying the senses to rise spiritually; W. Haubrichs, *Error inextricabilis. Form und Funktion der Labyrinthabbildung im mittelalterlichen Handschriften*, C. Meier, U. Ruberg (eds.) *Text und Bild: Aspekte des Zusammenwirkens zweier Künste in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Wiesbaden 1980, pp. 63-174; Kitzinger, *Cross*, pp. 103-114.

97. Ganz, *Medien der Offenbarung*.

98. The swords and daggers piercing the woman presages *Mater Dolorosa* iconography; S. McMichael, K. W. Shelby (eds.), *Medieval Franciscan Approaches to the Virgin Mary. Mater Misericordiae Sanctissima et Dolorosa*, Leiden 2019. On silent prayer, see: V. Debais, *Le silence dans l'art. Liturgie et théologie du silence dans les images médiévales*, Paris 2019.

99. A. García Aviles, *Transitus: actitudes hacia la sacralidad de las imágenes en el Occidente medieval, Imágenes medievales de culto*, Murcia 2010, pp. 22-25.

100. Falque, *Imagery and Knowledge*.

101. Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 111-116 and 355-356; P. Strohmaier, *Vom liturgischen Textil zum Werbebanner? Zwei byzantinische Goldstickereien im Dom zu Halberstadt*, «Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte» 80 (2017), pp. 219-246.

102. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*, pp. 171, 181.

103. P. Binski, *The Rhetorical Occasions of Gothic Sculpture*, «Collegium medievale» 30 (2018), pp. 7-32.

104. PL 171.1383; W. Tronzo, *The Cultures of his Kingdom. Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, Princeton 1997, pp. 56 and 112; B. Brenk, *Visualizing Divine Authority. The Mosaics of Roger II in Sicily: their Art and their Meaning*, Wiesbaden 2022, pp. 117, 135, and 151.

105. P. Wagner (ed.), *Icons—Texts—Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, Berlin 1996; S. Riccioni, *Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente a Roma. Exemplum della Chiesa riformata*, Spoleto 2006, pp. 16-30; *id.*, *L'Epiconografia: l'opera d'arte come sintesi visiva di scrittura e immagine*, A. C. Quintavalle (ed.), *Medioevo: Arte e storia (Atti del Convegno internazionale di studie dell'AlSAME)*, Parma 2008, pp. 465-480; *id.* *The Word in the Image: an Epiconographic Analysis of Reformed Mosaics in Rome (Twelfth Century)*, K. B. Aavitsland, T. K. Seim (eds.), *Inscriptions in Liturgical Spaces*, Budapest 2011, pp. 85-137; *id.* *The Visual Experience of the Triumphant Church: The Mosaic of S. Maria in Trastevere*, Rome 2021, pp. 56-58 and 111-12; Krause, *Inschriften*; Debais *Croisée*, pp. 145-51.

106. R. Suckale, *Die Weltgerichtstafel aus dem römischen Frauenkonvent S. Maria in Campo Marzio als programmatisches Bild der einsetzenden Gregorianischen Kirchenreform*, R. Suckale, *Das mittelalterliche Bild als Zeitzeuge*, Berlin 2002, pp. 12-122; S. Romano, *Riforma e tradizione 1050-1198*, Milan 2006, pp. 45-55.

107. The tympanum at Conques, likewise, includes a veritable tapestry of inscriptions to engage viewers in historical, theological, and moral arguments; J.-C. Bonne, *L'art roman de face et de profil. Le tympan de Conques*, Paris 1985. A similar profusion of inscriptions on the carved twelfth-century ivory cross in the Metropolitan Museum (Cloisters) not only constructs a complex typological program but also serves pictorial purposes; E. Parker, C. Little, *The Cloisters Cross. Its Art and Meaning*, New York 1994.

108. J.-C. Bonne, *De l'ornement à l'ornementalité. La mosaïque absidale de San Clemente de Rome, Le rôle de l'ornement dans la peinture murale du Moyen Âge*, Actes du colloque, Saint-Lizier 1995), Poitiers 1997, pp. 103-118; Riccioni, *Mosaico absidale*, pp. 65-72.

109. On animal iconography, J. Baschet, J.-C. Bonne, and Dittmar, *Le Monde roman par-delà le bien et le mal*, Paris 2012, pp. 107-111.

110. Sedulius had already merged animal lore with scripture in his *Carmen paschale*; the fan structures it poetically. In the flabellum's time, Sicard of Cremona incorporated the trope in the section of his influential *Mitralis* devoted to church ornament: "More clearly than the other [evangelists], [Mark] accounts for the resurrection of Christ, according to which Christ is represented as a lion, who after his death rose up and after his father's call on the third day was enlivened."

111. The verses raise the likelihood that the fan is not whole and that the empty back may, originally, have had a complimentary relief featuring Matthew's man and Luke's ox perhaps illustrated with suitable narratives of Christ's birth and baptism.

112. On "imaginative theology," see B. Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry; and Belief in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 2003; Sánchez Ameijeiras, *Rostros*, pp. 171-250.

113. PL 158.365; B. Davies and G. R. Evans (trans.) Oxford 1998, p. 269; Heslop, *St Anselm*. See also: U. Eco, *Opera aperta*, Milan 1962.

114. *Cur homo deus*, Chapter 3; PL 158.364.

115. M. Büchsel, *Materialpracht und die Kunst für Litterati: Suger gegen Bernhard von Clairvaux*, M. Büchsel, R. Müller (eds.), *Materialpracht und Mystifizierung mittelalterlicher Kunst «Kultbild»: Revision eines Begriffs*, Berlin 2010, pp. 155-181.

116. PL 175.14-15.

117. PL 172.814.

118. J. Hamburger, *The Hand of God and the Hand of the Scribe: Craft and Collaboration at Arnstein*, M. Embach, C. Moulin, and A. Rapp (eds.), *Die Bibliothek des Mittelalters als dynamischer Prozess (Trierer Beiträge zu den historischen Kulturwissenschaften)*, 3 (2012), pp. 55-80.

119. Debais, *Croisée*, pp. 151-164.

120. On persuasion, see M. Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* Oxford 2013; P. Binski, *Medieval Invention and its Potencies*, «British Art Studies» 6 (2017); <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/pbinski>.

121. A. B. Scott, D. F. Baker, and A. G. Riggs (eds.), *The Biblical Epigrams of Hildebert of Le Mans: A Critical Edition*, «Mediaeval Studies» 47 (1985), pp. 272-316, also abbreviated: Accessit Moyses. Idiote turba, magistri dux populi, fumus obscura parabola fertur, cum Deus in sacra scriptura mystica profert, p. 287.

122. Scott, Baker, and Rigg, *Biblical Epigrams*, p. 287. Hildebertus' *De nativitate Christi* seems to have inspired the Latin verse of the Palermo Nativity mosaic, with its triple trope of generation.

123. On the meaning of "decorum", see Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*.

124. Krause, *Inschriften*.

125. Kessler, *Neither God Nor Man*.

126. See Debais, *Croisée*, pp. 171-173.

127. J. F. Hamburger, *Ouvertures. La double page dans les manuscrits enluminés du Moyen Âge*, Lyon 2010, pp. 74-77; D. Ganz, *Visio depicta. Zur Medialität mittelalterlicher Visionsdarstellungen*, R. Hoeps (ed.), *Handbuch der Bildtheologie*, vol. 3, Paderborn 2014, pp. 145-182.

128. G. Wolf, *Nichtzyklische narrative Bilder im italienischen Kirchenraum des Mittelalters: Überlegungen zu Zeit- und Bildstruktur der Fresken in der Unterkirche von S. Clemente (Rom) aus dem späten 11 Jahrhundert*, G. Kerscher (ed.) *Hagiographie und Kunst: der Heiligenkult Schrift, Bild und Architektur*, Berlin 1993, pp. 319-39; M. Hauknes, *Emblematic Narratives in the Sancta Sanctorum*, «Studies in Iconography» 34 (2013), pp. 1-46.

129. H. Stahl, *Picturing Kingship. History and Painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis*, University Park, PA 2008, pp. 89-116.
130. L. Fernández Fernández, J. C. Ruiz Souza (eds.), *Las Cantigas de Santa María: Códice Rico, Ms. T-I-1 Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial*, Madrid 2011, pp. 477-520; S. Disalvo, *El planctus de la Virgen en la Península Ibérica, desde el Quis dabit hasta las Cantigas de Santa María*, IX Congreso Argentino de Hispanistas "El Hispanismo ante el Bicentenario", La Plata 2010, <http://ixcah.fahce.unlp.edu.ar>; Sánchez Ameijeiras, *Rostros*, p. 217.
131. I. Marchesin, *L'arbre & la Colonne: La porte de bronze d'Hildesheim*, Paris 2017 is an iconographic study organized poetically.
132. Sánchez Ameijeiras, *Rostros*, pp. 235 et passim.
133. On Mary as "porta coeli" see: N. Piano, *De la porte close du temple de Salomon à la porte ouverte du Paradis. Histoire d'une image mariale dans l'exégèse et la liturgie médiévales (IV^e-XIII^e siècles)*, «Studi Medievali» 50(1) (2009), pp. 133-157; F. Dell'Acqua, *Iconophilia. Politics, Religion, Preaching, and the Use of Images in Rome, c. 680-880*, London and New York 2020, pp. 278-280.
134. The *Tres riches heures* juxtaposes the same themes (Chantilly, Musée Condé MS 65); Hamburger, *Ouvertures*, pp. 81-83. On Adam's sin and corporal vision, see S. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*, London 2002, pp. 139-140.
135. Sánchez Ameijeiras, *Rostros*, pp. 213-217.
136. R. G. Newhauser (trans.), *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*, Toronto 2012, p. 178.
137. In fact, three transcriptions still survive, Caviness, *Windows*, pp. 77-156; T. A. Heslop, *St Anselm and the Good Samaritan Window at Canterbury Cathedral*, «Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes» 77 (2014), pp. 1-33.
138. Drpic, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 42-46.
139. P. E. Dutton and H. L. Kessler, *The Poetry and Paintings in the First Bible of Charles the Bald*, Ann Arbor, MI 1997.
140. Riccioni, *Visual Experience*, pp. 105-107.
141. PL 171.1381.
142. Ch. 5; PL 198.1540.
143. Diebold, *Attitude*.
144. See the slightly later Isidore in London (British Library, Royal MS 12 C. xix, folio 38^r).
145. Letter 159. MGH. *Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, K. Reindel (ed.), vol. 4, Munich 1994, pp. 90-99; see Riccioni, *Mosaico apsidale*, pp. 20-21.
146. Suckale, *Weltgerichtstafel*, pp. 76-85.
147. F. Botana, *The Works of Mercy in Italian Medieval Art (c. 1050-c. 1400)*, Turnhout 2011.
148. B. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon. Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, University Park, PA 2010, pp. 17-44; L. O'Connor, *Christ in Majesty on a Late Antique Eulogia Token in the British Museum*, «Convivium» I (2014), pp. 74-87.
149. B. Baert, *The Heritage of Holy Wood. The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, Leiden 2004; E. Frojmovic, *Translating Jerusalem: Jewish Authenticators of the Cross*, A Hoffmann, G. Wolf (eds.) *Jerusalem as Narrative Space. Erzählraum Jerusalem*, Leiden 2012 pp. 155-186; and G. P. Maggioni, *The Literary Sources for the Legenda Aurea*, C. Frosinini (ed.), *Agnolo Gaddi and the Cappella Maggiore in Santa Croce in Florence. Studies After Its Restoration*, Cinisello Balsamo 2014, pp. 123-135; H. L. Kessler, *Arca Arcarum: Nested Boxes and the Dynamics of Sacred Experience*, «Codex Aqvilarensis» 30 (2014), pp. 83-107.
150. M. Lidova, *Virgin Mary and the Adoration of the Magi: From Iconic Space to Icon in Space*, J. Bogdanović (ed.), *Icons of Space. Advances in Hierotopy*, Abingdon 2021, pp. 214-238.
151. L.-A. Hunt, *Art and Colonialism: The Mosaics of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1169) and the Problem of "Crusader" Art*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers» 45 (1991), pp. 69-85; M. Bacci, *The Mystic Cave. A History of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem*, Brno and Rome 2017, pp. 149-150; H. L. Kessler and S. Romano, *A Hub of Art. In, Out, and Around Venice, 1177-1499*, «Convivium» 7 (2020), pp. 12-47.
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156. D. Russo, *Espace peint, espace symbolique, construction ecclésiologique: Les peintures de Berzé-la-Ville (Chapelle-des-Moines)*, «Revue Mabillon» n. s. II, 72 (2000), pp. 57-87; É. Palazzo, *Les peintures murales et les pratiques liturgiques dans l'église médiévale*, D. Russo (ed.), *Peintures murales médiévales, XIF-XVF siècles*, Dijon 2005, pp. 57-62; E. Lapina, *The Mural Paintings of Berzé-la-Ville in the Context of the First Crusade and the Reconquista*, «Journal of Medieval History» 31(4) (2005), pp. 309-326.

157. *Volto di Cristo*, pp. 97-99.

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214. F. Dell'Acqua, *The Christ from San Vincenzo al Volturno (9th century): Another Instance of "Christ's Dazzling Face, Panneaux de Vitrail Isolés/die Einzelscheibe/The Single Stained-glass Panel* (XXIV International Colloquium of the Corpus Vitrearum), Zurich 2010, pp. 11-27; ead., *Il volto di Cristo e il dilemma dell'artista:*

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217. John 8.12 was originally inscribed on the yellow scroll Christ unfurls before the altar.

218. C. Rudolph, *Inventing the Exegetical Stained-Glass Window, Suger, Hugh, and a New Elite Art and Mystic Ark*, «Art Bulletin» 93(4) (2011), pp. 339-422, at p. 350.

219. C. Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen: Historische Begründungen eines Bildmediums*, Munich 2003, pp. 318-328.

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221. *Mitralis*, p. 15.

222. Sermo 15; see C. Muessig, *Heaven, Earth and the Angels: Preaching Paradise in the Sermons of Jacques Vitry*, C. Muessig, A. Putter (eds.) *Envisioning Heaven*, London 2007, pp. 57-72.

223. PL 165.1065.

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225. Sicard described: "Lapides pretiosi omnes muri tui, et turres Hierusalem gemmis edificabuntur;" *Mitralis*, p. 15.

226. Only in acquiring relief did the image of Christ, first written in mind, then outlined, seem fully incarnate; Hamburger "Seeing and Believing".

227. Like other iconographies, the breastplate had no fixed meaning. It was incorporated into the Fountain of Life panel in Madrid (Prado Museum) both as an anti-Jewish motif and justification for lustrous gem-like Eyckian oil painting; Nirenberg, *Aesthetic Theology*.

228. H. L. Kessler, *The Eloquence of Silver*, C. Heck (ed.) *L'allégorie dans l'art du Moyen Âge. Formes et fonctions. Héritages, créations, mutations*, Turnhout 2011, pp. 49-64.

229. Gerevini, *Bern Diptych*.

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232. Iacobini, *L'albero*; Klein, *Byzanz*, pp. 115-117 et passim; P. Saloni, *Arbor Jesse – Lignum vitae: The Tree of Jesse, the Tree of Life and the Mendicants in Late Medieval Orvieto*, Saloni, Worm, *Tree*, pp. 213-241.

233. Grabar, *Ampoules*; Weitzmann, *Loca Sancta*; Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*; Elsner, *Replicating Palestine*.

234. Theodulf of Orleans disparaged wax's capacity to blend colors or dirt to equal effect; *Opus caroli*, Freeman ed. p.119; Diebold, *Attitude*, p. 354.

235. Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 115-116.

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237. Carruthers, p. 164; Debais, *Chants des formes*.

238. *Mitralis*, 3.6. H. Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter: Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion*, Berlin 1981; F. Böespflug, Y. Zaluska, *Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie*

en Occident de l'époque carolingienne au IV^e concile de Latran (1215), «Cahiers de civilisation médiévale» 37(3) (1994), pp. 181-240.

239. See J. Wirth, *La Critique scholastique de la théorie thomiste de l'image*, O. Christin, D. Gamboni (eds.), *Crises de l'image religieuse. De Nicée II à Vatican II*, Paris 1999, pp. 93-109; H. L. Kessler, *Speculum*, «Speculum» 86 (2011), pp. 1-41.

240. Winterer, *Sakramentar*, pp. 414-422.

241. Smith, *Painted Logos*, pp. 143-144.

242. Deshman, *Benedictional*; V. Debiais, *Une théologie de l'informel: le pli et son ombre dans le benedictionnaire d'Ethelwold*, «Codex Aquilarensis» 37 (2021), pp. 163-178. See also: É. Palazzo, *Le souffle de Dieu. L'énergie de la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge*, Paris 2020, pp. 206-231; A. Kumler, *Abstraction's Gothic Grounds*, E. Gertsman (ed.), *Abstraction in Medieval Art: Beyond Ornament*, Amsterdam 2020, pp. 55-87.

243. Kumler, *Translating Truth*; Hamburger, *Diagramming Devotion*, p. 224.

244. Ganz, *Medien der Offenbaren*, pp. 323-324.

245. *Sententiae* 6.2; PL 165.1065-66; trans. L. Hamilton, *Décor et decorum: Reforming the Episcopacy in Bruno of Segni's De Laudibus Ecclesiae (Eleventh Century)*, Unpub. LMS thesis, University of Toronto 2007, pp. 70-73; id. *A Sacred City. Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society*, Manchester 2010, p. 204.

246. H. L. Kessler, *Shaded with Dust: Jewish Eyes on Christian Art*, H. L. Kessler, D. Nirenberg (eds.), *Judaism and Christian Art*, Philadelphia 2011, pp. 74-114.

247. Weinryb, *Bronze Object*, pp. 115-121.

248. Vanderputten, Reilly, *Acta*, p. 66.

249. H. L. Kessler, *Real Absence: Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision*, *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo (XLV Settimana internazionale di studi, Spoleto 1998)*, pp. 1157-1211; id. *The Icon in the Narrative*, H. L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art*, Philadelphia 2000, pp. 1-28.

250. H. Gearhart, *Theophilus and the Theory and Practice of Medieval Art*, University Park, PA 2017, p. 59; D. Ganz, *An Artist-Monk in Pieces: Towards an Archeology of Tuotilo*, D. Ganz, C. Dora (eds.), *Tuotilo: Archäologie eines frühmittelalterlichen Künstlers*, Basel 2017, pp. 21-51.

251. Hamburger, *Medieval Work of Art*; A. Iafrate, *Artifex specialis, per una lettura critica della figura di Matthew Paris attraverso le fonti*, «Opera, Nomina, Historiae. Giornale di cultura artistica» 2-3 (2010), pp. 1-42.

252. B. Baert, *The Gaze from Above. Reflections on Cosmic Eyes in Visual Culture*, Leuven 2021, pp. 29-40. On the compass as imposing order and chasing away primal chaos, see: A. Martínez Ruipérez, *The Moral Compass and Mortal Slumber, Divine and Human Reason in the Bibles moralisées*, «Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes» 81 (2018), pp. 1-33. Spiral lines conveyed the inspiring of Christ's humanity in contemporary depictions of the *Maestas Domini* and later at Vézelay, where they reinforce the tympanum's Trinitarian underpinning and Christ's identity with the Eucharist and also make visible the belief that God's energy transmitted at Pentecost enabled the apostles' mission throughout the world; Palazzo, *Souffle*, pp. 227-231.

253. B. C. Tilghman, *Pattern*, pp. 15-16; Binski, *Medieval Invention*.

254. Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, pp. 292-294.

255. H. Doherty, *The Twelfth-Century Patrons of the Bridekirk Font*, J. Camps et al. (eds.) *Romanesque Patrons and Processes. Design and Instrumentality in the Art and Architecture of Romanesque Europe*, London 2018, pp. 291-312.

256. It recapitulates the pier of the Moissac cloister that V. Debiais and E. Gertsman have analyzed, providing the airlock between raw matter and the spiritual; *Au-delà des sens, l'abstraction*, «Convivium» 8(1) (2021), pp. 28-51.

257. Itself an allusion to baptism; P. A. Patton, «*Et partu frontis exceptum*»: *The Typology of Birth and Baptism in an Unusual Spanish Image of Jesus Baptized in a Font*, «Gesta» 33(2) (1994), pp. 79-92; Sánchez Ameijeiras, *Rostros*, pp. 73-77.

258. J. Baschet, *Lieu sacré, lieu d'images. Les fresques de Bominaco (Abruzzes, 1263). Thèmes, parcours, fonctions*, Paris and Rome 1991; Palazzo, *Peintres murales*.

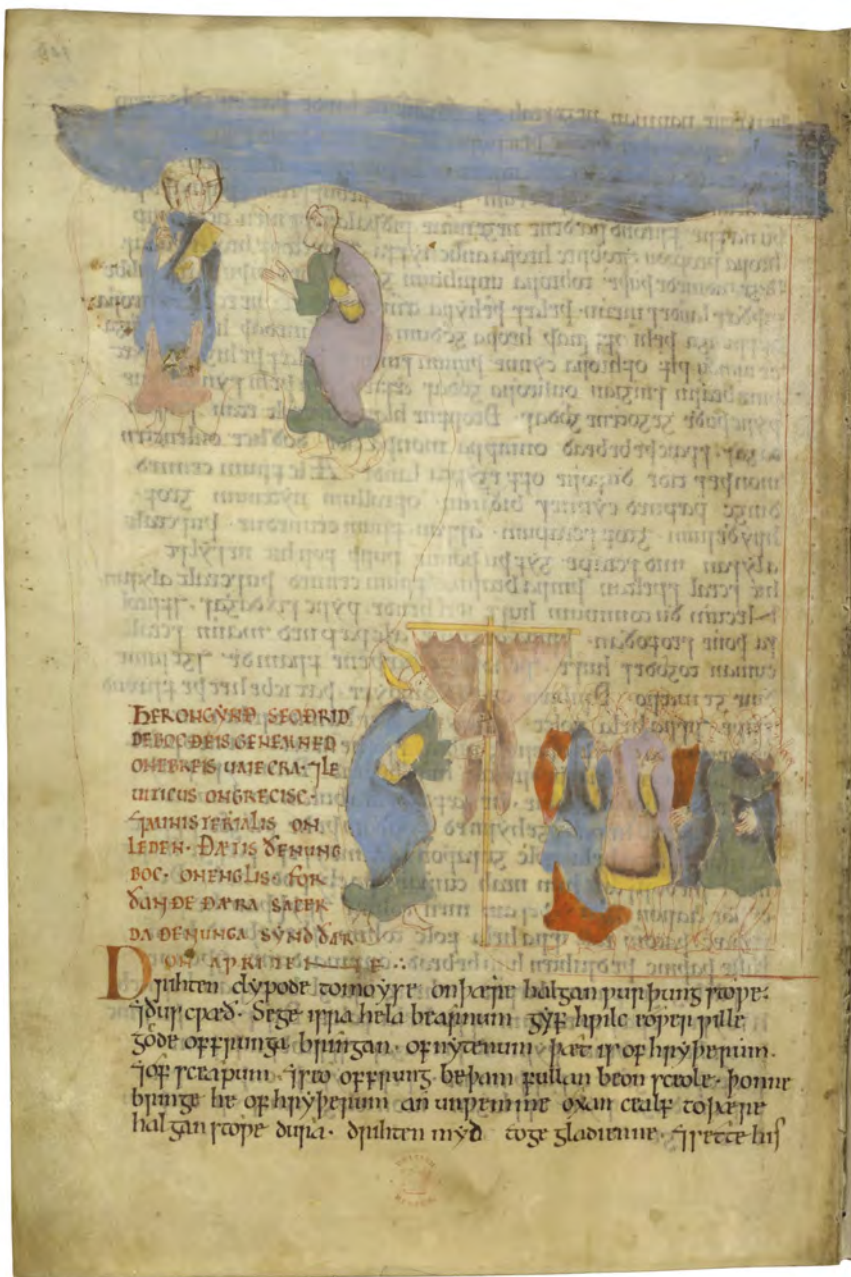
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260. Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*; Strohmaier, *Liturgischen Textil*.
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263. Baert, *Heritage*, p. 25; Eva Frojmovic, "Translating Jerusalem: Jewish Authenticators of the Cross", in *Jerusalem as Narrative Space; Erzählraum Jerusalem*, A. Hoffman, G. Wolf (eds.), Leiden 2012, pp. 155-86; Maggioni, *Literary Sources*.
264. Oftestad, *Lateran Church*, p. 237.
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269. *Briefe*, p. 99.
270. Book 2, chap. 12; PL 165.940-41. See H. L. Kessler, *A Gregorian Reform Theory of Art?*, S. Romano, J. Enckell (eds.) *Roma e la riforma Gregoriana. Tradizioni e innovazioni artistiche (XI-XII secolo)* (Acts of a Conference, Lausanne 2005), Rome 2007, pp. 25-48; Hamilton, *Décor et decorum*, pp. 50-51.
271. Vanderputten, Reilly, *Acta*, p. 66.
272. *Top. bib.* dist. II.39: *Giraldus Cambrensis, The History and Topography of Ireland*, J. O'Meara (trans.). New York, NY, 1982, pp. 84-84.
273. Wirth (ed.), *Pictor*, p. 110.
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275. PL 165.1065; trans. Hamilton, *Decor et decorum*, p. 71. Kessler, "They preach not by speaking". On the other hand, a prayer added ca. 900 to the Lorsch Miscellany in the Vatican Library (BAV, MS. Pal. Lat. 834, fol. 28v) interpreted the facing picture of three saints as a Trinity: "Haec uulgo picture man[et] dignissima laude...;" B. Bischoff, *Lorsch im Spiegel seiner Handschriften*, Munich 1974, p. 83.
276. Rudolph, *Tour Guide*, pp. 54.
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278. See Luchterhand, *Nacht der Bilder*.
279. S. Wittekind, *Die Makkabäer als Vorbild des geistlichen Kampfes: eine kunsthistorische Deutung des Leidener Makkabäer-Codex Perizoni 17, «Frühmittelalterliche Studien» 37 (2003), pp. 47-71.*
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286. Hauknes, *Painting of Knowledge*.
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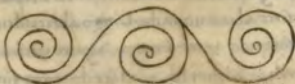
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311. N. Thebaut, *The Double-Sided Image: Abstraction and Figuration in Early Medieval Painting*, Gertsman (ed.), *Abstraction*, pp. 213-242.
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315. Juan Gil called Mary the "esposa y madre del sumo Rey, puerta del cielo, encanto del paraíso," Hamburger, *Speculation*, pp. 376-377. On doors and thresholds, see Sánchez Ameijeiras, *Rostros*, p. 216; V. Debiais, *Writing on Medieval Doors: The Surveyor Angel on the Moissac Capital (ca. 1100)*, I. Berti et al. (eds.), *Writing Matters: Presenting and Perceiving Monumental Inscriptions in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Berlin and Boston, MA: 2017, pp. 285-308. On Mary as threshold and the closed door of Virginity, see Dell'Aqua, *Iconophilia*.
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317. Panofsky was referring to the Latin preface of Ælfric's *De arte grammatica anglice*: "Mihi tamen uideatur melius inuocare deum patrem honorifice producta sillaba, quam brittonice corripere, qui nec deus arti grammaticae subiciendus est," J. Zupitza (ed.) *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, Berlin 1880, p. 2.
318. Nirenberg, *Aesthetic Theology*, p. 59.
319. Nirenberg, *Aesthetic Theology*, p. 24.
320. Gertrud Bing reported that Fritz Saxl recalled his grandfather's studying Talmud in the backroom of a shop he and his wife owned in Senftenberg (north of Dresden): in D. J. Gordon (ed.), *Fritz Saxl (1890-1948) A Volume of Memorial Essays from his Friends in England*, Edinburgh, 1957, pp. 1-46.
321. See Smith, *Painted Logos*, pp. 144-45, p. 158.
322. See Fricke, *At the Threshold*.
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326. PL 110.545-548.
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IMAGES



1. London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Claudius B. iv, fol. 105v, Ælfric Hexateuch, late 12th c., *Moses Receiving Commandments and Delivering Them to Israelites*, paint on parchment.

44
disparatur fuisse inuenitur deinde persequitur omnes quippe circulos eorum uniformes &
indivisibilis illa conuersio uel tens in spiram & uelut sinuosum acanthi uolumen. Cum fixa
cardine circuli casu uel etiam uoluntate acenosteno oppresso aut relaxato circulo describun-
tur circulares ut posthymicas arcum ductae lineae non pueniat ad eorum sed deflec-
tens a compescera rigore infra uel super arcum ducta linea saepius altiores laxiores
ue circulos faciat. hoc genus circulorum spiram solemus uocare uel acanthum uel uo-
lumen igitur quia planities sic planes recipit cotidiana uestigine ut non patitur eos
in eundem locum & uelut sedem ex qua progressi fuerint representari sed uel transi-
re cogat uel lentius progressionem minime occurrere addetunata recte dixit omnes
stellas in spiram & uelut sinuosum acanthi uolumen rotari ob inconstanciam atq; inae-
quabilem arcum uel tensionem ut si stella forte uenerit sic in arietis signo deinde rapiat
eam mundi conuersio ita ut eam longius a pigidiana progressionem pertrahat ceterum ali-
qua fies ab arietis discessio quantoq; plures conuersiones fieri tanto longius ab ari-
etis ad precedetia signa discedet & ad posterum adpiscet atq; inde ad aquarum p-
ue hanc conuersionem si remissior erit raptatio ab arietis ad tauro uersus recedet & ad
geminorum atq; cancerum iniquis semper gressibus & deflectoribus ab eorum atq; ab arietis
b. a conuersione rigore quos quidem gressibus heliacas appellant quorum in ore
morta ab inuentionibus inuentiones porro ab inuentionibus notantur suntq; simi-
litudinis formulae quae subter adscripta est.



Deinde ait atq; ueritabilis & consultata haec motuum uarietas & moderatio uis-
quoq; nota & uis omniumq; alio motuum pspicua esset chorea igni uel lucem cla-
rissimam deus uerum conditor erectione secundi atq; uelut globi quam lucem solem uo-
camus. Cum propter ceteras ineffabiles utilitates quas uniuerso mundo sol inuenit.

2. Lyon, Bib. mun., MS 324, fol. 44r, *Calcidius Translation and Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 3rd quarter of 9th c., Venus' orbit, ink on parchment.



3. St. Petersburg, National Library, Firk. Hebr. II B 17, fol. IV^r,
Pentateuch, 929, gold and paint on parchment.



4. Mt. Athos, Pantokrator Monastery, MS 61, fol. 165^r, Book of Psalms, 9th c., Psalm 115, gold and pigments on parchment.

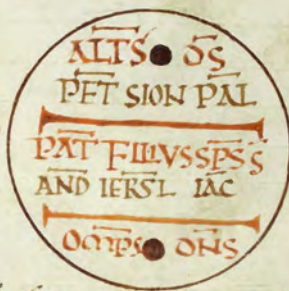


5. Genoa, San Bartolomeo degli Armeni, *Mandylion with frame*,
14th c., pigment on cloth and wood, gilt metal.



6. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Jacquemart de Hesdin, ca. 1400,
Christ Carrying the Cross, pigment on parchment.

A NNO OCTINGESIMO Q VADRAG ES MO
 quinto incarnationis xpi ihu dñi rē calculus
 iste. celest mensur a triū digitorū anigli panis
 in rotundū azy m sic composita. Scripta subha c
 quantitate ista preuelatur ē dñi sumi. In mense
 decimo feria vii diluculo iam exere confuso
 expleo huius apparuit mibi



T igitur iste rotē diu. duob; ferris in se adinui
 o parte ptenet semper uter utraq; parte fac de
 si ualens huiusq; discurre moneta terre et regis
 Eius non melius ualens discurret semp huiusq;
 moneta celestis regis

7. Paris, BnF, MS. lat. 2855, fol. 63^v, Eldefonsus, tract on the Eucharist,
 3rd quarter of 9th c., ink and pigment on parchment.

Quodamque estentia uenerabili uro in sapientem et doctum
 in ep'o in ipso t'co in te decimo.
 Anno de tri ginta primo quadragesimo quinto.
 In uenerabili uro in sapientem et doctum. Alacul' t'co id est
 mensura uro in digito angli. ut uocandi p'nti Alacu-
 li in op'ia et scripta sub quatuor et f'ca. p' uelatione
 de sume inuenit decimo. p' vii. diluculo. i. opere
 consilio cap' l'co uirum apparuit michi.

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9. Utrecht, Utrecht University Library, Ms. 32, fol. 1^v,
Book of Psalms, Psalm 1, mid-9th c., ink on parchment.



10. Paris, BnF, MS lat. 8846, fol. 5v, Book of Psalms, Psalm 1,
 1180-1200, gold and pigment on parchment.



11. Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, Cod. 2929, fol. 82^r,
Heinrich Seuse, *Exemplar*, ca. 1370, ink and pigment on parchment.



12. Venice, San Marco, atrium, mosaic at main entrance and first dome, 2nd quarter of 13th century, *Tree of Life and Fall of Adam and Eve*.



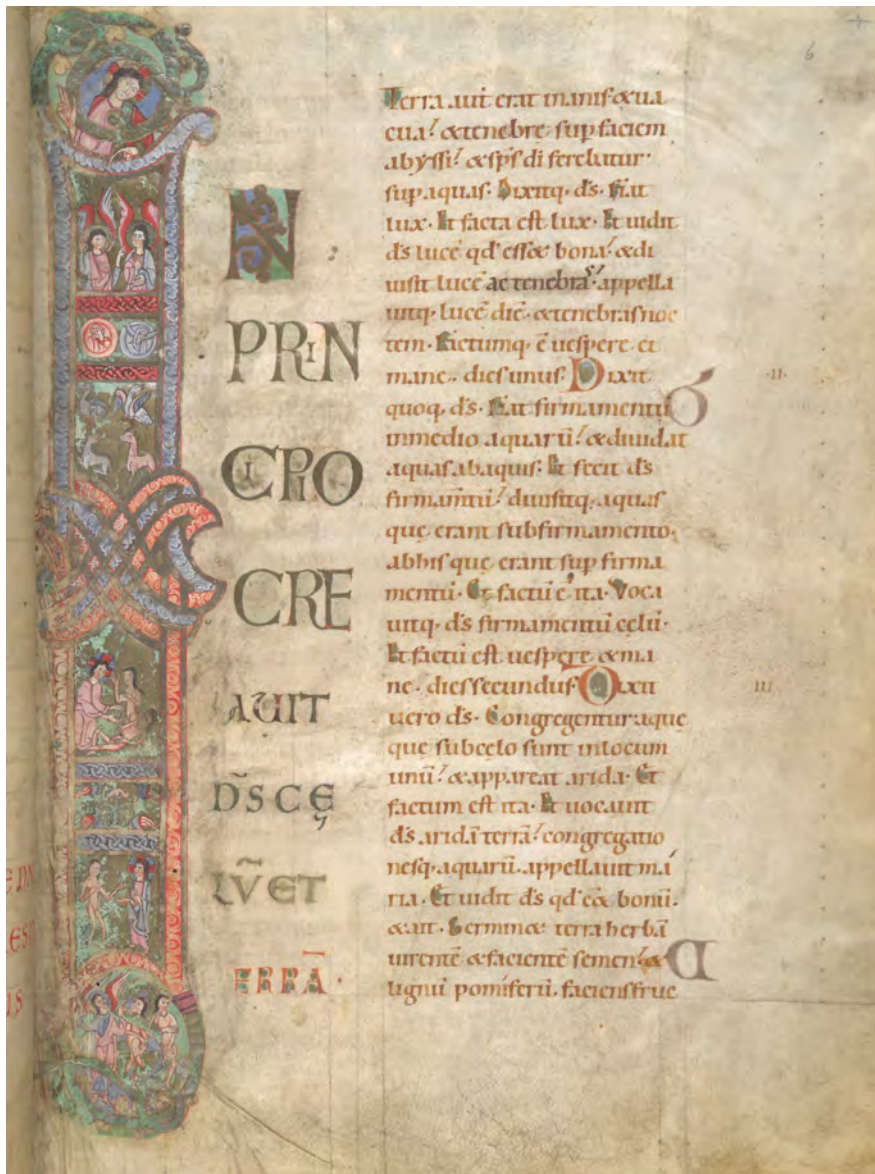
13. Canterbury, Cathedral, window, 4th quarter of 12th c.,
Life of Christ and Typologies, stained glass.



14. Vatican, Museo Vaticano, reliquary box from Sancta Sanctorum,
7th c., *Vision of Cross*, pigments, gold, wax, wood.



15. Basel, Cathedral Treasure, reliquary, various dates,
David and Virgin and Child, mixed media.



16. London, British Library, MS Add 14791, fol. 6^r, Bible of Abbot Kuno, 1st third of 12th c., *Opening of Book of Genesis*, silver and pigments on parchment.



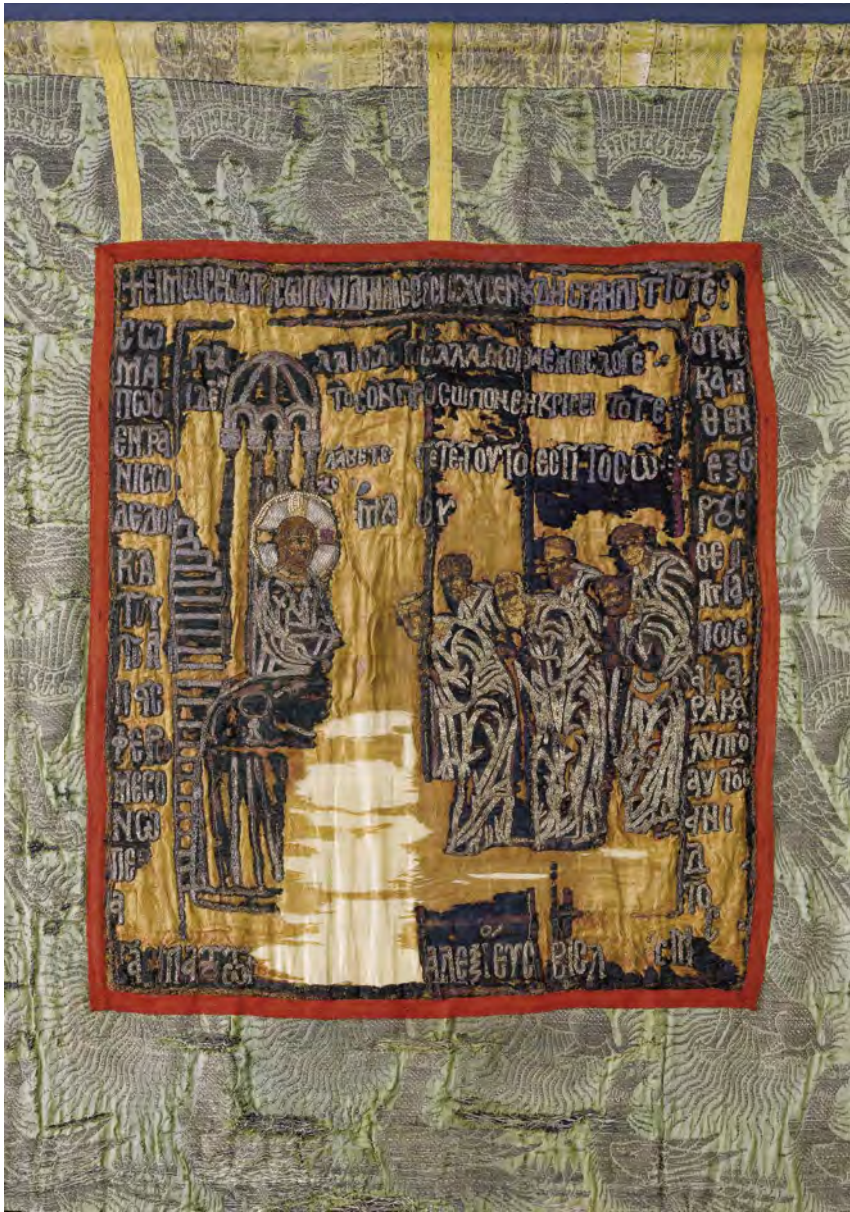
17. Vatican, Museo Vaticano, reliquary box from Sancta Sanctorum (opened),
7th c. wood, dirt, and stones.



18. Estella, Church of San Miguel, north portal, tympanum, 12th c., *Christ in Majesty*, stone.



19. Darmstadt, Hessisches Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, MS 2282, fol. 1^v,
Boethius' Translation of Porphyrius' Isagoge to Aristotle's Categories,
 mid-12th c., *Lady Dialectic*, ink on parchment.



20. Halberstadt, Domschatz, Kulturstiftung Sachsen-Anhalt, inv. no. DS087,
Church Flag with Byzantine Veiling Cloth (Poterokalymma),
 probably second half/last quarter 12th century, embroidered silk.



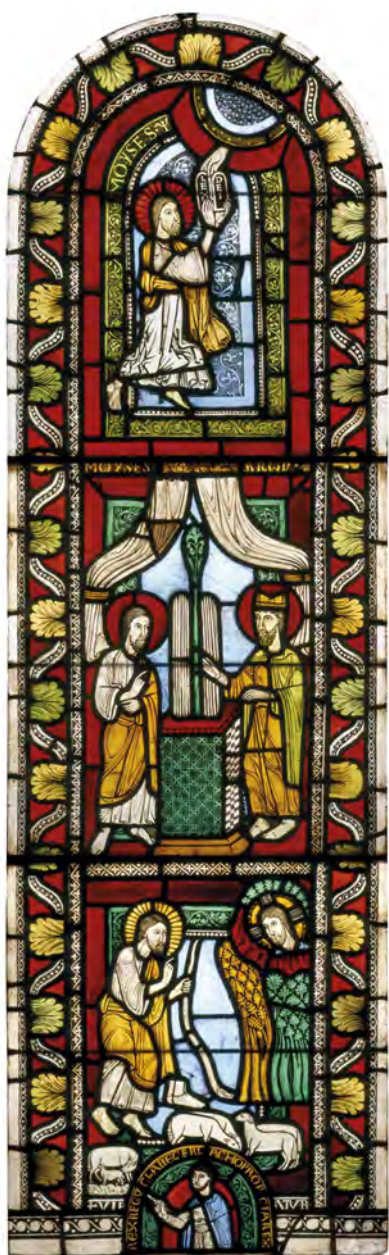
21. Palermo, Cappella Palatina, south transept, mosaic, mid-12th c.,
Christ Pantocrator and Nativity of Christ, stone, glass, gold and silver mosaic.



22. Vatican, Pinacoteca, panel, 3rd quarter of 11th c.,
Last Judgment, pigment on wood.



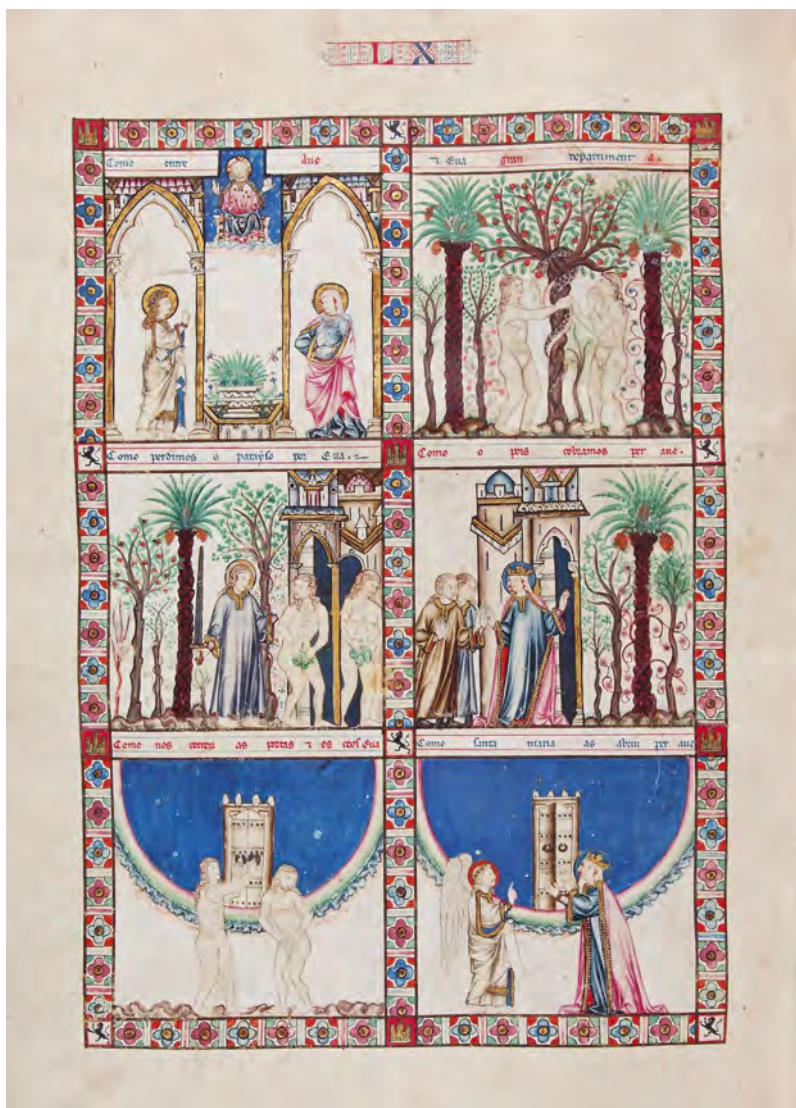
23. Kremsmünster, Benedictine monastery, flabellum, *Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, Bear Suscitating Cub, Eagle Flying to Sky and Descending Beneath Sea*, 12th c., gilt bronze.



24. Münster, Landesmuseum, windows from Arnstein, 4th quarter of 12th c.,
Tree of Jesse Flanked by Old Testament Typologies, stained glass.



25. Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Msc. Bibl. 22, fols. 4^v-5^r, *Song of Songs*, early 11th c., *Allegory*, gold and pigments on parchment.



26. Escorial, Real Biblioteca, MS T-I-1, fol. 88^v, *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, 1280-84, Song 60, *Eua/Ave*, pigment on parchment.



27. Rome, Santa Maria in Trastevere, apse,
Christ and Mary Cothronus, 1140-43, mosaic.



28. Vatican, Museo Vaticano, reliquary box from Sancta Sanctorum (verso of lid), 7th c., *Scenes from Christ's Life*, pigment on wood.



29. Bern, Historisches Museum, diptych of Andrew III of Hungary, late 13th c., *Life of Christ and Saints*, gold, gems, crystal, parchment.



30. Grottaferrata, San Nilo, triumphal arch, *Pentecost and Trinity with Prophets*, 12th c. and 13th, mosaic and fresco.



31. Deir el-Surian, apse, *Annunciation to the Virgin*, 8th c., fresco.



32. Mt. Sinai, St. Catherine's monastery, iconostasis beam (detail),
Adoration of Magi, 13th c., paint on wood.



33. Paris, BnF, MS Nouv. acq. Lat. 2334, fol. 1^v, Ashburnham Pentateuch, *Creation of World*, 5th c.? with 9th c. overpainting, pigment on parchment.



34. Sankt Olof, altarpiece, sculptural group of ca. 1440 placed in 16th c. shrine,
Throne of Mercy, paint on wood.



35. Wiesbaden, Landesbibliothek, Rupertsberg Scivias, fol. 51^r,
Hildegard of Bingen's Vision, ca. 1165 (20th c. copy), paint on paper.



36. Massa Marittima, Museo dell'arte, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, altarpiece, *Virgin and Child with Saints and Personifications*, 1st quarter of 14th c., pigment and gold on wood.

The panel is slightly restored in the photo; the silver and Trinity on Fides' mirror is a reconstruction of the detail now lost in the painting but perceivable through chemical analysis and sgraffiti.



37. Bridekirk, St. Brigid, baptismal font, 1140s,
Richard Carving Ornament, stone.



38. Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire,
Cod. 2929, fol. 82^r (detail of Fig. 11).

Hans Belting (†)

DANTE'S ENCOUNTER WITH LIVING "SHADOWS"

Dante's *Commedia*, later known as *Divine Comedy*, is a journey to the afterworld, experienced by the poet as a dream. The inhabitants of this otherworldly space are described as images: their meaning will be the focus of the present paper. Dante understands this dimension of the afterlife according to the Medieval conceptualization of the three specific places that are described in the three *cantiche* of the poem. The dead appear in the two first books, *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, as living shadows who still carry their mortal bodies with them in image- and voice-form. In *Paradiso*, they have turned into lights, who still wait for their resurrection within eternal bodies. Moreover, these three places are dominated by distinctive temporal notions: an endless time in Hell, the different times corresponding to each individual punishment in the Purgatory, and the awaited end of time in Heaven.

The scenario, which is going to be developed by the poet in his work, is most clearly described in the first, introductory *canto*. Prior to the beginning of his journey, he gets lost "in a dark forest", where wild animals bar his way. Then suddenly somebody appears who "looked speechless through long silence". Dante addresses him with these words, asking for protection: "whoever you are, whether a shadow or a real human being". The answer is: "I am not a man, but I was once a man (*uomo già fui*)" (*Inferno* 1, 73). The speaking shadow is introduced in this way. Some hints at its previous life enable the poet to understand that he is facing Virgil, who lived more than one thousand years before him. He greets the great poet of Antiquity as his "master" (*maestro*) and his unequalled "model" (*autore*).

The *volume* Dante maintains to have studied "so long" is nothing else than Virgil's masterpiece, the *Aeneis*. In the latter's sixth book, the Trojan Aeneas, the later founder of Rome, descends into the Netherworld in the aim to ask his father Anchises about the future. The role played there by the Cumaean sibyl is undertaken in the *Commedia* by Virgil, who only in the *Paradiso* will leave the task to another soul (*anima*), that of Beatrice, "who is worthier than me" (*Inferno* 1:65 and 1:122). Already the introductory verses of Dante's poetical journey to the afterworld evoke notions that have informed the perception of the dead's afterlife in two different cultures – the "shadows" of Antiquity and the "souls" of Christian tradition.

European imagination was nourished by the ancient rhetorical figure of the “living shadow”, which regained its full poetical potential with Dante. He attributes the explanation of his rather original interpretation of this figure to the words of the ancient poet Statius, who, according to legend, was a Christian convert. It first appears in the 25th canto of the second *cantica*, which corresponds not only to the work’s middle, but also to a key moment and a real turning point in Dante’s journey. Since a soul is going to experience a new transformation, through which it will be led into Paradise, there is a need to provide some elucidations about its body of shadow. The poet’s claims of having seen souls in the hereafter could sound hazardous, given that Christian doctrine taught that they were bodiless. Dante’s shadows were not inspired by theology and were introduced as a tribute to Virgil’s otherworldly journey. He worked out a double strategy whereby such special images were simultaneously defined *by analogy with shadows and in contrast to bodies*.

A double bodily association is already present in the shadow we cast on the ground, and it can be reduced to this general principle: *an image is like a shadow, which differs from the body but is produced by a lighted body*. Sensorial seeing leads first to imagination and later to conceptualization.

As a natural bodily image, the shadow has constantly played a role as a source of inspiration and guidance for image-making. It worked simultaneously as a proof and a loss, as an index and a denial of the body, whose clear outline was blurred and made hard to recognize. On the other hand, the body was, in Dante’s eyes, a living phenomenal reality and, as such, a *persona*. This latter word, which indicated a mask in ancient theatre, was already used by Thomas Aquinas to describe whoever lives in his/her own body. Unlike Virgil, the pilgrim Dante was still a *persona*. In the sixth circle of Hell (*Inferno* 6:36), the two travellers catch sight of an illusory image (*vanità*) that looks like a person (*che par persona*).

Like the border between life and death, the threshold between bodies and shadows, despite their being so strongly associated in the sunshine, can hardly be crossed. Rather than as a stimulus to transgression, Dante interpreted it as an outcome of transcendence. Accordingly, the analogy of image and shadow in its mimetic association with the body led him, in a further step, to acknowledge the ontological difference between shadow and body. Through their shadows, bodies cast their image on the ground, whereas the dead do not *cast* any shadow, since they *are* shadows.

Ancient thought made clear that shadows cannot be touched in the same way as images can be hugged. Already Homer describes an unsuccessful embrace that causes disappointment. As Odysseus tries to clasp the image of his mother in his hands (*Odyssey*, 11:205-210), it vanishes “like a shadow or a dream”. In Virgil’s poem (*Aeneid* 6: 699-700), Aeneas throws his arms around his father’s neck, but “the image escaped his hands” (*manus effugit imago*). He sees “bodiless beings” (*sine corpore vitas*), who come towards him as “empty images” (*cava sub imagine*). In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (402-443), such an experience of shadows is associated to Narcissus’ mirror-image: what he saw was only “the shadow of an image” (*imagineis umbra*) that, after coming and staying with him, also went down in his company.

Similar expressions are also encountered in Dante's work. In the second canto of *Purgatorio* (2:76-84), he sees a soul approaching and trying "to embrace him". Since this attempt fails, the poet cries out: "O empty shadows, which exist only in their appearance!" (*Oh ombre vane, fuor che nell'aspetto*). Only by his voice he recognizes the figure standing before him as his friend Casella, who states: "As I loved you once in my mortal body, so I love you now albeit bodiless". In the 21st canto (130-136), Dante and his guide meet with the roman poet Statius. As soon as Dante introduces Virgil to him, the former discourages him from any embrace: "Brother, leave that alone, as you are a shadow and you only see a shadow" (*Frate, non far, ché tu sei ombra et ombra vedi*). Statius admits with embarrassment that he "forgot our nonentity and treated shadows as solid bodies" (*trattando l'ombre come cosa salda*).

The different phenomenal appearance of Dante's body vis-à-vis his shadow is first hinted at in the third canto of *Purgatorio*, in the very moment as he leaves the dark depths of Hell and comes out to the sun-lighted slopes of Purgatory (*Purgatorio* 3:16-18). Since the sunshine is behind him, he casts a shadow on the ground in front of him: "The sun was broken in front of my figure" (*rotto m'era dinanzi alla figura*), "which was an obstacle to its rays". This does not happen with Virgil: is he still at his side? The guide reassures the poet with these words: "It is already evening in the place where the body, through which I once cast a shadow (*al quale io facea ombra*), is buried" (*Purgatorio* 3:24).

The next instant, as a host of souls fix their attention on the shadow cast by Dante on the rocky ground, Virgil confirms to them "that you are really seeing a human body, and that's why the sunshine is cut through with him on the ground" (*il lume del sole in terra è fesso*). It is by God's will that Dante still has a body, "against which the sunshine is broken" (*rotta*). Similar explanations will be given frequently during the visit to the Purgatory. The souls, engaged in improving their status, get frightened when they realize that Dante breaths and casts a shadow, and mistake him for an intruder. In the circle of the voluptuous, he is asked why "you can make of yourself a wall against the sunshine". They whisper to each other's ears: "That one does not look like having a fictitious (*fittizio*) body" (*Purgatorio* 26:12), and, in so saying, they provide a definition of their own status. The shadow is understood as a visual marker signposting the solid matter (*cosa salda*) which has been lost by the souls.

Dante understands shortly later why the gluttons, who, as souls, need no nourishment, can lose weight and may look like starving people. Then Virgil steps aside and is finally willing to reveal the origins of the bodies of shadow. He encourages the poet Statius to verbally show the "cosmic view" (*la veduta eterna*) wherein even the bodies of shadow have a place (*Purgatorio* 25:31). Statius deals with this in three steps. First, he sums up the process whereby the body is created through human conception, in keeping with Aristotle. Second, he follows theological scholasticism in his statement that God creates immortal souls, which share in both human and divine qualities, as they manifest themselves in the body's life.

Later on, Dante/Statius relies exclusively on his own thought in describing the origins of the bodies of shadow. The soul preserves the shaping power (*virtù informativa*) it pos-

sessed before separating from the body. The poet has recourse to the natural metaphor of the rainbow created by sunlight in the air imbued with rainwater: in the same way, the shell of air that surrounds the souls in the afterworld takes shape in a form through which they can manifest themselves “by their own power” (*virtualmente*). A second natural metaphor hints at flames, which are obliged to follow the fire in any direction: in the same way, the new shape (*sua forma novella*) conforms to the soul, and “that’s why we call it shadow” (*ombra*). Nevertheless, this bold comparison implies a basic distinction. Whereas, in this world, the soul manifests itself in the body, in the afterworld it can find expression only in a very idiosyncratic type of shadow. It happens therefore, so says the soul, “that we have to speak, laugh, and cry”, and the Purgatory visitor is invited to become convinced of this, since “the shadow is formed” (*l’ombra si figura*) by such affections (*Purgatorio* 25:110).

In this strongly investigated passage Dante takes a risk. He speaks of the miraculous making of an image, in which the soul lives again in the afterworld. As shown by Étienne Gilson, there was no place for the existence of shadows in the theological universe. Rather, they are inventions of a poet who transposes Virgil’s model into a Christian context. Whereas the ancient viewed shadows as indicators of lost bodies, the souls of Purgatory prepare themselves to a further transformation into lights, which will resurrect within their bodies on the day of Last Judgment (*il gran dì*). Dante is bound to the shadows he meets with not only through their reminiscences of past lives, but also through their hope in a shared future.

Already in the 11th canto Dante admits to his artist’s pride, which will be something he will have to expiate in the same way as the dead artists on the terrace of the arrogant. Despite such manifestations of humility, in the third *cantica* he runs another risk, which his narrative qualities had hitherto been unable to achieve. The ascent to the sphere of planets in Paradise is a new task, which cannot be accomplished by relying on the shadow notion. He invokes the god-poet Apollo, but only Beatrice can help him to understand what he is going to see. The image problematics emerges here in a new form. Since the souls leave their body of shadow behind them, they are transformed into lights, whose association with shadows can only be perceived as contradictory. In the light, the shadow has vanished.

The afterworld traveller, who is still living in his own body, has literally lost his footing. Souls move about weightless and as quickly as light in aether. Dante describes them as “living lights” that are like countless mirrors reflecting divine light: “Then I saw one thousand souls hastening towards us” (*Paradiso* 5:103). One of them, “nested” within a lighting cover as all other souls, comes closer and speaks to him. As the poet inquires about its identity, it shines “of a brighter splendour”, since, in this way, it shows its joy for the question (*Paradiso* 5:109). Other images come to be associated with this nocturnal “constellation” of stars. In the 19th canto, the “beautiful image” (*bella imago*) displaying an eagle with open wings proves to be a multiple composition, where each soul radiates like a ruby. Accordingly, the eagle can also speak with several voices. Dante is now reporting something that “nobody has hitherto described and not even the boldest *fantasia* may be able to imagine” (*Paradiso* 19:1-3).

God's vision creates the light radiated by the souls. But it can be wondered whether they have already achieved their final status. An answer is given by Solomon in the 14th canto: "our vestment" (*vesta*) of light will be preserved and will even radiate of a brighter light, when the flesh, now glorified and hallowed, will cover again our *persona*, re-established in its living wholeness" (*Paradiso* 13:43-45). Consequently, "the splendour that shines hereabout will be surpassed by the appearance of the body (*carne*), which is now covered with earth" (*Paradiso* 13:55-57).

The souls' return to their new, immortal bodies is an audacious thought, which Dante cannot avoid borrowing from Christian tradition. Nevertheless, he regains his poetical freedom by adding that souls are "nostalgic about their dead bodies" (*mostrar disio d'i corpi morti*; *Paradiso* 13:63). Since very early times, human beings reacted to their existential challenges by opposing the *faces of images* to the *facelessness of death*. Because of death, they found themselves entangled in the enigma of an absence, to which images owe their oldest meaning. Their presence in this world responds to a definitive absence. In the myths associated with funerary cults the dead come always to a place where they are waited for by the living within an image. Therefore, the ontological meaning of images was connected to death, since it is only in the realm of death that the appearance of an image is able to attract a new being.

At the core of Dante's otherworldly journey lays an image theory grounded in the distinction between image and body. These two notions differ from each other from a double perspective: on the one side, bodies *are not* images, and on the other hand, images *have* no bodies. Shadows are cast by mortal bodies, and not by souls, which experience a new life as bodies of shadow. Since the latter could but be understood as *images*, they could not be mistaken for living *bodies*. Only Dante's dreaming self could cross the border between life and death. Awareness of death – which, from an anthropological viewpoint, can be described as the genetic moment of human image-making – eventually led Dante to work out the poetical imagery of a journey into the afterworld, which has become world literature.

COMPENDIUM OF QUESTIONNAIRES

LUISA ELENA ALCALÁ

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My original focus of interest was the Society of Jesus and the ways in which Jesuits influenced and engaged with images and artistic matters in the viceroyalty of New Spain in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At first, this topic (of my dissertation) was meant to be a study on patronage. However, due to the kinds of sources and archival materials discovered, I broadened the focus, finding patronage studies too limiting because they fell short of recovering a sense for how the Jesuit network operated. The aspects that interested me about the Jesuits concerned mediation: how they circulated objects and images, placed them in specific settings, and activated them for a multi-ethnic and layered society through various methods. Since then, my research has moved in other directions: sometimes it returns to the more traditional methodologies of art history, including artist biographies, style, and iconography; at other times, it engages with the recent “turns” in the field, such as the spatial turn. In general, I work from the objects and am not married to any methodology, but rather let the objects and artists that pique my curiosity signal which path might best respond to the issues that seem most pertinent to them.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

These would be Jonathan Brown’s, *Images and Ideas in Seventeenth-Century Spanish Painting* (1978), David Freedberg’s *The Power of Images* (1989), and Michael Baxandall’s, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (1988). Professor Brown was my mentor, and he taught me both to look closely at painting and to undertake historical research exhaustively. Through a series of case studies, his book did just that, offering an elucidating window onto the past by demonstrating the extent to which style, iconography, ideas about art, and patronage were densely interwoven. Baxandall’s classic study is equally concerned with recovering a sense for how works were made and seen, but his methodology was in its day completely new. To-

day, one would probably characterize him as someone who thought “outside the box”. For someone who was trained in the study of Old Masters but works on Spanish American colonial art like myself, his “period eye” was a welcome stimulus, an invitation to explore specific viewing contexts more deeply. Finally, Freedberg’s study, which engaged with *low* as much as *high* art, has been deeply inspiring for the study of religious images in Spanish America. Although different in approaches, from today’s vantage point these three books and their methodologies seem rather complementary.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

From the replies to the previous questions, it is probably already clear that I consider traditional art history still of great value. In fact, I am often in awe of the depth of knowledge of the foundational figures of the field. Although the time when style analysis or iconographic decoding were an end in themselves is mostly over, it is also true that sometimes current characterizations of those methodologies are reductionist. In an interest in evidencing what is new and different in our own times, we have not always fully recognized previous contributions and the ways in which they continue to be relevant. For the most part, in my area of work, style and iconography are still present in much of current scholarship, albeit as tools which facilitate addressing broader and different questions. As such, their worth should be recognized more openly.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

The field’s “turns” are stimulating because they draw attention to very specific aspects of the visual realm, often allowing us to consider images in a new light. Also, because these “turns” are usually interdisciplinary, originating outside art history, I find that thinking about how they might intersect with art historical research provides a space for creativity. Of these trends, the spatial and the material turn have been the most influential for me. Years ago, authors working on space, a sense of place, and landscape provided a stimulus for research on the painting *Conquista y reducción de los indios infieles de Pantasma y Paracas*, published in *The Art Bulletin* (2012). More recently, I have re-engaged with the spatial turn as a means of positing that distance, as a concept and a reality, needs to be foregrounded more in accounts of viceregal art (*Latin American and Latin Visual Culture*, 2021). At the same time, a source of concern is that while at their best the “turns” allow us to see works in new light, they can also invite simple reformulation of previously well-studied objects, dressing the old in new clothes with little authentically new substance. Whatever the approach, I would encourage more research on entirely new topics: at least for Latin American colonial art most artists and works have still not been the object of any kind of study.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

For anyone working on Latin American art of the viceregal period and interested in doing so in an inclusive and sensitive manner, notions about colonialism are fundamental. Years ago, postcolonial studies and foundational figures, such as Homi Bhabha, raised awareness of the complexity of intercultural relations, posing questions that continue to be necessary when addressing the relationship of the Western world to the rest of the globe in the humanities. At the same time, for those notions to be effective and convincing when applied to specific studies about art and images, it is fundamental that they rest on a solid historical foundation for, as many historians of Latin America have demonstrated, not all colonialist contexts operated in the same way, nor was lived experience the same across the vast geography of those territories. Another widely relevant frame of discussion at present for many fields, and with which I often engage, is globalization. The exchanges and interconnections being uncovered challenge earlier narratives which existed mostly as part of local or national histories. Globalization, despite its pitfalls, has transformed the field, and not just in terms of the production of knowledge: it has brought scholars working in disparate fields into greater contact and collaboration than ever before.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

In general, I believe meaning is conveyed through the “what” and “how”, which is why I feel strongly that we must not renounce to training future generations in how to look closely at objects. This includes not just knowing how to identify and interpret subject matter or iconography, but also formal matters related to style, composition, colour, scale, texture and more. At the same time, meaning is ultimately the result of how those forms and themes are perceived and interpreted by their audiences; and, considering how varied these have been across time and space, but also in any one given moment and place, images will always possess more than one meaning. While fixed, images are tremendously rich and flexible vehicles of communication, and meaning is often the result of the visual and cultural associations that a given public brings to a work. This is quite evident in the study of sixteenth-century New Spanish art: as Alessandra Russo and others have demonstrated, an archbishop’s feather mitre could carry different meanings in Europe than among the indigenous communities of central New Spain and for the *amantecas* (feather-artists) who created it.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

Indeed, these are other factors that also affect the production of meaning. Because of traditional academic divisions by media and technique (the dominant triumvirate of ar-

chitecture, painting, and sculpture), art historical specialization has sometimes decontextualized each one of these types of monuments or objects, creating an ideal narrative for them that does not always account for actual visual experience. For instance, we often write about paintings as if they were visible in luminescent museum-like viewing conditions but walking into a church, usually dark, reminds us that perhaps they were seen and even understood in different ways in the past. Of course, there have been scholars working on the issue of experience and meaning for a long time (take, for instance, John Shearman's *Only Connect...Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*). And, currently in the field of religious images some of these aspects are gaining ground as scholars research processes such as the veiling and unveiling of objects, while others apply new computer technology to reconstructing original viewing conditions. Perhaps one additional factor that deserves greater attention in terms of "meaning" has to do with the role of ornament surrounding and framing images and objects.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

For the most part I would agree that this is so, although the historiography of practically every field of expertise has repeatedly demonstrated in hindsight that there was always more to learn. Viewer expectation, or the way people connect to images, is ultimately as vast and heterogeneous as the realm of the visual itself. Extracting a satisfying and accurate sense for how reception operated and what the role of the viewer was from sources (especially textual ones) is usually not easy to accomplish because those sources, if found, are rarely as explicit as we would like them to be. Nonetheless, as Baxandall demonstrated years ago, the kinds of sources that may be of relevance for understanding the relationship of images to society needs to be as varied as possible, and in this respect, interdisciplinary approaches have been helpful. It would be wonderful to see these applied more often to the study of viceregal art in Spanish America, where less work has been done on this issue.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Social history and art have been an important part of our tradition, and it clearly speaks to the potential for images to inform other images as well as overall social experience. Images clearly work in a matrix, and the viewer's understanding is thus also the result of recurrence, repetition, borrowings, citation, similarity and difference vis-à-vis other related works, and the constant resignification that takes place through the relationships in the world's enormous community of images. Furthermore, to the extent that they may be representational – a window or a mirror onto the world – there is no doubt that they provide echoes of other works and experiences.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

The “material turn” has been significant in my research in so far as its questions intersected directly with my study on the Virgin of Loreto and replicas of the Holy House in Mexico. The devotion gained meaning locally not just for what it represented but because of how the materials of the Holy House were described and activated by the Jesuits promoting the cult among Hispanic and indigenous audiences. That said, the materiality of images as a methodology means different things to different people (it is like globalization in this). Currently it seems to cover everything from technical art history to historical research on materials and consideration of them as one more factor that shapes meaning. In any case, I find it important to remember that while material-based study is currently shedding new light and even helping to reconfigure certain areas of research, such as the realm of religious images and objects, awareness of technical and material factors was something that foundational figures in the history of art, such as Henri Focillon, emphasized early on. And, like all methodologies, it is probably more pertinent for certain objects than others; as regards technical studies especially, we need to explore how to relate its findings to the history of art in more direct and meaningful ways.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Recently I invited Alejandro Vergara, Senior Curator of Flemish and Northern European Paintings at the Museo del Prado, to give a class in the galleries. Standing before Rubens and Brueghel’s *Five Senses*, he drew attention to the allegorical figure of Sight, sitting at a table and gesturing toward a small painting that a *putto* holds up to her gaze, reminding us that it was often in such a setting that people gathered to talk about paintings and objects. Possession (through acquisition or gifting) and subsequent conversation have always been fundamental aspects of the social lives of images, and there are plenty of sources, both textual and visual, that capture these interactions. Of course, we lack explicit testimony of engagement for most objects, and in the field of Latin American viceregal art sources are drastically fewer than those for European art of the same period. Nonetheless, as many scholars have shown, that absence should not mean that one cannot figure out some type of “social life” for those objects. The biography of things and agency are methodologies encompassed in the broader category of the “social life” of images which, along with many other colleagues in my field, I find quite helpful, especially because we not only have fewer sources but also know less about artists and patrons. Ultimately, these approaches activate the works of art in interesting ways.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Besides sight, some images clearly have the capacity to engage other senses, most noticeably touch and sound. As regards the former, in the previously mentioned research about the Holy House of Loreto, it is evident that pilgrimage to the original sanctuary in Italy was as much about seeing the image of the Virgin and Child, supposedly made by Saint Luke, as it was about experiencing and touching the walls of the Holy House. Pil-

grims sought to physically experience the space of the Holy House and touching the brick or stone walls, supposedly the original ones of the house where the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary took place, was a crucial experience. Consequently, many copies of the Holy House also sought to imitate and recover that experience, inviting touch through material imitation as well as through sermons and texts that emphasized touch.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Although not my field of expertise, Non-Western art history has much to teach in this respect. For example, Inca and Andean societies revered certain sacred mountains and stones, and this was not just a pre-Hispanic phenomenon but rather a tradition that persisted after the Spanish conquest and into the present. Acknowledging the iconicity of such natural formations facilitates writing a history of viceregal art for this geography that is not exclusively about Spanish cultural imposition and local adaptation; it is also about the meeting of different cultures who understood iconicity (and religion) through different forms, both manmade and natural. Beyond the Non-Western traditions and contexts of cross-cultural contact, it may also be true that even in the study of European art, we have neglected this issue. It occasionally comes up, as when Palomino, the Spanish treatise writer, notes a few examples of local devotion being expressed to images people “see” and find in an odd-shaped rock or other natural object. Rather than delimiting such accounts to theoretical analysis about materiality and religious images, one could also take such anecdotes as a window onto a broader arena of belief, popular beliefs, that persisted locally even as orthodoxy was rigid. Although typically researched by anthropologists, such considerations are still underexplored by art historians.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

The field of Latin American viceregal art has a wealth of studies that address these issues, many from theoretical perspectives grounded in postcolonial theory and often applying but also transforming those theoretical models to fit the specific historical situations of each case. At the same time, for Latin American studies terminology – finding the best word to describe these processes – has been a source of much discussion and some debate. Should we call it hybrid, mestizo or syncretic? Does the metaphor of “translation” satisfy the field of art history for tracing such movements and transformations? Is it only apt for cross-cultural contexts or can it be used in a European context as well? When should we use each one of these (and other) terms (the list is long)? And are they interchangeable? Although they most certainly are not, they do sometimes seem to be used with laxity and without full consideration for the differences involved. At the same time, it is worth considering the extent to which the terms we choose may determine the out-

come of the research. Are we missing other artistic dynamics by foregrounding these processes? What do we push into the background?

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

Avoiding the Western lens if one has been formed by it (and, as we all know, art history as a field has been shaped by it) is almost impossible, and it seems important to acknowledge this and move forward from there. The investigation of non-European contexts seems to require a double task: the specialization in the culture of choice, as in any other field, combined with the critical analysis of an earlier historiography that projected and imprinted European art historical models worldwide. The latter task has, of course, already been undertaken, and there is much to learn from reading authors such as Craig Clunas or Susan Vogel. Ultimately, to avoid applying these Western European notions it seems necessary to learn more about other cultures and artistic traditions, something easier said than done. How many specialists in non-European cultures are there in European or Latin American universities? At stake is not just a greater understanding of non-European contexts but also the legitimacy of studies that pursue a global focus (or, more commonly, connections between two or more culturally distinct geographies). For those interested in working with the non-Western artistic traditions, the highest of academic standards must be met and engagement must be professional and not episodic or the result of an academic trend.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

A couple of thoughts. First, as regards English as a *lingua franca*, one of the risks involved is that it generates a larger bibliography in this language than before, and while beneficial, this may also result in future generations relying more on it than on the bibliography these texts cite in other languages. To what extent does English run the risk of making scholarship in other languages invisible in the future? Will younger generations foster the fallacy that they no longer need other languages besides English? Maybe this will not happen, but some grade of vigilance may be wise in the pursuit of a balance between the bridges we are building and the foundational blocks they rest on. Secondly, in terms of the age of globalization and interdisciplinary ambitions, we must work harder to meet their challenge because they require both specialization and deep knowledge of cultures and societies that we are not always as versed in as it might be desirable. Finally, I hope we do not leave expertise – the traditional kind – aside. Knowing how to look and interpret images in terms of condition, materials, and techniques which, along with style, make them look the way they do, are defining skills of the art historian.

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BARBARA BAERT

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

In 2004, at the beginning of my academic career, I became involved in an interdisciplinary research program on one verse: John 20, 17. The research team consisted of an exegete, an anthropologist, and myself as an art historian. For me, the *Noli me tangere* project was not only *pars pro toto* for a turn into the senses, but also led to the concept of *Interspace*. *Interspace* concerns the “magnetic field” between word and image, or the methodical translation of a literary corpus into the iconographic tradition. The insights from this interdisciplinary collaboration, have given me the methodological resilience for the follow-up projects on the iconography of the bleeding woman from Mark, and on the context of the so-called *Johannesschüssel*.

These latter projects not only challenged the relationship between high & low material culture, but also fundamentally questioned the original concept of *Interspace* once again. Where iconography appeared to have no safety net in primary sources, and knowledge of functions of textless phenomena remained “blind,” other approaches forced themselves upon us.

Infra: §3 en §4.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

– As early-career scholar onwards. Gerhard Wolf & Herbert Kessler about the mandylion and *il volto di Cristo*. These authors had a considerable impact on me regarding the ontology of the image (later also Georges Didi-Huberman and his *L’image ouverte*).

– *Compagnon de route*. The Belgian non-conformist art historian/anthropologist Paul Vandebroeck on nun’s art, material culture and Berber textiles. Vandebroeck did not need the Turn for his transcultural & transhistorical research in archetypes and migration of motifs.

– Today. Anthropologist Timothy Ingold on the impact of environmental senses and his work on the meaning of the visual medium as making processes.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

I will explore this question with three case-studies that challenged me to reconsider the dichotomy between style & iconography, between form & content.

1. Hybrid Objects: Enclosed Gardens. *Revisions*

The phenomenon of the Enclosed Gardens (*Besloten Hofes*) in the Low Countries is one that has only received some attention in the last decade. As a product of so-called cottage industry within the nunneries, it was not considered part of the canon for a long time, until the Gardens regained interest from the gender and anthropological turn. The Enclosed Gardens escape the actual definitions of religious devotional material and escape the more conventional methodic perspectives. By distancing themselves from mainstream questions, the Enclosed Gardens became *pars pro toto* for an art history that dissolves the boundaries between high and low, between text and image, and between making and completing. The study of the Gardens has demanded a revision concerning these in-grained contradictions.

Infra: §10 Tim Ingold.

2. Objects and instruments of daily life: art-form-process. *Replacements*

The essay *About Sieves and Sieving* takes as its subject an object that utterly coincides with its own function. The essay explores the *longue durée* of the sieve as a symbolic-technical object of use, looking at examples from Jewish folklore, Berber culture, and ancient Egypt that indicate the cosmological importance of the action of sifting, and the exclusivity of women in the related actions. The roundness of the sieve and the ‘shaking’, rocking, circular movements support this symbolic spectrum. Female responsibility for nutrition and hygiene are cultically and symbolically transferred to the sieve. *About Sieves and Sieving* also involves paradigmatic challenges. The first challenge concerns its tectonics. The sieve’s filtration process is made possible by a woven structure. Its capacity both to retain (saving the good) and to remove (discarding the unwanted) in a single action makes the sieve a fundamental symbol of ‘separation’ and ‘filtration’.

The sieve connects the principles of matter, structure, form and function in a radical manner, and inspires us to consider objects, things, material culture etc. organisms. The binary asks a *replacement* by the non-binary, by consubstantiality and immanence.

3. Art Historiography and ‘burned’ scholars. *Integrations*

As a student during the eighties, I was taught what is known as Panofsky-bashing. We were taught to regard Panofsky as the “Atlas bearer” of guilt, in terms of an overly rigorous definition of Worldview, an overly dogmatic interpretation of disguised symbolism, and a malignant irreparable dichotomy between form and content within his famous three-step system. The result is that our generations have not read Panofsky and know only the negative valuation history as a teaching tool. This has prompted me personally to revisit so-called stakeholders in art historiography in *prima lectura*. The return to primary sources, among ‘overheated’ scholars brings peace and hygiene to the lore and inte-

grates exegetical nuance and ‘the period’s eye’ into historiography. This project led to the publication *Signed PAN* at Princeton (Peeters Publishers).

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such new scholarly debates?*

1. My generation has experienced the various “turns” both consciously and unconsciously. My doctoral research during the 1990s concerned the literary, material, and iconographic development of the Legend of the Cross from the early Middle Ages to the 15th century. The dissertation project worried some senior scholars at the time. The method was fluid, the finality unbounded, and the genre indeterminate: no catalogue raisonné, no stylistic research, no single iconographic course, and an open lock on all sorts of “vernacular” traditions. Someone at the Hebrew University at the time called my interdisciplinary ambition “a glorious mistake”. Through the material & anthropological turn, however, *A Heritage of Holy Wood* would still gain a frame of reference to this day. These “multiple dynamics” led me, backed by scholars such as Carolyn Walker Bynum, Cynthia Hahn, Jeffrey Hamburger, Bianca Kühnel, John Lowden & Miri Rubin, to the study of liturgical and domestic objects in material (gendered) space, and their anthropological anchoring in the senses (cfr. §7 mise-en-scene and project OrnaSacra).

2. *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte* was never taught as such at KU Leuven. But as a searching postdoc scholar, I myself came into contact with German *Kunstwissenschaft* around the year 2000 through the Berlin milieu of Gerhard Wolf, Hans Belting and Christoph Wulf. Around the same time, I also began to read the work of James Elkins and Tom Mitchell on my own initiative. The German *Bildwissenschaften* on the one hand and the “Iconic Turn” from the U.S. on the other emancipated me. The French Turn with *l’anthropologie visuelle* (Louis Marin, Georges Didi-Huberman), also broke open my work theoretically.

As benefits I mention:

- Ontology and iconogenesis of the image (e.g. vera icon). Myths of emergence of the image; paradigms of image as non-figurative (*dissemblance*) versus figurative (*resemblance*) (Georges Didi-Huberman); Textile and “textility” as matrix of the dynamics of the image (Tristan Weddigen);

- Nachleben studies. Research on Aby Warburg: *Pathosformeln*, *Ninfa fiorentina* and the launch of the Studies in Iconology series (Peeters Publishers: 2014*).

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

In the foregoing, I have outlined the impact on turns. My impressions can be extrapolated to present-day understanding of images:

- Transcultural rooting and archetypes: so-called migration of images (Warburg Studies);
- Making & Meaning: images in their materiality and made by human hands;
- The image in the sensory space: images entangled in the sensorium.

I add two elements that have not yet been addressed:

The renewed fascination with the detail, the *Beiwerk*, the *parergon*, the ornament. Since Ernst Gombrich's *The sense of Order*, there has not yet been an "Ornamental Turn". How can we provide meaning to these motifs that have been mistakenly considered "empty"? What role does the *parergon* play in artistic interpretation today. From the perspective of art historiography, Spyros Papapetros performs inspiring work on Gottfried Semper to this end.

Developments in Digital Humanities. The possibilities of deep learning, computational art history in which form groups, iconographic families (genealogies of images) can be articulated.

6. *What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

See my answers in §5.

"How to summarise Barbara Baert's reconfiguration of iconology? As a resistance to the reduction of iconology to hermeneutics, i.e. to the interaction with images as flat entities to be read, as visual representations that can be coded and decoded, understood as "illustrations" of texts. Barbara Baert proves that images confront the viewer more like a sensing organism than as text. While a text depends on a code, the contact between organisms is never perfectly coded. It presupposes continuities and transitions, movements and tensions. The image is not just a visual text but an organism that appeals to the broader aesthetic and intellectual disposition of the viewer. An image that evokes odours and touch, movement and breath demands infinite attention as it claims to include more than a readable message. It cannot just be seen, archived, explained and left behind because it solicits the experience of time as duration. Subsequently, the experience of time as duration is a sign of life and it is in this sense that we may speak of a "life" of images (Vlad Ionescu, in *Predella*, 39, 2016)."

7. *To what extent is "meaning" determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

– *Mise-en scene*. With our project team Ornasaca and its casus of the liturgical space of the Cathedral of Antwerp during the 16th century, we developed the idea of the liturgical space and its objects (*retabula*, altar bells, etc) as a choreography of moveable patterns, dependent of the momentaneous liturgical and devotional needs.

– *Conditions of visibility*. For my dissertation in the nineties on *The Legend of the True Cross*, I traveled the world hoping that churches would be opened as to set my eyes on fresco cycles, liturgical objects, etc. Deep Pixel Viewing as for example is shared with the public after the famous Van Eyck conservation project lead to important new iconographical interpretations, as for example deep details of the pupil of the new discovered authentic lamb's face (published in *Iconographica*). Of course, the emotional impact to see the images "in vivo" remains incomparable.

– *Experiential viewer*. The sensory and emotional experience of the viewer has long remained taboo as a methodological starting point. In the training, an objective gaze is

claimed from the students. That gaze should then lead to a language purged of emotion. That is a fiction. Where the viewer's gaze attaches itself to the image, a dynamic of meaning-giving arises. One cannot escape the projection of the subject and the self. This position is taken most radically by Mieke Bal (after Roland Barthes): the image needs the gaze, it comes to life in the meaning that the viewer himself administers. The viewer fertilizes the image.

This position has also influenced my academic language. I have evolved into an écriture that allows for scenography, drama, and prose, thus integrating relevant passages from (functional) literature. My academic position is evolving toward "authorship".

As a writer and an essayist Siri Hustvedt (*A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women: Essays on Art, Sex, and the Mind*).

"One can argue that there is a synesthetic quality to all art experiences, that art revives a multimodal-sensory self. While looking at a painting, for example, don't we feel the brush? Studies have shown that mirror systems are active when people look at visual art and are also activated by written accounts of actions or emotional situations. If we do not feel our way into works of art, we will not understand them. I do not sense the touch of persons depicted in paintings, but I do have strong felt responses to the marks left by the painter's brush, but then arguably this is a common experience, one hardly limited to people with mirror touch."

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

The "now" might be:

– The ability to relate the classic iconological approach to a phenomenology of the image. Reading images – that is to say, explaining them in terms of visual symptoms that are detectable in texts – appears as a first step, an introductory episode meant to account for other sensorial dimensions of the image. (After Vlad Ionescu about *Pneuma*, in *Predella*, 39, 2016).

– Or say that the end precedes the beginning,/ And the end and the beginning were always there/ Before the beginning and after the end. /And all is always now (T.S. Eliot [1888-1965], *Four Quartets*)

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

A valuable classical-Panofskian viewpoint is that the image is embedded in its cultural environment. That environment can be micro (e.g., a snapshot) or macro (the oft-discussed concept of *Weltbild*). The image can be loosely or very tightly sewn into a temporal and spatial joint. Occasionally the image even escapes that wiring. The image floats or is "suddenly" there. Be that as it may, I agree that one image evokes another, and a dialogue with the broader cultural context ensues. Here I hold to a strong iconological reflex. The relevance of this reflex lies in the resilience of the Art Sciences to unfold itself and allow access to the erudite.

“Yet, the potential of the discipline to spread out and the freedom to keep the subject matter close some of the time and to expand it over its complete breadth on other occasions is one of the most delightful choreographies that the Human and Art Sciences can create. The dynamics of open and closed, of landscape and focus, of archetype and details – and everything in between: the thinking, seeking, trying, hesitating, failing, the creative solutions, and so forth – are more than just a spontaneous reflex: they form the *ampleur* of an actual describable hermeneutics in the *Zwischenraum* or ‘the third area’ (from: Baert, *Interruptions & Transitions*).”

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Here I am very much inspired by Tim Ingold. Throughout his work, Ingold has fought against dualisms in the human sciences, such as the dichotomy between object and subject, between form and content. Instead, he sees objects as living beings and artists as makers from whose hands objects flow. Ingold therefore rejects Aristotle’s exhausted Western hylemorphic model, whereby art is just a passive meeting of form and matter. Ingold replaces this template with an ontology that prioritises the actual formative processes and transformations of materials over, respectively, the finished product and a static definition of form. Form came to be seen as imposed, by an agent with a particular end or goal in mind, while matter – thus rendered passive and inert – was that which was imposed upon. To the transformations and blends of materials rather than to the different stages of matter.

“My ultimate aim is to overthrow the model itself, and to replace it with an ontology that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products, and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter [...]. My aim is to restore things to life and, in so doing, to celebrate the creativity of what Klee (1973, p. 269) called ‘form-giving’. This means putting the hylomorphic model into reverse. More specifically, it means reversing a tendency, evident in much of the literature on art and material culture, to read creativity ‘backwards’ (Ingold, *The Textility of Making*).”

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Cfr. reflections in §7 & §9.

Again, I will let Siri Hustvedt speak her mind about these interrelations. “I believe art is born in the world of the Between, that is bound up with the rhythms and music of early life, as well as in a form of transference that moves from inner life out onto the page, from me to an imaginary other. My story tells emotional, not literal, truths.”

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

See also §8.

This question was exactly the purpose of the book *Pneuma* (2016), and *Interruptions & Transitions* (Brill, 2017) where I launched the concept of thresholds. Being a core-subject in my work it was already touched upon above.

I will give one passus from the book:

“In her book *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter: Bildmotiv und Bildort*, Tina Bawden assigns five coordinates to this intertwined energy of stillness and movement, of past and future, of the in-between: ambivalence, concealment, invitation, transformation, and mediation, to which I would like to add a sixth parameter – *synesthesia*. (...) “Research into the impact and meaning of odour as part of a model of knowledge has long been underestimated. In ancient, oral cultures – as well as in late antique and medieval epistemology – rites and models were developed in which scent (incense, oils, flowers) occupied a prominent place. Odour is an ephemeral element that reaches us through the air. Winds carry odours with them. An odour is phantasmic. In the sacral context, odour plays a crucial role as an evocation of, and a way of recognizing, the divine. The unseen God manifests himself through his voice and through scent, and is worshipped with the scents of sacrifice, incense, herbs, perfumed oils. Perfume is a medium that allows people to move between the now and the transcendent. Odour may be only the fifth sense in the Platonic model, it is nevertheless an exceptional sense of knowledge. Odour evokes insights in a flash: as an *anamnesis*, as an intuition. Odour is also the pre-eminent binding agent of synesthetic apprehension.”

I think this approach is also the opening to what we did not touch yet so far: the trans-global, transcultural view on visual culture. What bounds us is wind, smell, nature. What brings us in intercultural dialogue is indeed the fundamental bias of the body in the sensory world of the planet.

“We should not be guided merely by the sense of sight in meandering through the labyrinth of *Fragments*, and also, and perhaps more importantly, in pursuing our own research interests: if we follow the thread that Barbara Baert has lent us with her generous example, then we may find our way out of any labyrinth and be less afraid to pursue scents wherever they may lead us” (Davide Stimilli on *Fragments*: a celebration book with 110 lemmata from Barbara Baert’s oeuvre since the year 2000 (2018).

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

– The non-figurative. In the most recent analyses by visual anthropologists, the conspicuous presence of rock and flamed marble in iconographic traditions thematising the pneumatic emergence of images is interpreted as a visual undertaking whereby the hidden and mysterious “breath” is evoked pictorially. Independently from each other, Georges Didi-Huberman, Paul Vandenbroeck, and Victor Stoichita suggest that the *faux marbre* in representations of the Annunciation is an expression of a phase in the visualisation process that precedes the stage of figuration. In other words, artists insert representations of marble and mineral-amorphous drawings in iconographies that benefit from the symbolism of “what precedes” and the “taking root in the matter in order to take shape”, as the Annunciation. Paul Vandenbroeck goes one step further. He writes: “In addition to the phallic sphere, we must introduce non-phallic symbolic domains. Such a domain can be called the *matrix*. The *matrix* conceptualises non-oneness, the prenatal experiences of the

I and the non-I, which exist together without absorbing or repelling each other. [...] The basis of meaning lies in the ‘transcendence’ of bodies. As yet non-symbolic processes of interconnectedness are charged with meaning; not by a ‘higher’ (symbolic) intervention, but from the base, from within (*Matrix Marmorea*).”

– Landscape. My first experiment with this approach was the book on wind: *Pneuma and the Visual Arts in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity*. At this very moment is “imprimatur”: *Looking into the Rain. Magic, Moisture, Medium* (De Gruyter). Back cover text:

“The sensory experience of water falling from the heavens evokes feelings ranging from fear to gratitude and has inspired many works of art. Using unique and expertly developed art-historical case studies – from prehistoric cave paintings up to photography and cinema – this book casts new light on a theme that is both ecological and iconological, both natural and cultural-historical. The follow-up of *Pneuma and Rain*, will be *Morass. Mystery, Matrix, Medium* (inspired by the work of Rod Giblett)”.

14. *Many studies have focussed on the dynamics by which images, originally meant for a specific viewing context, came to be transferred, appropriated, transformed, and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

I think of two points of interest here.

Moshe Barasch describes the creation of *Noli me tangere* as a particular example of *energetic inversion*. Energetic inversion is the power of a gesture to become a formal-artistic recipient for various emotions and their shifting interpretations across the history of art. In the history of gesture, the *Noli me tangere* constitutes such a powerful force field.

I still consider what Aby Warburg developed in his oeuvre, and realized together with Gertrud Bing in his *Bilderatlas*, to be the fundamental hermeneutic for image transfer. It is a tool that is both infinite in its ambitions, and the only access to understanding migrations, genealogies and time travel of image cores. No other explorer has tried with such passion, delicacy and stubbornness to fathom what still continuously washes up on the shores of the Middle Sea from the Far East: from Mithras to Cherub, from astrology to mathematics. Panel A says all about the methodological basis for understanding the human will to expression: 1) *Orientierung*; 2) *Austausch*; 3) *Soziale Einordnung*. This is why the publication project of Horst Bredekamp et al. is so important.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

We will not be able to reverse this process. I myself am in favor of the use of loanwords. Some terms are hermeneutically intertwined with the author’s native language and cannot be translated without losing the psyché of the word.... For example: *Scheine* (Hegel), *Kunstwollen* (Riegl), *Pathosformel* (Warburg), *Aura* (Benjamin), *Punctum* (Barthes), etc.

Belgium’s position in this regard is interesting. As a trilingual country, Belgium remains art historically connected to the French tradition (*anthropologie visuelle*), to the English-speaking tradition (*Pictorial Turn*, *Visual Studies*) and to its German-speaking

neighbors (*Bildwissenschaften*). With this in mind, we have recently set up a network – *réseaux iconologies* – which will further explore and disseminate this added value with methodological workshops.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

There is nothing “lacking” and there is no “should” because there will always be *Kunstwollen*. Today and in the near future, we will embrace the various efforts that have already been initiated regarding the decolonization of our heritage, museums and the language surrounding them, and the further opening up of the planetary borders for a transglobal historiography of art. Unmasking gender-unfriendly reflections also remains an important responsibility. Finally, the art historian, in his capacity to unite images and narratives, can also play a social, ecological, and climatic role.

“Yes, everything becomes attenuated, but it’s also true to say that nothing entirely disappears, there remain faint echoes and elusive memories that can surface at any moment like the fragments of gravestones in the room in a museum that no one visits (...). We never eliminate all vestiges, though, we never manage, truly, once and for all, to silence that past matter, and sometimes we hear an almost imperceptible breathing” (Javier Marías, *The Infatuation*).

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CHARLES BARBER

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My initial work was focused upon the liturgical framing of the reception of the image. This led to a greater interest in the words used to articulate works of art in both the past and the present (the work of art, rather than image, remains my preferred term). My attention to words continues as I engage with the varied ways in which works disclose themselves.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Martin Heidegger, *On the Origin of the Work of Art*; Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

I am not so sure that a “traditional” art history is so readily definable; what we see today is a continuation of a long history of methodological fluidity that defines our ill-disciplined “discipline”.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

These changing foci have certainly helped me to shape fresh questions, whether through adopting/adapting the point of view being explored (materiality, for example) or by reacting against the terms proposed (object agency, for example).

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

I can only suggest notions that have currency in my own work (framing, dislocation, fracture, resistance), I am reluctant to propose a definition of “our present-day understanding of images”.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I think that “meaning” resides in our persuasive appropriations of what images propose.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

When is meaning determined?

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Better equipped than whom? I have my doubts that we (or those that came before us or those that will follow us) can claim a superior point of view.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

This would depend upon the work to which the viewer chooses to put any given image.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

It is both fundamental and but one aspect of the work of art.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

This would depend upon the work to which the viewer chooses to put any given image.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Icons could be seen, eaten, smelt, touched, and heard. Whether our process as art historians is bound to one of these senses or can embrace some or all of them is a situational choice we can make as practitioners within the field.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

This may depend upon whether we understand iconicity to be a manifestation of productive knowledge or a mode of framing things in the world.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Genealogy, per M. Foucault.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

By listening.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

That is for each of us to decide.

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CLAIRE BOSC-TIESSÉ

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

From an initial education in Western history and African art history, I have developed a history of images (always considered as objects) in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, with a special focus particularly on the different aspects of their making, their status, and their use. The analysis of the ruling systems and artistic productions over a long period, from the 13th to the 19th century, enabled a deeper understanding of the different temporalities of the objects, by encompassing them in the visual and material cultures from which they originated and through which they passed, in order to draw up a history of the statuses accorded to them. Combining different approaches, I have jointly directed several projects on Christian rock art, in particular on the UNESCO World Heritage site of Lalibela, and on the constitutive materials of paintings, technological and artistic processes based on ensembles of wall paintings and a corpus of icons from the museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, at the crossroads of history, archaeology and material sciences. On a broader level, my work is reconsidering the conditions and modalities of writing a history of African objects before the 20th century and the issues at stake.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

While preparing my doctoral thesis, some authors accompanied the questions I was asking myself. Ahead, they had proposed some approaches that allowed me to build my own, adapted to my topics of study. I began my thesis in 1995 and that of Jérôme Baschet, then recently published (*Lieu sacré, lieu d'images, les fresques de Bominaco (Abruzzes, 1263). Thèmes, parcours, fonctions*, Paris-Rome, La Découverte - Ecole française de Rome, 1991) confirmed my conviction to look at the sets of images, murals, and illuminations I was studying at the time as total objects interacting with places, including wall paintings in monuments and illumination in books. It is not this particular book that I would include in my top three readings today, but it was a starting point (I now advise my students to read *L'iconographie médiévale*, Paris, 2008). Moreover, in a history of

Ethiopian art that was still very much marked by the notion of influence when it came to identifying the engravings that had served as models, Serge Gruzinski, and especially *La pensée métisse* (Paris, Fayard, 1999), provided me with clues for thinking about the choice made by Ethiopian kings, clerics, and painters to sometimes make use of foreign images and transform them into new forms. This prompted me to always look for what was the third term of the encounter, what he called the “attractor”, the way in which artistic exchange and transformations could take place within and beyond a connected history. Later, and in relation to other concerns, it was Eric Michaud’s book (*Histoire de l’art. Une discipline à ses frontières*, Paris, Hazan, 2005) that helped me to formulate my research on the intellectual ruts we inherited, and on nationalist and ethnicist approaches to art.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Without limiting art history to that, dating and attributing – its first operations when it was constituted as an academic discipline – are still fundamental operations in order to avoid anachronistic, even atemporal iconological interpretations. This does not prevent us from reexamining the ways in which we proceed, from reformulating them if necessary, and from reconsidering their meaning. Thus, questions of dating also lead us to reconsider the different ways in which objects relate to time. Furthermore, although attributing is not an objective of my practice, I do address the question of the modalities of creative gestures, of the types of authorship, of how the “author” is designated, whether the latter is perceived as individual or collective, and of the socio-political stakes of these attributions and determinations. In a context of documentary paucity, the notion of style is still needed as a method of inquiry but also as a gateway to explore creative processes. Differentiating styles is not an end but a first operation of sorting things out in the aim to go further. In both cases, there are questions that remain unanswered as to motivations or formal choices, but this provides a basis for examining the modalities and meaning of a figural thinking at work.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

What we call “turns” is often specific to a field of social sciences, or to a community of researchers, which emphasizes or returns to the practices, objectives and subjects of another field. Each of these turns is therefore specific to a particular group, to which one aspires to belong. If we are sometimes called upon to take position in relation to these “turns”, which we do not always feel concerned with, it is – beyond that – very important to always think of our objects as global and to clearly set out our choices of approach and their limits. Furthermore, we need develop a reflexive way of thinking that situates – as much as possible – what we have done and what we are doing in the historiographical

debate but also in a broader way, in relation to systems of thought, moments in history, and places on the globe where we are active and where we are speaking from.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

My ongoing investigations are driven by Walter Benjamin's notion of aura, at least as developed by George Didi-Huberman at the end of *Devant le temps. Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (2000), and more generally by the questions raised by temporal, geographical and cultural closeness and distance, which imply considering the different regimes of historicity experienced by and through objects, as well as reflecting on how on the art historian situates himself in a given place and time in relation to material works.

Moreover, working in Ethiopia and in Africa more generally, it would be interesting to revisit the notion of "thing", already considered by Otto Pächt on the one hand and Jean Bazin on the other, in the aim to investigate the ways in which the so-called sacred thing-object, as it is defined or perceived, is construed in African contexts and then to come back to European ones.

6. *What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

How images would convey messages and who would understand them is always a question that implies a reflection on the different operating modes of various kinds of images. This includes an acknowledgment of the creators' intentions (and the tensions that may arise among the different persons taking part in it) and the people works are made for in both the moment of their making and, possibly, in future times. Some images may have been designed and produced as highly elaborate ideological discourses, others as primarily evoking a being or presence, or an effect. Moreover, images can carry different meanings than the religious or political texts from the same period, to which they may refer. How these messages are conveyed remains to be examined in each case. The same subject in the same style, or even the same image, can also have different meanings or effects depending on the context. The pomp and circumstance surrounding the display of images can change the message it conveys to viewers about what it "represents", i.e., the ways in which the displayed image is made present and is invested with a special status.

7. *To what extent is "meaning" determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

Above all, these issues must be addressed systematically. What consideration is given to these elements, as well as to the reception of images, by those who create, commission and display images? Whatever the answer, even if it is completely negative, this can shed light on their makers' expectations and therefore the status, function, or power (for insignificant that it may be) images are invested with.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Thanks to work such as that of Michael Baxandall, we are in any case better equipped to ask ourselves this question systematically, but we must accommodate our method of inquiry depending on the objects and the available documentation. We can also wonder how the expectations of the viewers at different times contributed or not to the preservation of certain objects, or some specific features of an object. We should take into account the extent to which perception is conditioned by a number of “filters”, such as, most notably, the modification or disappearance of colours.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

An image reflects a history into which it is embedded. Like art historians, people who look at images are led – at least mentally – to compare the images and their conditions of display, and this comparison is revealing, although it is rarely expressed in words. The ways in which such feelings were apprehended in the past are difficult to reconstruct in our times.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

That the materiality of the works is on everyone’s lips is no doubt indicative of how much it had been forgotten, at least by a large number of art historians who, unlike archaeologists or museum curators, for example, have a less direct relationship with works, which they mostly know through photographic reproductions. This is even more evident in the case of images, since the iconic turn, which has affected historical disciplines in particular, has focused on the iconology of images without really considering them as three-dimensional objects. But this also leads to the question of the difficulty of accessing the objects directly. All these elements have led to forget for a while that images have a format, a weight, a position in or on an object, etc. Systematized global and material approaches associated with other kinds of analyses are still rare. Nor is it a question of simply identifying the materials, but of understanding their implementation, their arrangements and, beyond that, the processes, technological know-how, and gestures that enable their making. In this way, taking into account the materiality of the images sets the grounds for an art history that participates in the social sciences. This requires a real interdisciplinarity that understands the background, methods, terminology, and objectives of each field, which is not yet fully implemented and therefore does not yet fully bear fruit in terms of developing new paradigms.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

If we understand the social life of images here as what makes them become exchangeable goods at one time or another, this raises the question of the various kinds of value

they may have in different situations. The issue is particularly relevant for images that were disseminated far from the geographic and cultural context in and for which they were created in either their original form or as replicas or reproductions. The study of the categories of value attributed to images by viewers or users is very helpful as it can bring to the fore all the associations images may happen to carry beyond those for whom and for what they were initially intended and explain on which grounds they may be attractive to beholders who do not understand them or ignore their original iconological project. Furthermore, it questions how an image works and how we look at images beyond their social life.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

The experience of images relies above all on the sense of sight, but at the same time it involves more generally the body notably in a kinaesthetic way: beholders interacting with both static and moving objects through their physical movements. This is the case with religious objects carried in rituals, used as focuses for kinetic devotions, and meant for either an uninterrupted or a fleeting display. In any case, this kinaesthetic relationship to the object also involves other senses, such as hearing and olfaction, that may be aroused by the association of images with musical performances, words of all kinds (proclaimed, whispered, official or not), and ceremonial scents, as well as the smell of incense, body odours, etc. All these aspects are part of experience and must be included in the analysis: questions should be asked as to the extent to which such a multi-sensorial dimension of images was acknowledged by their makers and their audiences. Furthermore, touching a work is often problematic but it would be interesting to perceive a work, and even an image, through this medium and see what this adds to our understanding.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Including non-artistic elements having an iconic dimension into the art historical narrative seems necessary in the aim to work out larger social, political, and religious frameworks to our understanding of specific situations or phenomena in their multiple aspects. It also raises interesting questions and encourages scholars to reassess the definition of visuality in broader terms.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

The first “tool” is to carry out an in-depth study of the context in which these appropriations and transformations take place, the conditions, motives, effects, and the histor-

ical phenomena in which they are embedded. In this respect, it is a hermeneutic and not a ready-made method to apply. This may seem obvious, but it is rarely carried through to the end. I was confronted with this problem when studying the use of the *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* engravings realized in the 16th century for over four decades: conceived by the Mallorquin Jesuit Nadal and drawn by Italian Jesuits, they were finally engraved and published in Antwerpen, then copied and adapted in other books in the 17th and 18th centuries, and widely used in Ethiopia in the eighteenth century in a context of violent opposition to Catholic aims, where a taste for images disconnected from their provenance prevails. But one could go much further.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

We are facing an imperative of communicability of notions, and we must therefore be able to recognize the structures at work and translate them when dealing with similar phenomena. But to do this, we also need to broaden our knowledge as well as our terminology and lexical practices. It is necessary to carry out, and be able to publish, research on the lexical and semantic history of notions relating to creation, art, divinity, representation, etc. Such studies require time, and will not necessarily offer systematic answers on lexical equivalences in different languages. It is important to remember that these are research topics in themselves.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

The needs are not necessarily the same in the different fields of inquiry. For the arts of Africa, we still need to go into much greater depth on how to make history even if this will vary according to the periods and areas concerned. In the same way, we need to re-examine the relationship between collection, corpus and heritage and the ways in which we rely on objects to recognize when there is history to write. Recent research in the humanities has fully recognized intangible heritage, but we still do not know exactly how to take them into account in an art historical narrative. More generally, the methods of a real history of forms, embodied in a social history, are still poor. We should also take more specifically into account the conditions and situations (place and time) in which our analyses take place.

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MANUEL ANTONIO CASTIÑEIRAS GONZÁLEZ

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

A small group of scholars was trained at the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) by professor Serafin Moralejo (1946-2011). He pioneered in our country the introduction of the Panofskyan iconographic and iconological method in the study of medieval images, and he took up Gombrich's criticism of that method in claiming the primacy of genres, the theory of decorum and the terminological fallacy. It was a formative experience. My first approach to medieval art occurred within that context and, more generally, within the study of the Western tradition. I was interested in the connection between art and pilgrimage, the migration of images, and the survival of Antiquity in the Middle Ages. My PhD on Spanish medieval calendars (1993, edited as a book in 1996: *El calendario medieval hispano: textos e imágenes*), as well as the handbook *Introducción al método iconográfico* (Barcelona 1998), that developed from the classes I was holding at the time, were both indebted to that approach. Before long, my further steps as a young scholar were affected by several stays in Italy. In Pisa, Salvatore Settis enlarged my vision on the survival and reception of Antiquity and on Aby Warburg's legacy. The reading of his three volumes on *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana* (Torino 1984-1986) was an epiphanic experience which has long conditioned my approach to this fascinating topic as my recent publications on the image of Hercules (2017) or the reliquary-altar of St Saturninus at the abbey of St-Hilaire d'Aude (2020) show.¹ In Rome, I worked with Chiara Frugoni (1940-2022), who pushed me to become a medievalist concerned with the relationship between text and image and the role of patronage in the “production” of iconographic programmes.

At that time, I also began to explore other fields. Semiotics, literary theory, and reception aesthetics expanded the toolkit at my disposal in the study of the meaning and function of images. Umberto Eco's semiotics, Julia Kristeva's intertextuality, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic capacity of a text and its re-accentuation over time, Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics and fusion of horizons, were all instrumental in my inquiry into the complexity of the iconic language in medieval art. As a result, I am

fascinated by issues concerning medieval images that go beyond the limited approach of iconography/iconology and focus on the role of the beholder. For instance, in my view, the paving mosaic of Otranto is a monumental equivalent of the literary exercise of ekphrasis.² Romanesque portals, to use another example, do not exactly correspond to texts, but are more akin to a performative text, in the sense of Marco De Marinis' *Semiotics of Performance* (Bloomington 1993).³ The issue of authorship, anonymity, and "portrait" in relation to medieval artists is another case in point, as I try to show in my work on Romanesque panel painting and illumination.⁴ Finally, the intercultural and transcultural aspects of the image of Saint George between the Eastern and Western Mediterranean allowed me to explore the shifting meaning of this representation and its varied reception by different audiences.⁵ The open-minded spirit of the journal *Iconographica* has been a point of reference for all of those concerned with seeing images from multiple, transdisciplinary, and transcultural perspectives – and I am no exception.

2. Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.

Books are not the only publications to convey ideas in our field. In my experience, essays and articles play as crucial a role as books in increasing knowledge and widen our epistemic horizons. For instance, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl's seminal *Classical Mythology in Medieval Art* ("Metropolitan Museum Studies", 4, 2 (1933), pp. 228-280), Otto Karl Werckmeister's *Pain and Death in the Beatus of Saint-Sever* ("Studi medievali", 3rd series, XIV, 2 (1973), pp. 565-626) and Michael Camille's *Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications for Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy* ("Art History", 8, 1 (1985), pp. 29-49) spurred my interest in understanding the mechanisms of transmission, creativity, and perception of medieval images in ways that art-history books have yet to do.

The most influential books in challenging my research on medieval images do not belong to art history, but to other fields, such as semiotics, anthropology, and literary theory. Umberto Eco's *I limiti dell'interpretazione* (Milano 1990) gave me the opportunity to reflect on the continuous process of resignification and polysemy of images and texts by distinguishing among the *intentio auctoris*, *intentio operis*, and *intentio lectoris*. Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford 2010) prompted me to use the term "agency" instead of "patronage" and to apply the formula Recipient as Agent/Index (material entities) and as Patient, whenever patrons regard themselves as authors of a work of art. Finally, Stephen Jaeger's *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia 1994) and *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia 2012) offered a better understanding of some peculiar processes in the ontology of art and the production of images during the Middle Ages. Jaeger's publications, for example, can be used to explain on which grounds abbots and bishops were presented as agents of the divine driving-force in texts and works of art, and how the concepts of charisma and aura replaced the role of the artist in the creation of medieval images, in both icons and reliquaries.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

We are anxious about the future of our discipline and the renewal of medieval studies. First, we feel the need to test the boundaries of the established narratives of art history in the modern-nation states. Second, most scholars are keen to participate in the emerging field of the Global Middle Ages. Third, I am convinced that works of art should be studied as examples of specific cultural and artistic encounters. The distinction between “style” and “iconography” is an old-fashioned one – the signifier is always a bearer of meaning, no matter what. Thus, in my course on Romanesque Art, I focus an entire class on looking at the celebrated portal of Saint-Foy at Conques from a semiotic point of view, along the lines of the seminal contributions by Meyer Schapiro (*Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language*, New York 1996) and Jean-Claude Bonne (*L’art roman de face et de profile. Le tympan de Conques*, Paris 1985). Frontal, profile, symmetry, asymmetry, beauty and ugliness, scale, order, and chaos are intrinsic to the meaning of an image. Conques offers a beautiful example to explore those semantic possibilities. Furthermore, the tendency of iconography/iconology to look at medieval images as a reflection of a written text, or of a collection of written texts, should be replaced by an understanding of works of art as performative texts in themselves, in which the onlooker is included in it.

Post-structuralism has highlighted how figurative and non-figurative elements (*ornatus*) are equally seminal in the hermeneutics of art. They cannot be separated from other aspects such as relative position, distribution, and relation to space. This is what Jérôme Baschet, Jean-Claude Bonne and Pierre-Olivier Dittmar call “iconographie totale.” The visual arts are seen as part of a complex set of relations between ritual and hierarchy. Sometimes this kind of approach forces art into a structure or logic system that is alien to any specific cultural and historical context and ignores the limitations of the makers’ skills and the will of patrons. I am convinced that works of art are evidence (or indices) of a specific culture. In order to place them into their context and reconstruct contemporary perceptions and audiences, we need to consider several issues including some theoretical ones. Hence, the importance of exploring coeval written sources in any attempt to develop a discourse on medieval art and of considering the different agents involved in the making of a work of art.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

Many things have changed in our field in the last decades. The blurring of frontiers in Europe and the growing interest in cross-cultural issues pushed the study of images in different directions. Compelling studies have explored artistic interactions in the Mediterranean and the various processes of hybridization, appropriation, and cultural exchange that characterized them. Scholars are testing the boundaries of established art-historical

narratives. We are indebted to Hans Belting's *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (München 1990) and his approach to the cult and reception of Byzantine images in Western Europe. As a topic, it dominated our understanding of the status of medieval images in the last decades and it opened new ways of thinking about the scholarly debate. The collection of essays edited by Herbert Kessler and Gerhard Wolf on *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Bologna 1998), Michele Bacci's *The Many Faces of Christ* (2014), Beate Fricke's *Fallen Idols, Risen Saints: Sainte Foy of Conques and the Revival of Monumental Sculpture in Medieval Art* (2015), the rich scholarship on Crusader art, are all examples of this renewed interest in the status of representation, the cultic value of images and the complex reasons for the circulation of icons and of repertoires of images between the Eastern and the Western Mediterranean.

In this regard, I have focused my attention on the reception of Byzantine and Crusader images in the art of the Iberian Peninsula, especially in Catalonia, and the expansion of the Crown of Aragon into the Mediterranean. This pushed me to shift the core of my research from Romanesque art to Crusader, Byzantine, and Gothic art with a focus on artistic exchange, cross-cultural studies and the making of new identities. My views on Magister Alexander and Cypriot art,⁶ the Sigena chapterhouse and the legacy of the Psalter of Melisende,⁷ Catalan rule in Greece and its echo in the metropole or homeland (the main territories of the Crown of Aragon),⁸ the controversial question of the artistic milieu of the creation of the Kahn Madonna and its possible arrival in Calahorra (Spain) as a religious/diplomatic gift,⁹ the fighting over the image of saint George from East to West and into the Atlantic kingdoms are all topics that I believe can contribute to this new trend that looks at Mediterranean studies as a global phenomenon. Along these lines, I edited together with my colleagues of the Sapienza University of Rome a special issue of *Arte Medievale* (2020), on *Incontri mediterranei. Arte e artisti tra Bisanzio e l'Occidente dopo la Quarta Crociata (1204-1430)*, and, with the Portuguese scholar, Carla Varela Ferndandes, the collective book *Images and Liturgy in the Middle Ages. Creation, Circulation and Function of Images between West and East in the Middle Ages (5th-15th centuries)* (2021). My forthcoming book, *Latin Perceptions of the Byzantine East: Art and Identities in Flux during the Catalan Expansion across the Late Medieval Mediterranean* is focused on similar themes.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

Rethinking the issue of representation in art has benefited the three main fields of my research. For some time now, I have looked at the meaning and perception of images in the context of pilgrimage and Romanesque art in terms of textuality, intertextuality, and patronage. Little by little, I have realized the importance of including the beholder as well as his experience of the surrounding space. An understanding of the phenomenology of embodiment and Edmund Husserl's kinaesthetic consciousness in the experience of art changed my insight on the function of images in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The setting of a cultic statue of Saint James on the main altar in 1211, as a dou-

ble of the central high relief of the apostle-patron on the Western portal (1168-1188), transformed the direction of the pilgrim's itinerary into the building and his perception of narrative and iconic images.¹⁰ Similar cases have been explored by Giovanni Freni (2011) for the Duomo of Fidenza and by Christopher Lakey (New Haven 2018) in his book on the Romanesque portals in Modena and Ferrara.¹¹ A growing interest in liturgical performances, the performative aspect of medieval images, and the five-senses approach pushed me to go beyond the restricted limits of iconography. My studies on the representation of the Sibyl since the 11th century are a pertinent case.¹² Finally, the emerging field of Mediterranean studies as a privileged space to look at images from a cross-cultural perspective gave me the opportunity to shift my research to new problems and geographies. Thus, as I mentioned before, I have been working in the last decade on travelling objects and shifting identities in the context of the expansion of the Crown of Aragon to the East.

6. *What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I consider the visual object as a performative text, not only because of its capacity to evoke other texts and images but also because of what it means by itself. It is true that a visual object is a sign, whose signifier – shape, form, dimension, colour – can stress and adjust the signified. As a result, the "meaning" is based on the peculiar relationship between signifier and signified and it can change over time and in different contexts. A visual object can also be categorized as an iconic, indexical, and symbolic sign – these categories are not mutually exclusive, so that any depiction may combine any of them. Thus, the complex iconographic programmes of the portal of Santa Maria de Ripoll and the Creation Tapestry in the Cathedral of Girona can be seen as text by themselves, with an incredible capacity for quoting other texts and images, such as the Ripoll Bible or an astronomical treatise.¹³ At the same time, however, the iconic value of most of the narratives of those artworks become both index and symbol.

I consider myself an art historian and the aim of my research is to understand how works of art matter in the expression and transmission of ideas, beliefs, devotions, and conflicts in the Middle Ages. Hence, my emphasis on highlighting that in every process of production of a work of art there are three main agents involved: the artist (or maker), the recipient (or patron), and the audience. The relationship among them and their role can be interchangeable, as Alfred Gell pointed out, and they all condition the meaning of the work of art. This leads us to question the idea of authorship, which in the Middle Ages is often related to the recipient, who can be God or the commissioner. Then, as far as the role played by the artist in the process of meaning is concerned, we must distinguish between *auctor materialis* and *auctor intellectualis* as Lucia Battaglia Ricci has done in her study on the Buffalmacco's paintings in the Camposanto at Pisa.¹⁴ Ultimately, the meaning of a work of art is the result of a long process in which material and intellectual aspects are thoroughly mixed. However, the result is not univocal and in every case we must address *intentio auctoris*, *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris*.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

The shaping of “meaning” is the result of many factors and, in some cases, makers and commissioners are not in full control of the process. We have overcome the belief that the significance of an image is based on visual appearance, iconographical identification, or a patron’s requests only. The significance of a topic, image, or work of art can change depending on their location and media. For instance, it is not the same to be within a religious or a secular building, at the main altar or on a portal. Likewise, images change audience and significance from being on an illuminated page, on a painted panel or on a fresco. The growing interest in issues related to lighting, visibility and *mise-en-scène* has fostered studies on materiality, 3-D virtual reconstruction and aesthetic perception. They are all helpful tools in re-enacting the onlooker experience and in offering a better understanding of the original setting and intention. My own participation in the 3-D virtual reconstruction of the main altar of the Cathedral of Santiago during the period of Diego Gelmírez (1100-1140) made me realize that the shrine was literally enclosed by a railing which emphasized the perception of this place as a *sancta sanctorum*.¹⁵ Likewise, during my study of the mural paintings in the chapterhouse at Sigüenza (1197-1208), the original distribution of the benches for the nuns and the lighting through the windows on the west wall helped me understand the direction of the narrative into the room and the effects of light on its content and meaning. Finally, thanks to reconstruction drawings of the original hanging system of the Kahn Madonna, I could distinguish between the original Byzantine layout of the piece and the later addition of two wings for display in a Latin context.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

A medievalist should be trained in the study of the coeval texts concerning the theological, aesthetic, devotional, and sociological value of images. Ekphrases, travel accounts, chronicles, visions, exegetical debates, collection of miracles, homilies, customs, rituals and even wills are usually good tools to reconstruct the horizon of expectations of the potential viewer of a work of art. Sometimes scholars forget the need to plunge into written sources and explore the coeval vocabulary for the visual arts in order to assess the appropriateness of their interpretation and test their own limits. The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations of the original audience is a difficult but necessary task. No less complicated is to build a hermeneutical bridge between present and past. We should be aware that in the process we are projecting our own concerns. In this regard, Alexander Nagel’s *Medieval Modern: Art Out of Time* (London 2012) is a provocative effort at finding analogies between our contemporary aesthetic experience and medieval modes of perception.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

This is the core of our mission as art historians who study images. In the past, this was the aim of Panofsky's iconology, but this logocentric approach has been contested and, in many respects, overcome by semiotics and post-structuralism. Recent studies on the perception and fruition of images try to avoid old-fashioned intellectual history by focusing on gender, multiculturalism, body awareness and the five-sense theory. I am convinced that images have the capacity to express fears, emotions, ideas and to take us back into the past. Each category of image – narrative, iconic, devotional, portrait, marginal, etc. – belongs to a system of communication with a horizon of expectations. Fruition, therefore, is not only aesthetical and can be translated in terms of religious debates, social concerns, strategies of promotion, etc.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

I worked in a museum – the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya – as curator for five years (2005-2010). There, I developed a special sensibility for the materiality of images. It is a complex field, which requires the combination of traditional art-historical approaches with lab-analyses and knowledge of technical literature. Research on pigments, pictorial techniques and artistic materials can bring new insights into the meaning of an image. The precious character of some pigments, such as lapis lazuli or orpiment, the search for glittering effects and the use of some specific colours such as blue or red convey meaning, as I show in the case of Catalan panel painting.¹⁶ Often materiality is connected to exegetical debates or aesthetical questions. It might even entail a reflexion on the ontology of a work of art, as Beate Fricke showed in the case of the reliquary statue of Saint Foy at Conques.¹⁷

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

The social life of images in medieval culture is apparent. As Meyer Schapiro pointed out, the emergence of extensive iconographic programmes on Romanesque portals constitutes the "speaking face" of the Church and its will to communicate with an audience. The aim of this medium – the Romanesque portal – is to provoke the curiosity of the viewer, and often addresses its audience by way of inscriptions. These image-laden portals acted as stage or backdrop to both liturgical and daily life. Likewise, devotional statues and most illuminated books can be seen as part of a ritual performance. We can obviously add other examples of the social life of images in the Middle Ages both in private and public domain.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

In the last decades, several scholars contributed to enlarge our perception of the experience of medieval images. Alexei Lidov's hierotopy highlights how the creation of sacred

spaces involves not only images but also lighting, music and smell. The five-sense theory provided us a helpful tool to include other senses in the perception of images, in which touching and tasting were usually part of the religious experience of the sacred. Most of these approaches are in debt to the principles of Edmund Husserl's *Phenomenology of Embodiment* and the concept of synaesthetic consciousness. In it, movement and contrast with others are at the core of the individual's search and perception of space. I found these ideas helpful to understand the ways in which pilgrimage centers were transformed during the 12th and 13th centuries. In the case of the Cathedral of Santiago, at the turn of the 13th century, Maestro Mateo set a new longitudinal axis (W-E) in the sacred topography of the basilica thanks to the building of an impressive western porch – the Pórtico de la Gloria – the setting of a monumental choir in the central aisle and the placing of a statue of Saint James on the main altar. It dramatically altered the previous transversal axis (N-S) as well as the itinerary created by Diego Gelmírez around 1100. It also engaged pilgrims in new kinetic devotional practices in front of the statue of the Apostle.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Iconicity is a phenomenon that involves many signifiers and artistic images are not unique in their access to it. In his study on the “copies” of the Holy Sepulchre in western Europe (1942), Richard Krautheimer made clear that there is an iconography of architecture. A stone, a mountain, a cave, a road, a rock or a river can also become an icon within a specific culture or belief. These natural elements are relevant in any pilgrimage culture, in which the sacredness of space is often based on some relevant elements of the landscape. In the Byzantine and post-Byzantine world, the impressive landscape of Mount Sinai became iconic. Its features appear not only in icons related to Mount Sinai but also as a mirror image of Mount Tabor in the depiction of the Transfiguration. Something similar happens with the reception of the Holy Land in the West – the sacred topography of the biblical stories is evoked through images, places, and natural landscapes.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

The study of images should always entail the phenomenology of reception. I find especially suggestive Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic capacity of a text/image and its continuous re-accentuation over time.¹⁸ I am also devoted to Umberto Eco's distinction between *intentio auctoris*, *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris*, and the unquestionable character of the work of art as “opera aperta”. In the last few years, we are witnessing a renewed interest in this topic from the perspective of cross-cultural studies. Terms alien to the traditional vocabulary of art history – such as appropriation, framing, intercultural, transcultural, hybridization and introjection – have been progressively incorporated into

our field. Most of these terms stem from anthropology and psychoanalysis. They can help in the study of the use of images in cross-cultural contexts. Currently, I am using these concepts in my research on the image of Saint George in the Mediterranean and in some case studies of the Catalan presence in late medieval Greece and Sinai, and its consequences for the art of the metropole.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

Art history has been transformed by a global perspective in the last few decades. The terminology used in our field often shows its limitations in the understanding of images from milieus that are multicultural or unrelated to the Western tradition. The application of western European concepts to the study of other geographies and beliefs is unwarranted and research on the ontology of artistic creation in these cultures is needed. I believe that anthropological studies and comparative art history can be helpful in this endeavour.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

Global art history seems here to stay and to develop in the future. Our understanding of artistic areas such as the medieval Mediterranean is transformed by this new perspective. The era of established narratives in art history, based on the geography of modern nation states, is obviously over. Comparative art history offers a new field of research and new methodological tools for its development are in order. Help may come from other fields – semiotics, anthropology, literary theory – as the study of images cannot be restricted to art history. The training of future art historians will have to be open to input from outside.

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FLORIANA CONTE

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Iconographica has contributed to this debate by housing articles that approach images from multiple, including transdisciplinary and transcultural, perspectives. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Until my twenties I read novels, some essays on history and literature, I watched many films. In the books I preferred, images played a role in emotional and social life, they could take on a supernatural efficacy, imitating nature as simulacra or even taking revenge on the neglect of men: I hadn't read Kris and Kurz or Schlosser, I didn't know anything about the “legend of the artist” nor of the functions of imitation of art. The narrative around the images that conditioned me was in works of fiction such as Balzac's *Cousin Bette* and *Cousin Pons* and Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*; the strategy of staging, and static or dynamic reworking of images of the past and of the contemporary was in movies such as *Rocco and his brothers* and *Conversation piece* by Visconti, *The Age of Innocence* and *Life Lessons* by Scorsese and *Novecento* by Bertolucci. In the last two years of my university studies, I have channeled my interests towards the history of art. *Patrons and Painters* and *Rediscoveries in art* by Francis Haskell then broadened the terms of the investigative mechanism of research that reconstructs the history of images in relation to those who created, wanted, paid for them, and the environment in which they were born, to that for which were commissioned under the conditions in which they have come down to us.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Geschichte der Portraitbildnerei in Wachs: ein Versuch (1911) by Julius von Schlosser: while I was studying for the Ph.D. at the Scuola Normale in Pisa and I was twenty-four, I began to familiarize myself with German, so first I read Pommier's 1997 French translation, without fully understanding all the implications of Schlosser's method. Ten years later, while I was writing a book in which funeral sculpture with a memorial function had a decisive place in the reconstruction of the history of art between the State of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples after the death of Caravaggio, I actually read the essay thanks to

the best of three Italian translations released in 2011 (*Storia del ritratto in cera. Un saggio*, edizione annotata e ampliata da Andrea Daninos, 2011).

Rediscoveries in Art. Some aspects of taste, fashion, and collecting in England and France by Francis Haskell (1976): looking at the works and studying the books, history rises again as it really is. I indicate *Rediscoveries* also because, like other books by non-Italian art historians that I consider important, it is written in a clear and engaging language: in fact, the chapters rework a cycle of educational conferences from 1973.

Storia moderna dell'arte in Italia (1990-2009) by Paola Barocchi: it teaches not to separate the "history of art criticism" from the history of art, and to build a very difficult type of book, the history of art book made of literary and visual sources, completely different from an anthology.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between "style" and "iconography"? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Especially in Italy in the twentieth century and due to the authority of Roberto Longhi, who was only a bit interested in iconography, "style" coincided with the link between quality and the only form of exercise possible for a connoisseur who is also an art historian: the sequence of images of works linked by a name and a progressive chronology using a mimetic language. Today, anyone who imitates Longhi without being an equally excellent connoisseur of images and of the language to be used to write about them risks considering the works in a purely sequential way, to the detriment of their history. Today's history of art still produces important results when it absorbs Longhi's lesson from the first «Paragone», from *Proposte per una critica d'arte* to the following experiences, including popular ones. After all, the history of art can continue to benefit from the fruitful relationship between the recognition of the materiality of the images, the ability to attribute them, the study of the sources and the fortune of both told with the mastery of language and narrative techniques.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different "turns", each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

Rather than investigating the meaning in the visual arts and the power of images, I still find profitable those in which images are intended as historical sources to learn about the past and better understand the present. The perspective of the history of reception and the historical fortune of images is an objective starting point even when the research requires specifying a chronology, an attribution, a production context, etc. A revealing case study in my research was that of the Pescocostanzo altarpiece by Tanzio da Varallo: after the historian Gaetano Sabatini (1928) had published the document that allowed its attribution and dating to 1614, and after Roberto Longhi (1943) had proposed the same attribution and dating (apparently independently), for decades the iconography of the altarpiece re-

mained a mystery to all the scholars who dealt with it. Art historians sought an answer in seventeenth century studies, not in those about other periods, and the results of the ruminations were truly imaginative. In 2012 I realized that the central scene of the altarpiece led back precisely to the iconography of images of devotion famous in southern Italy that dated back to the cult, renewed in the seventeenth century, of the icon known as the Madonna of Constantinople: I had known since at least 2001 *Il pennello dell'Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca* (1998) by Michele Bacci, and other studies about this medieval image and its fortune.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

Narrative (cf. 1), photography (of works of art and as work of art) and the re-presentation of images of the past in motion in cinema are relevant filters in the understanding of images after the 1950s. Even for non-specialist audiences, these are visual filters that allow access to different forms of knowledge, not just the history of art and images. A certain way of creating and presenting images is now common both in fictional storytelling and in the study of history and artistic creation. Then there is the relationship of images with words: the language guarantees the attempt to reproduce the illusion of movement and the relationship with space. The words, the syntax, the language of ekphrasis in general are fundamental in the historiographic mechanism: the expressive research must be different if you write about the fifteenth century in Florence or about Pop art in Rome.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

For me, images contain primarily the message of the past, which is also useful for better understanding the present. Francis Haskell demonstrated this concept with the contradictions and the open problems of *History and Its Images* (1993), trying to reconstruct some aspects of the impact of images on historical imagination. Images explain how reality is conditioned by taste, fashions, religious beliefs, money of some men, the actual availability of certain objects on the market at a given historical moment, by contemporary art which always represents the key to access images of the past, from the techniques of reproducing images, from the increasingly technical language that is needed to talk about art and artists.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

The staging strategies, the conditions of visibility, the experiential dimension of the spectators are increasingly decisive factors for the deciphering of an image. Let me explain with two eloquent examples of the relationship between images, their preparation, and the experiential dimension of the spectators: the series of photographs by Thomas Struth. In *Museum Photographs*, the room behind visitors to international museums also frames

the works of the past they are admiring, creating a new image intended for the external viewer. In *Audience*, spectators are also photographed from the front in the halls of the museums, favoring the illusion of inclusion in the external viewer. In both cases, the two most traditional means of reproducing images, painting and photography, merge into a single image that focuses on the spectators who become part of the set-up and of a contemporary architectural and exhibition landscape.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

I believe that photography of works of art and photography as work of art (see 7) have assumed a decisive role (often, however, with photography prevailing over direct inspection of works) also for the interpretation of the meaning of the works placed in their original context or in museums. A work interpreted by a photograph, by an installation, by a new location in an environment different from the one for which it was designed opens the way to different cognitive attitudes, not necessarily contingent on its original meaning. The atlas of images significantly titled *Opere allestimenti fotografie* that Paola Barocchi organized for vol. III**. *Tra Neorealismo ed Anni Novanta, 1945-1990* of *Storia moderna dell'arte in Italia*: the atlas opens with a table dedicated to the visual interpretations of antiquity in which three zooms on the *Annunciation* by Gentile Bellini and on the *Reception of the ambassadors* by Carpaccio. These details were chosen by Roberto Longhi for its *Viatico per cinque secoli di pittura veneziana*, and they make clear that the photography of work of arts is the main language of art history, which in turn owes a lot to the cinema for the concept of the selection of images details.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

The reproductions and citations of images from the past allow us to decipher the visual language of contemporaneity. The images reproduced in art history books, in academic and popular magazines, especially in electronic publishing, on television, in social media, offer the art historian the tools around which to build critical reflection on how language is evolving in national and international figurative arts and how it affects the social, political, and taste-related orientations of the population. Images inform viewers about the present: in particular, they allow us to understand aspects of the iconography of political communication and that of commercials and advertising photographs. Deciphering the images we are bombarded with every day, and putting them in series giving shape to a centuries-old sequence is also a very efficacious way for teachers to deal with issues of civics.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

For my generation and for subsequent ones in Italy, the history of art is primarily a history of photographs that transform three-dimensional objects into images. A certain

way of making history of art is based on these images, essentially based on the attributive rearrangement that often ignores the materiality of the objects that are studied in effigy. But the objects have executive characteristics, anomalies, manufacturing findings, which cannot be reproduced in the images. So also because at least since the 1970s the history of art and the works of art themselves (think of the performing arts) coincide with photography, which hands down their occasional materiality, I believe that the materiality of the images coincides now in the common idea with the immateriality of the art they reproduce. It is no coincidence that the twentieth century is the century of the “immaterial form of art”, the Performance Art, which some protagonists of it historicize by exploiting the presumed affinity with the material art par excellence, sculpture, because of the common difficulty of sculptors and performance artists in raising funds from the clients to be compensated. The “immaterial form of art”, which has the body as its main material and its behavior as iconography, finds in documentary photography controlled by the artists the means through which it can be turned into material art: photographs are sold, even if the work of art is immaterial and therefore unsaleable. The concept of the artist as a star is also linked to these photographs that document intangible art, whose image is a simulacrum to be idolized, even if it does not create objects. In this sense, today the materiality of images is transferred from the created object to the artist who creates nothing.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Images are traditionally related to the viewers through the position of the objects in the architecture that contains them, of the architecture in the urban context, of the city in the territory and in the landscape. In this way, the images always take on a “social life” that coincides with their civic and political function, even when their historical fortunes are studied: if you study street art you get to investigate illegal buildings and landscaping, then to study the social role that certain images had when they were created and the one they are invested with in the course of time, as the context preserving them changes. Furthermore, even the fakes conceived for deceptive purposes explain the “social life” of images: one understands how one century sees another, as for example in the nineteenth century the sculpture and painting of the Quattrocento that wealthy collectors wished to buy.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

In addition to sight for each field concerned with the history of style and iconography, touch should certainly be mentioned, as it is useful for investigations of the surface of panels (especially if you are in doubt about their authenticity) and of sculptures.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

In figurative painting, the landscape is inserted into an image from the point of view of man, even if no human figures are represented in the image. The narration on the landscape adheres to it on a perceptive basis. A historical-artistic narration that gives value to the recovery of the visual experience also as a personal emotional experience has a consolidated and renewable twentieth-century tradition even today in the genre derived from periegetic literature, such as the travel books by Cesare Brandi (*Persia mirabile, Pellegrino di Puglia*, etc.). More generally, images enable viewers to see the landscape through figurative diaphragms: it is natural for an art historian, but also a citizen of average visual culture, to wish to preserve a stretch of landscape that reminds him or her of the environment of Latium and Tuscany pictorially celebrated by Poussin, Lorrain and Salvator Rosa. If one deals with Italian and American painting of the 1960s, the language must adhere to the urban landscape that inspires figurative painters, whose visual elements (petrol pumps, advertising billboards, signs, signs, cars on road etc.) are the real subjects of the painting, not its background. Obviously, the continuous scars have progressively destroyed the fluid connection between place, architecture, city, work of art and art history that was typical above all of the Italian tradition, in which the landscape is closely connected to literature and art and it is part of the same cultural heritage.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

The stringent links between the reproductions of images in an attribution-based analysis that also includes, where appropriate, iconographic issues, is always the basis of the art historian's instrumentation. This instrumentation cannot ignore the knowledge of techniques, materials, styles, architecture, the market, artistic institutions, sources, historiography, language, literature, philosophy, reproduction, conservation, and restoration. All the other professional skills that accompany art historians in their research (the chemist, the restorer, the computer engineer, etc.) are very useful but cannot replace the figure of the connoisseur who becomes a historian. Non-invasive diagnostic investigations and IT-assisted humanities are an increasingly dominating presence in popular and scientific publishing and university courses, to the point of downplaying the specific role of art history, even if they have nothing to do with the latter's focus and expertise.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

The global and prevailing Western point of view is about the concept of "art that imitates nature". The relationship between art and nature, the "imitation", involves numerous points in the fields of culture and the classification of reality. In other cultures, with other languages, imitation is not the base of art. And each culture has precise words to speak about its concept of art. So "basic English" helps to understand each other during oral and written expositions, but it strongly sets limits to the topics for which every cul-

ture and every language have technicalities, discursive models, argumentative styles, grammatical and syntactic structures, visual systems typical of the community that uses it and not always transposable into other languages, unless we run the risk of impoverishing our argumentation skills. The exclusive use of basic English leads to the perspective of an Anglophone monoculture (Harald Weinrich 2002), which offers the undeniable advantage of disseminating information in a fast and universally understandable way. Yet, this may result in an excessively simplified diffusion, which does not allow for argumentative subtleties and semantic nuances, may trivialize communication, and lead to the loss of history. If a language no longer has the words to convey a scientific message (in the history of art or any other science), it turns into a mere communication tool for daily occasions or a little more.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

Ultimately, the primary task of the art historian always remains to connect series of words and series of images to reconstruct history and put it in direct relationship with people's lives. Our studies are often conditioned by the simplifying methods of analysis of contemporary art criticism even when we study the art of the past. Art is asked to entertain, not to represent a unifying, identifying element that breaks down social barriers and improves reality. The relationship between generalism and specialism, today skewed in favor of the latter, should also be overturned to resurrect the all-encompassing system of culture promoted by humanists.

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1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Over thirty years ago, starting when I was a child and continuing through my teenage years, I studied drawing and painting in the workshop of the artist Denis Godefroy in Rouen, Normandy. Teaching – both children and adults, including patients at the psychiatric hospital – was for him not only an artistic but also a social engagement. His understanding of images, as a drawer and painter, was physical and metaphysical. He had deconstructed images in the 1970s, in the sense of a *figuration analytique*, and he reinvested his art with material and gesture, technique, sensitivity, and emotion in the 1980s. He died in 1997. A few months later, I began studying art history.

In 2002, I completed my degree at the École du Louvre in Paris. My wish to study objects and images first-hand, in museums, had determined this course. However, I felt uncomfortable with the widely practiced sacralization of art. For this reason, another focus of my studies at the Louvre was the anthropology of European societies and cultures. This included some fieldwork: I followed bronze-casting techniques in contemporary handicraft and experimental archaeology. An additional interest of mine was museology, especially anthropological museums, which reflect social life. In order to shed light on the long European tradition of keeping and admiring sacralized objects for centuries in institutions, I turned to historical anthropology for my Ph.D. The result was my book translated as *Treasure, Memory, Nature. Church Objects in the Middle Ages* (London-Turnhout 2020).

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

André Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la Parole*, 2 vols., Paris 1964-1965 (*Gesture and Speech*, Cambridge, Mass. - London 1993). Symbolic artefacts and images arise in tandem with hominization. In France, the study of art history is thus associated with that of archaeology. These two volumes, entitled *Technics and Language* and *Memory and Rhythms*, are rooted in physical anthropology, prehistoric archaeology, and contemporary ethnolo-

gy. Presenting a theory of human behaviour and cultural development, this study is also an ecological critique of modernism. I read the volumes in 2001. This sparked my interest in being a scholar. Leroi-Gourhan inspired much research in *technologie culturelle*, the anthropology of techniques. In 2012, I tried to build a bridge between this subdiscipline and art history with an essay and an edited volume on tools and instruments. That was important for my subsequent work.

André Desvallées, François Mairesse (ed.), *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, Paris 2011. This comprehensive reader, produced by the dedicated committee of the International Council of Museums, offers an introduction to museology. Ten years before its publication, in 2001/2002, I studied this field enthusiastically at the École du Louvre. At that time, anthropological and aesthetic approaches to extra-European indigenous art and culture were a subject of debates concerning the future Musée du Quai Branly in Paris (inaugurated 2006). In those years, Michel Colardelle was also reinventing the Musée national des Arts et Traditions populaires in Paris (closed 2005) as the Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée in Marseille (opened 2013). Colardelle, driven by ideas from “new” and “critical” museology, wanted to make central the visitor’s sensory and cognitive experiences with objects, as well as to reflect on interculturalism. He was a figure of socialist museum politics, engaged and creative, and an inspiring teacher.

Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps, les rites, les rêves, le temps. Essais d'anthropologie médiévale*, Paris 2001. When I was looking for a Ph.D. advisor, Michel Colardelle introduced me to Isac Chiva (1925-2012), a retired ethnologist of rural France and a close collaborator of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Chiva suggested Jean-Claude Schmitt, a historian of the Middle Ages whom he felt knew ethnography well. I told Chiva of my interest in the development of the European Union and especially in Germany. He referred me to a text in which he discusses the pogrom of Iași in Romania in 1941, which he survived, as well as his friendship with the poet Paul Celan in their Parisian exile and his collaboration with German ethnologists who confronted the National Socialist heritage of *Volkskunde*.¹ Chiva urged me to pursue what I felt committed to. Jean-Claude Schmitt agreed to help me study a church treasury in former East Germany. His recently published collection of essays was perfect for my transition from ethnologist to medievalist. I admired the depth of his methodological reflection and his ability to historicize all sorts of human experiences. This opened up possibilities for me at a key point, as I realized that contemporary museology came to bear upon many questions about church treasures.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

What is traditional art history? We should distinguish the *traditio* of artefacts, their handing down from one generation to the next, from research about them, which is about

interpretation in the present and is thus never really traditional. With its objects and questions, art history is a heterogeneous field in which factual knowledge and logical interpretations are brought to bear on material and ideological issues. This is a strength of the discipline. Our teachers at the École du Louvre were museum professionals, most of them brilliant. We did not reflect much on methods, but we were introduced to art from all times and continents, in the Louvre galleries and other Parisian museums: the scope was universal. Such an approach, in this case bound to the patrimony of the French nation, raises questions. Leaving the Louvre, I felt the need to step back and study our “Western” fascination with museum objects as a cultural construction. History and anthropology were helpful. With later academic experiences in Germany and Italy, I came back to objects and art history. Traversing several scientific cultures, almost like an ethnologist, and holding organizational roles within international research communities (at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, and the German Center for Art History in Paris) have taught me that rejecting methods often happens out of ignorance and fear, or out of an irrational commitment to the idea of progress. Integration is more productive. I admire strong argumentation, whether on style, iconography, or various other topics, and do my best to learn and collaborate and to enrich art history.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

I have been part of two groups of scholars committed to renewing the study of images. These experiences were formative. Among other cultural historians close to Jacques le Goff, Jean-Claude Schmitt understood that images document the *imaginaire* of past societies. He also situated the concept of *imago* within medieval anthropology. Michel Pastoureau, focusing on the history of the symbolism of colours and animals and extending this approach to objects, explained how the imaginary is part of reality (I realized later how this connects to surrealism, through his father’s friendship with André Breton). My second encounter was with the *Bildwissenschaft*, or “image-science”, of Horst Bredekamp, my other Ph.D. advisor, in Berlin. From there, I obtained a faculty position in Hamburg, where Bredekamp had contributed to actualizing the legacy of Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and his Warburg-Haus, and this deepened my understanding of this intellectual community. The first scholarly conference in which I presented, between Paris and Berlin, was organized by Hans Belting’s group in Karlsruhe, and his rather physical anthropology of images was important for me too – as was, later, Herbert L. Kessler’s broad knowledge and theoretical understanding of medieval Christian images. *Bildwissenschaft* analyses all sorts of images, beyond the sacralized notion of art. Progressively, this brought me back to art history. However, since this discipline has more to account for than images – their various relations with all kinds of three-dimensional material objects being one major question – I suggested *Objektwissenschaft* as a complement and expansion and launched a book series entitled *Object Studies in Art His-*

tory. My efforts concentrate on easily movable objects, at the intersection of art history and cultural and social history.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

I understand images as objects. By definition – etymologically – an object is that which affects the senses of a subject and is processed through cognition. There is a useful difference between thing and object, though a given item can be both at once. Things are conceived abstractly as existing concretely. Objects, on the other hand, are perceived in life by the senses: they consist of sensory properties, coming together as we experience them in specific situations. Perception is culturally determined and continuously creative. It is an experience of presence, but also one of distance, or absence, when it comes to sensory deprivation. The latter occurs when access to objects is not immediate; and obviously, with images, what is depicted can be seen in most cases only from one side and cannot be touched, smelled, heard, etc., although our brain supplements this. Represented objects might even be unrealistic, able to exist only in images or texts or in our minds. Perceiving objects, interpreting them cognitively, allows for creative recombinations and actualizations. This is, for me, what art history seeks to study. Images, like other objects, are multisensorial and cognitive experiences.

6. What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

Only a tiny part of what humans perceive with their bodies is elaborated into ideas. Most perceptions remain unconscious, still contributing, however, to shaping future perceptions and reactions. We become accustomed to perceiving and acting in environments. This process of adaptation, constitutive of identities, gives rise to styles, which are best described as effects of repetition and familiarity – as in a volume on style in anthropology, techniques, and aesthetics edited by Bruno Martinelli in 2005. Beyond individuals, collective styles are created when human groups share practices, objects, and images. In such sensory communities, people agree on how specific perceptions are to be valued and interpreted: when meaning is attributed to styles, they become symbols. How symbolism is conceived within groups varies, as Philippe Descola has shown for visible forms in his anthropology of figuration.

7. To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

The notion that humans have five senses, sight being particularly valued among them, was known in antiquity. It is a simplification, ignoring the dynamics and complexities of multi- and intersensoriality, as well as other senses, like proprioception, through which we know our movements and positions. When we see bodies in images – heroic, tortured, active, etc. – our brains relate them to our perceptions of our own body, both from the past

and in the immediate present. The same happens with other representations and perceptions. Experiencing images is never solely visual, such that the reverse question is worth asking: when is meaning created in a more specifically visual way in images? Perhaps when meaning becomes conventional, in what is commonly called “iconography”. But visual codifications are only meaningful in certain situations. There are iconographic styles, as are there styles of thought. And likewise, the boundaries of iconic representation are not always clear. I co-edited a volume on fifty objects that, while all shaped like books, served a variety of functions, from reliquaries and mechanical clocks to camera obscurae and laptop bags, spanning the late Middle Ages until today. Are they feigned books, and thus images experienced in practice, through their use? They are rather combinations of actual elements of books – combinations held together materially and symbolically, invoking mental images to create meaning in given situations.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

We are at an interesting moment. My impression is that considering images in isolation is a dead end. It certainly allows us to take them seriously and to develop adequate theories. But it also entails an essentialization of images, or even a generalization of “the image”, which might interest aesthetes or philosophers and can be studied from these perspectives but cannot serve as a fundament for art history as a full human science. To cultivate more comprehensive approaches to images, we need to recognize that vision and imagination are experienced and memorized in connection with all sorts of sensory perceptions. Moreover, both as artefacts and in our brains, images are part of the reality they represent. In two essays, I have exposed how the theologian and natural philosopher Albertus Magnus explained the appearance of the head of a king in veined-marble panels, in Venice, as an astral influence ultimately directed by God; and how Giotto, hearing of this, painted in his famous chapel in nearby Padua vices and virtues as figures in stone in order to impress upon viewers that free will resists astral determinations. This assertion of the place of human art in the forces of nature was important well into the early modern period. Today, developments within sensory anthropology and the anthropology of techniques are opportunities for art history to participate in interdisciplinary debates and to expand its scope.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

The notion of different modes of existence is helpful here. Bruno Latour describes the heterogeneity of human experience, between the realms of science, politics, and religion – establishing new connections as a way to address social and ecological challenges. Objects, images, and texts also exist as realities that are ontologically discrete from one another yet are related via sensory properties, whether experienced directly or in representations. These properties establish continuums across distinct realms, and

their recombinations inform future perceptions. As I recognized in a co-authored book, the crown of Hildegard of Bingen, which features images, existed in several different though related forms: as a vision experienced by the twelfth-century mystic; as a textual description of said vision; as a preciously embroidered personal insignia (extant to this day and newly identified); in the similar yet simpler crowns for Hildegard's singing nuns; and in what people outside their convent heard related to this. This diversity produced significance and legitimation for the objects and subjects involved. Art history can reconstruct such connections, in which images often have important functions, along with their implications.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Materiality, as a term, is an abstractum. I think we need concrete and precise questions about the physical properties of specific materials (their colour, brilliance, sound, texture, etc.) and about the history of their interpretation and organization in cultural systems. Equally relevant are techniques dealing with the physical and symbolic properties of materials: natural and data sciences can reveal technical choices and patterns; an iconology of techniques can shed light on their socialization through representations. Forming materials into images establishes relations among the materials, the images, and the techniques entailed, with possibly far-reaching consequences. My analysis of figures of slaves sculpted in ebony – as parts of chairs and gueridons made in Venice around 1700 – led me to retrace the history of the association between the material ebony and the bodies of people identifying or identified as black. This relates to the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy in Europe and America. As this case underlines, we experience images materially with our bodies, and they shape how we inhabit our bodies, both individually and socially.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

If we avoid metaphors in order to seek precision, as I think we should on this topic, then images do not have “social lives”. They do not live, nor do they act, and therefore making them the subject of any active verb is, in a factual sense, wrong. Humans, rather, make images, involve them in their social lives, act with them. Images and objects have histories, not biographies. It is certainly common to attribute some life and subjectivity to inanimate objects. This is the case with toys at a normal phase of child development; it seems to be the primary purpose of certain images of divinities or individuals, and it is also frequent in advertising. Art historians as scientists, however, should not share such beliefs. Their role is rather to describe the origins, forms, and functions of these beliefs. Evident partners in this endeavour are psychologists, specialists of religion and politics, and sociologists (as all human societies involve objects). Most importantly, attributing subjectivity to images and other objects can mean delegating responsibility and thus distracting from the actual role of humans. This can have important consequences. Art history can contribute to explaining, in many cases, what is at stake.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Objects that bear images – that is also: images as objects – involve multisensoriality in various ways, as do images that represent objects in relation to bodies. One task of art history is always to understand how this occurs. Not all objects and images are intended for an “objective” perception. Take for example a transparent glass beaker, enamelled around 1300 with colourful images of three camels – animals known to drink rarely, but a lot at a time – amid vivid vegetation. Made to be sold, probably in Venice, and later unearthed in the Rhineland, this small vessel invited the user to glimpse the refreshing wine through and between these images, before consuming it. It must have been appealing on the market, as well as entertaining for drunken people with altered sensory and cognitive faculties: hence the simple pattern and generic message. Another multisensorial object that I have studied, this one much more complex, is a hydraulic musical fountain, an exceptional piece of precious metalwork made in Paris in the fourteenth century and now in the Cleveland Museum of Art. It is rich in images: water-spitting men, dragons, and animal heads, enamelled figures of couples playing musical instruments, of winged hybrids, and more, all amid architectural forms whose details caught sparkling drops of water. Modest in size, this refined object would have offered an overwhelming sensory experience to a small, privileged, educated group. As a “fountain of youth” and a political allegory, it seems to have manifested eternal felicity in the kingdom of France. I think that such complex cases can teach us a lot about images, about the various ways in which they relate to objects, and about art history more generally.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Seeing includes our experience of images, which contribute to shaping our perception. This is why we speak of a picturesque landscape or a photogenic person – and inversely, things like landscape design and facial cosmetics follow trends established in existing images. Moreover, we can use real objects iconically in life, just as figures use attributes in images. Such relations between presence and representation, between earlier experiences and sensory perception, are not limited to vision and images; they accompany other senses and objects, too. This poses a major question indeed. If perceiving an object is already creative and thus means creating an artefact, should art history expand its purview beyond objects made by humans? I think so, also because this has important implications. The interpretation of the long tooth of a narwhal as the horn of a unicorn, for example, was established in the twelfth or thirteenth century and still, in part, motivates the hunting of this small whale from the Arctic Ocean. Art history has the means to uncover the leitmotifs that shape how humans relate to “raw” materials and other resources. This is relevant also in terms of political ecology.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Like other objects, images are made and then perceived, used, and transformed in specific historical situations. These situations are materially, socially, and symbolically determined, each one unique and continuously changing. Objects and situations are intricate, and these intricacies as they exist in time are, I think, the main problem of art history. How should we thus analyse objects, especially those not meant to exist in front of us? More than to situate them solely in known history or the present, we should seek to understand how situations are determined by objects, how they would not exist without them. Objects result from, deal with, and contribute to shaping situations, that is, contexts. They are not autonomous – and this includes modern works of art – but are created as solutions to material, social, and symbolic problems, sometimes with ingenuity or virtuosity. In addition, objects exist in dynamic situations and may be kept, given away, or destroyed in reaction to them. The better we describe the materials, techniques, and forms of objects and especially of images as specific combinations of sensory properties to be perceived and interpreted, the better we can grasp and explain their correlations to the specific situations in which that experience happened. This approach brings together object studies and cultural history.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

Artefacts, in their material logic, already relate to language. Considering pertinent languages is thus important for their study, always with the necessity of distinguishing between the language practiced by those being studied and the analytic language of the scientist (even if that is contemporary English in both cases). Cultural anthropologists refer to the emic and etic approaches, describing cultures complementarily from within and outside. “Art” in the common sense and thus “artist” and “art history” are local and recent inventions, originating in Europe just a few centuries ago. They are related to Christianity, its tradition of interpretation and representation and its transformations, and they involve European languages, past and present. European legacies are now more or less globalized, or are treated as such. But “global art history” should not be a history of only this process of globalization, whether in the form of Christian missions or the development of multiple modernities and contemporary art scenes. This scope is in itself a marker of progress, because it is more explicitly Eurocentric than the nineteenth- and twentieth-century practice of selecting, in the history of the world, what would fit best with current Western ideas of art or of world heritage. But it is not yet global. A universalist perspective in art history would be fruitful in its analyses and as a message, but to develop it the discipline needs more radical approaches, beyond the common notion of “art” or notions specific to any single community. It would have to encompass, non-hierarchically, productions from all times and places, including those of cultures with less material

equipment, even beyond *Homo sapiens*. A strategic field in which to begin exploring this is the European Middle Ages, as a profound alterity that generated Western modernity, key notions – *imago*, *obiectum*, *artifex* – having been elaborated there. But the discipline must also test its concepts with even more distant alterities, in dialogue with archaeology and anthropology.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

Art history's recent achievements concerning vision and images are impressive. But they come at a price: relegating the discipline to mere questions of observation and representation. There is an urgency now, in the face of the current ecological situation, to grasp more comprehensively how humans create artefacts and act with them in the world, and how they might do so in more sustainable ways. Such questions demand global approaches to the human experience and to human experiences in their past and present diversity. Our crisis is primarily a legacy of Europe. It has roots in the divisions among, and the evolutions of, craft, art, industry, and design. Art history has much to contribute by broadening its questions around and beyond images, with a sense of responsibility.²

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1. I. Chiva, *Des itinéraires décalés et croisés / Getrennte und gekreuzte Wege. En l'honneur de Utz Jeggle*, Tübingen 2001.

2. I thank Lena Bader, Matthias Krüger, Léa Kuhn, Joanna Olchawa, and Robert Vogt for comments and Julia Oswald for excellent editing.

VINCENT DEBIAIS

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My focus of interest has been and remains the relationship between texts and images in Medieval visual culture from the Christian West, mainly from an epigraphic perspective, with a focus on monumental writing in sculpture, painting, and mosaics, as well as the shapes, functions, and audiences of medieval inscriptions made in the pictorial medium. I aimed to go beyond the traditional association of source and illustration to demonstrate that inscriptions and images are part of the same visual and intellectual discourse that tends to overcome the limits of the form. The topic of text/image relationships may sound old-fashioned or overinvestigated, but the different “turns” of the last three decades allow a new understanding of the extent to which the simultaneous analysis of visual and textual elements can tell us about medieval written and visual cultures. More recently, I have been dealing with the concept of abstraction in medieval visual arts and the implication of informality during the Middle Ages, in connection with Christian theological notions of *ordo* and *forma*.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

For my research on text/image relationships, I have read and constantly re-read two important books: Arwed Arnulf, *Versus ad Picturas. Studien zur Titulusdichtung als Quellengattung der Kunstgeschichte von der Antike bis zum Hochmittelalter*, Munich, 1997; Herbert L. Kessler, *Neither God nor Man. Words, Images, and the Medieval Anxiety about Art*, Freiburg, 2007. More recently, I rely a lot on Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Penser par figure. Du compas divin aux diagrammes magiques*, Paris, 2019

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Personally, I do not believe in any need for replacement. Notions evolve, concepts are adjusted, but, basically, I assume that methods remain almost the same. New trends and new objects need sometimes to be addressed by means of more precisely focused approaches, but this must be done in the aim to respect the material and to produce deep knowledge, not to serve a trend. The notion of iconography can be discussed for specific images but the intellectual paths it opens with careful descriptions and thorough identifications cannot be avoided or replaced. Art history will probably grow stronger if it incorporates new approaches in their diversity without trying to create “school”- or “club”-like phenomena. I cannot think of any notions that may be mutually exclusive or disqualify other scholars’ approaches.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

I am convinced that my research benefited a lot from various personal encounters and from slow, individual, and friendly intellectual debates, especially during fellowship and research stays in the US, and I am truly grateful to my colleagues, teachers, and students, who took time to carefully discuss intriguing topics or conceptual challenges. In the other hand, I cannot say that the great scholarly debates or trendy discussions have been productive in the same way, especially during scientific meetings, symposia, or workshops, when questions of methods were often posed, whereas the real historical or artistic issues were left aside. I sometimes had the feeling that it was more important to manifest one’s belonging than to make research, and this has often led me to avoid these debates. I am convinced these debates are useful and helpful for the field, but we should think of a more convenient format for their development.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

For the last few years, I have been especially interested in three main notions. The first one is materiality; after the effervescence of the “material turn” and all the fruitful meetings and publications, I have found that both the means and meaning of medieval images can be revealed by a careful analysis of the empirical and symbolic qualities of their material aspects. The second topic is a general understanding of the anthropology of images, in a cross-cultural and cross-historical perspective, thanks to Philippe Descola’s work, among others. The third one is the importance of Christian theology as a major key to the interpretation of the visual, not only as it concerns the contents of medieval images, but also their shapes and functions.

6. What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

In my understanding, “meaning” is at the intersection of content and media. Iconography tends to focus on the image’s subject, and on the ways in which the subject is staged

within a sculpture or painting, but I assume that the meaning also stems from all those elements within an image that do not directly belong to the subject: i.e., from what I call the iconography of the in-between, and especially from the material and technical implications of image-making.

7. To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

Meaning cannot be separated from the rhetoric of the visual, and from the narrative or iconic strategies used to stage an image in its context of display. Recent research on sacred space, light, movement, senses, and the body have shown the importance of the display conditions, and the contemporary art concept of “installation” may help us to see where meaning is produced when an image is created for specific events involving the senses of sight and touch.

8. In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?

I assume we are now ready for some experiments in the archaeology of reception. In this respect, recent works by Roland Bettencourt or Bissera Pentcheva for Byzantium prove to be very stimulating, even if I doubt that we will be able to go much further. There is always a difficulty in separating the sensorial effect of the object and the possible expectations from the viewer. New approaches from the anthropology of the visual could probably give some insights here, based on the experience of seeing, feeling, waiting for, and dreaming images, but we will always face the limits of a reconstruction where spiritual, religious, and magical aspects are hard to investigate.

9. To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?

Images are part of the continuum that shaped the medieval world, as shown by Jean-Claude Schmitt or Jean-Marie Sansterre; but they have a special status at the same time – they constitute a special level of reality. Art history still must assess this level of reality that came to be shared by material/visual images, and other types of images. This is probably where medieval art history must meet its fellow disciplines and methods in the wider field of medieval studies. The experience of dreams, ghosts, but also feelings and emotions probably have common points with the medieval experience of art.

10. What is your assessment of the materiality of images?

The materiality of images is essential for the understanding of both the making and reception of medieval art. The question is not only what makes images *be*, but also what makes images *mean*. The importance gained by archaeological approaches in the most re-

cent trends of medieval art history leads sometimes to an exclusively material understanding of images, as if they were made of things or stuffs, and had no intellectual or spiritual content. On the contrary, the symbolic approach to materials often leads to the opposite result of only emphasizing the immaterial functions to the detriment of any material aspect. In this respect, it might be useful to go back to medieval thought and look at the conceptualizations of materiality worked out in the Middle Ages. The works by Elina Gertsman, Aden Kumler, Beate Fricke, Bissera Pentcheva seem truly relevant in this respect. Working with the students in museums and archives is fundamental to reach this global understanding of medieval material.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Alfred Gell's *agency* certainly opened new perspectives as to our understanding of the ways in which medieval images interacted with each other. Sometimes we lack information about the viewing/experiencing contexts of such images, and it remains difficult to assess their environment and their social life. New trends in the ecocriticism might be interesting to develop in view of an “ecology of the visual” where images, people, and events are thought of as parts of a global, interrelated milieu. In any case, we will have to remain careful when trying to reconstruct such interactions. Medieval images belonged to a specific ontology, and we cannot give them attributions and “powers” they did not have.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Sight is the most important sense for the experience of images, as shown by Éric Palazzo recently, but touch is also crucial, as we can read throughout Jackie Jung's research. In my own work, sight works along with touch to understand all the phenomena of textures, for example.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

In my new research, I focus on the notion of “abstraction” in medieval visual arts. So, I truly believe in a large understanding of iconicity, even for images and objects that look imageless or formless. In the same way as there is an iconicity of script, I guess there is also an iconicity of sound, of nature, of material, of social gatherings. Everything might be considered for its iconicity if it has been understood as such by medieval thinking, and the semantic spectrum of the word *imago* is so strong and wide that it might encapsulate all these forms of image-making. Of course, it seems difficult to put them under the title of “art”, and this is where art history might need to be careful not to lose its purpose, but for a global approach to medieval visuality these are promising research paths.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Recently I came across research tools stemming from theoretical biology and ecology and used them to explain phenomena of transformation, alteration, adaptation, erasure, destruction, disappearance... Even if it can only work in terms of analogy and discrete parallelism, it may be interesting to apply them to medieval topics.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

I understand the concern, but the language I work with is not only a tool, it also defines and shapes my own thinking and I truly do not know how I could reshape everything in order to avoid linguistic tricks or evidences of who I am. Awareness is a key, carefulness is necessary, but it seems more important to teach focusing on the meaning of words instead of trying to create a new lingua franca that should erase any personal involvement. But this is my own limitation and fear probably. Writing seems too hard for me to remodel it at my age!

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

I wish I knew! Personally, as a scholar of western Christian art, I would advocate for a reconciliation between the erudite approach of medieval images and objects and a more sensitive, spiritual, poetic reading of objects. I have the feeling that art history became cold, clinical sometimes, and that language is not used anymore to convey the sensations and aesthetics emotions triggered by the encounters with medieval art. Current trends are so self-aware that they do not allow any statement that is not political, and beauty often disappear behind the curtain of methods, schools of thought, and claims. I sometimes wish art history may be more about people and their experiences of beauty. But this is a very naïve proposal that does not fit in the state of the field where we should be thinking more about the students, young scholars, and their challenges to live or survive in the academia. Wanting to focus on theology, philosophy, and the spiritual implications of medieval art might seem superfluous in this context, but this is probably where we can make a statement about the possible specificity of medieval art within the panorama of universal art.

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RALPH DEKONINCK

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

I am the product of a very classical training in art history, from a time when the stylistic approach was the main orientation of art history studies in my university, with an opening towards the analysis of works of art by laboratory methods. While relying on such foundations, my path has opened up towards more properly iconological questions. My research is part of what is known today as “visual exegesis” applied to early-modern religious imagery. This expression of “visual exegesis” is not only to be understood in the sense of a simple exercise of iconographic/iconological interpretation: it refers more precisely to the study of image-specific visual strategies aimed to produce sensible meanings or meaningful affects, with a view to reform, conversion, or inner conformation. The interpretive act, both intellectual and affective, was at that time conceived according to this pragmatic aim. It was guided or induced by a certain visual rhetoric (which relied on the combination of various figurative registers, from narrative to symbolic). In the cases of the illustrations of Jesuit meditation literature on which I have worked, it can be said that the image can compete with ingenuity to enter into resonance with textual exegesis. Far from confining itself to a role of illustration or dependence on the gloss of written commentaries, the image glosses itself, or even thinks itself, by producing its own “theory” in the etymological sense of the term *theoria*, i.e. by producing the conditions for its own contemplation and understanding. The image thus becomes not only the support or the locus of meditation, but even more the motor of spiritual transformation. Therefore, in my field of inquiry we can speak of a shift from the study of images to the study of the process of vision, that is to say towards the relationship of the beholder to the object of meditation through the latter’s image. This belies the idea that “we cannot see what seeing is”: representation can be offered as a meditation on the very act of seeing, which opens up very stimulating research perspectives on the experience of the image, or rather on the image conceived and lived as an experience.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Here are the three books, published between 1989 and 1993, that marked the beginning of my career as a researcher in art history, many other authors – such as Louis Marin and Marie-José Mondzain – having after that guided my steps: David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, 1989; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image. Questions posées aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, Paris, 1990 (*Confronting Images. Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman, University Park, 2005); Victor Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau*, Paris, 1993 (*The Self-Aware Image. An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, a revised and updated edition, Turnhout, 2015).

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Concerning the understanding of the distinction, and even the opposition between iconography and style or meaning and form in relation to Christian images, I would say that we have inherited the Christian *doxa* drawn from the famous letter of Gregory the Great to the iconoclast bishop Serenus of Marseille. It is well known that this letter grants the image a linguistic status, able to stand in for the sacred text in order to serve those who do not have access to it. This conception was to leave a profound impression on our “natural” way of interpreting images in terms of meaning and reading. As a reaction to this logocentric approach that sees the image as a text to be read, the pendulum has tended to swing the other way and research has shifted attention from meaning to the material presence of images. Images appear as objects endowed with a certain power, a feature that short-circuits the classical metaphysics of representation, whose tendency is to reduce representation to a disembodied sign or as an imitation of reality that has a symbolic or mimetic meaning. In this respect it is possible to speak of a return to presence instead of representation. This is probably a reaction to the increasing dematerialisation of images in contemporary society, the very term “image” now tending to make us forget its material density.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such new scholarly debates?*

Like a return of the repressed, the powers of images have come to the surface, and we have (re)discovered all their anthropological depths, hidden since the Renaissance by the theoretical and even ideological frameworks of artistic literature and then of art history. It is therefore no coincidence that the anthropological turn that has affected art historical research in recent years has come mainly from medievalists who have sought to reveal the workings of the belief in the efficacy of images. Some images are now considered as agents, that is to say, as objects endowed with an ability to act or to trigger reactions and not simply as things to be interpreted as passive transporters of ideas. The image does not simply produce meaning, but also actions or reactions, based sometimes on the idea or belief that

they can act by themselves. This move from the material turn to the performative turn characterises a series of research projects carried out in a wide variety of fields, all of which attempt to go beyond what images tell us or show us towards what they want, or more precisely towards the “needs, desires and demands they embody” (Mitchell); in short, what we want from images. To put it simply, while it is obvious that an image can make us cry, how can we believe that it might cry by itself? This scholarship has especially highlighted the ways in which belief in the efficacy and agency of images depends on a series of factors, ranging from their specific material and formal characteristics to the ways in which they were displayed and the rituals activating them or being activated by them.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

In recent years, we have witnessed a revival of scholarship on ornament (closely related to a new interest in the study of *parerga* and framing effects in general), a dimension that seems to have escaped the field of iconography, of meaning and of representation. Being no more considered as a simple pattern, ornament is today approached as a complex phenomenon whose significance exceeds the strictly stylistic dimension. Its aesthetic dimension, far from being limited to the issue of taste and fashion, must be reintegrated within the realm of human intentions and actions. By serving with its aesthetic qualities the significations (symbolic, ritual, etc.) of the object, the ornament acts on the spectator and makes him react in return. The ways in which ornamentation affects meaning need thus to be considered. In particular, we need to examine the ways in which an image is often transformed by the force of its ornamentation, but also by the ornamental apparatus accompanying it and bringing it before the viewer. Let me remind that the primary meaning of *ornamentum* relates to the harmony between form and function. Deriving from the Greek etymology referring at one and the same time to the idea of beauty (cosmetic) and to the idea of order (cosmos), it designates the appropriateness to a function, even to what guarantees its efficacy, or even efficiency, and therefore quite the opposite of the superfluous to which we habitually attach the word.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

If we consider that the majority of medieval and early-modern images-objects were viscerally rooted in situations that gave them sense and to which they gave sense, I would say that I understand this last word “sense” (and not “meaning”) in three complementary ways: in that it touches not only on the question of meaning, but also in the way it refers to the organisation of space, to the paths induced, to the direction of the gaze as well as of the body; and finally in that it refers to sensitivity, to the affects, to the emotions that make sense, according to the first two meanings of the term that I have just mentioned. Meaning, space, and emotion/motion, or if one prefers the semantic, kinaesthetic and aesthetic dimensions (in the primary sense of *aesthesis*), such are, in my opinion, the coordinates of what I would call the situated arts or images, at least in the field that is mine.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

Let me express a truism: in the era of globalisation and the digitisation of images, which are now apprehended in fairly virtual networks, and in the face of the musealisation of many works of the past that were not conceived for the museum, it is important today to consider anew the inscription of works in spatial-temporal situations, or in what we should call their “chronotopes” in the early days of their creation and reception. Alfred Gell speaks of “Art nexus” to designate the network of intentionalities through which producers and receivers, not to mention all the mediators or mediations in between, act on the senses of the work, and make sometimes the work itself act as an agent in its own right. For my part, I prefer the expression of “art connections” that I understand according to the orientations that I have just mentioned (cf. answer to the question 6) and which do not exclude the mediators and mediations. What interests me are the networks of images and objects that constitute what I would be tempted to call a “spatial nexus” in which these images-objects make sense. This corresponds more or less to what Jérôme Baschet called “relational iconography” or to what Ernst Gombrich called the “ecology of images” referring to the visual environment with which human beings have always interacted.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

In my field of research, the study of the interactions between spiritual practices and artistic practices (cf. answer to question 1), or, to be more precise, the study of the interferences between the plastic and symbolic characteristics of the works on the one hand, and the meditative modalities of their creation as well as their reception on the other hand, allows us to better understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its creator and its viewers that they also contribute to construct. It is a question of looking at the mental equipment of the spectator of the time, i.e., the ways in which his visual and spiritual culture is deeply impregnated with the protocols of reading and experiencing the image conveyed by meditative literature.

More broadly speaking, if we consider images-objects as a crucible of human relationships, the principle of life (*Eigenleben*) in images, according to Bredekamp, can no longer be seen conceived as a direct extension of the human body or society, but as a force (*Eigenkraft*) emanating naturally from images themselves, a force that can act on the body as on society. It is possible to speak of figural forces, to use the terminology of Louis Marin, while Bredekamp prefers to speak of *Potentia* or *Latenz* to designate these latencies activated at a precise moment or in specific circumstances. To see the image as a force is in fact to take an interest in power as potential, in potentiality, that is to say, in the entirety of what the image is able to bring about. What then are the characteristics of this

latent force, and what activates or intensifies it, what contributes to its performance and to its efficacy? That is the question that seems most important to me.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

If we were to apply this question to the field of spirituality, it is interesting to note how material images were not only able to assimilate many of the protocols of meditational or devotional practices, but also how they were able to impregnate these practices themselves, right up to the mystical experiences whose relations testify well to this impregnation of the visual models in vogue at the time. Spirituality has as main objective the transformation and conformation of the faithful to the models given as examples to be imitated. It is on this ground that meditation has been thought as a painting in action. Painting was in fact used as a model for thinking about the act of spiritual imitation, the meditator being assimilated to a living image, a likeness in the making, who undergoes or participates in the work of conformation, a kind of "spiritual galvanoplasty" to use Henri Bremond's beautiful expression. Thus, the image in act is at the heart of the meditative process, as a means and an end. It is in this sense that meditation could be thought of as painting in action.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Many studies have repositioned the question of the material side of art works at the centre of art historians' interests. In contrast to an approach to art history that has long avoided the material dimension of images in favour of an often strictly stylistic or iconographical analysis, it is now understood that the properties and values of materials are part of the very meaning of works of art and the ways in which they are received. It invites us to consider how materials generate certain forms and appearances, and how they bring about and maintain certain beliefs in the immanent power of objects, independent of their formal or representational value. This reflection is for example particularly relevant for liturgical objects made of a wide variety of materials (metals, wood, ivory, textiles...) whose symbolic meaning pertains to their efficacy.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Turning away from classical iconographic and stylistic approaches, research has attempted to understand the uses and practices which an image can give rise to. Many images form indeed a knotwork of social actions and interactions with it being at one and the same time the object and the means. From this, a body of thought on the functions of the image and on its power to bring about actions or reactions has been developed. It had long been recognised that the image could arouse an emotion, but this emotion in turn was able to provoke a motion, such as prayer, conversion, donation, and so on, just to mention the type of reactions closely related to religious images.

Let's take again the example of the liturgical realm. It is obvious that in order to better apprehend the meaning and efficacy of ritual objects, a strictly stylistic and iconographic approach cannot suffice any longer, because these objects only 'function' within a complex system of relations: relations with the people who ordered and manipulated them; relations with the ritualized time-space; and finally, the relation between the different objects themselves displayed and used in a certain order.

More generally speaking, we could say that this type of images is only performative insofar it is performed, i.e., insofar it engages the spectator in a performance. It is even possible to say that it is effective only when it is performed, in the sense of the performing arts.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

The presence of the image, during the Middle Ages and the Early-Modern period, has never been as isolated as a work of art hanging in a museum might be (and yet such a work is not really isolated, the museum itself being a frame that locates the work and determines its artistic status); the image or object is always located in a specific place and within a network of other artefacts, gestures, words, sounds, smells... After considering the nature of the work, it is therefore necessary to go beyond its immediate frame to understand it within this network of sensitive relationships that are thus fashioned around it and because of it.

The symbiotic environment (cf. answer question 7), which I envisage in the church spaces of early modernity, is composed not only of a great variety of image-objects but also of a multitude of deeply ritualised gestures and words. This is particularly true for the ways in which the rituality of ordinary liturgical times on the one hand and the extraordinary religious festivities on the other constituted powerful factors in activating works of art and images. Far from being conceived as autonomous pieces that we could contemplate today in isolation, these works were, for the most part, integrated, understood, and experienced in complex ensembles that were both perennial and ephemeral. This mixture of ephemeral and perennial art prompts us to rethink our conception of the hierarchy of the arts and the boundaries between the different artistic and visual media.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that "iconicity" (or "visual efficacy") is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

The history of art, especially for the periods after the Middle Ages, continues to maintain a division between image and object. This division is still characteristic of museums, which distinguish between works of art that correspond to an image (essentially painting and sculpture) and the so-called decorative arts, which fulfil a function that is not exclusively iconic and artistic. Many of these objects do not carry any image. This does not prevent these objects from making images, i.e., from being a space for the projection of an

imaginary. An object doesn't need to be figurative to be efficient, and to form a knotwork of social actions and interactions. This is also one of the main lessons of the anthropology of images and art.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Within the frame of what is labelled today "Global art history", the investigations on all type of cultural and especially visual circulations and transfers constitute certainly one of the main trends of the present research. If we want to understand for example the worldwide dissemination of early-modern European images, in particular engravings (and for my part more specifically the Antwerp engravings), and their influence on diverse visual cultures, we need to better understand the reasons for this international success. In other words, we need to examine the conditions of possibility of cultural transfer and translation as well as explaining its effects. This supposes to reconsider the classic question of influence exerted by the European prototypes on the new conquered territories, by setting aside the model of a one-way relationship between prototype and copy, which assumes a certain passivity on the part of the receiver and the exercise of a certain power of domination on the part of the issuer. This conception, based largely on the idea of images as propaganda tools in the hands of conquering powers imposing their models, did in fact persist for a long time. In recent years, attention has turned more towards the factors involved in the various forms of visual interbreeding that typify the dissemination and assimilation of this European imagery throughout the world. The image, thus directly or indirectly inspired by the first European visual sources, can turn out to be the result of a subtle interplay of borrowings that can affect both themes and modes of composition, or even particular motifs, which can be infinitely recombined according to a grammar and syntax that have yet to be understood in terms of how they operate and which cultural issues are involved.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

For some time now, research in the anthropology of the image has sought to move away from specifically Western framework of thought in order to think about the image by shifting towards the study of non-Western cultures. Anthropologists such as Alfred Gell, Carlo Severi and Philippe Descola, specialists in these cultures, have in turn attempted to take a renewed look at European arts thanks to this departure from their own cultural framework. The recent broadened reflections of Philippe Descola in *Les formes du visible* (2021) thus seek to account for four modalities of figuration or figurative schemes through time and across cultures on a global scale (animism, naturalism, totemism and analogism), the comparative perspective allowing him to bring together an Alaskan Yup'ik mask, an Aboriginal bark painting, a miniature landscape from the Song dynasty and a

Dutch interior painting from the 17th century. While the generalising ambitions of such a comparative anthropology of figuration may appear somewhat excessive and, for some, somewhat reductive, it is certain that it contributes to a fresh look at the iconic and artistic heritage of the West through this test of otherness.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

In emphasising the conditions of creation and even more the modalities of reception of images, some main trends in art historical research and Visual Studies have tended to neglect their intrinsic being as a factor that can activate their power. In this regard Bredekamp speaks of 'intrinsischer Bildakt' (intrinsic image-act) to account for the intrinsic power of images. The presence in question here is no longer that of the referent in the image or of the forces manipulating it, but that of the image itself, and it matters little whether this is anthropomorphic or not, figurative or not. We need therefore to reintroduce the issue of the aesthetic dimension of images, a dimension that must not be reduced simply to the philosophical sense of beauty but for which it is necessary to restore the etymological sense relating to sensibility. The anthropology of the image and the Visual Studies have attempted to deconstruct the aesthetic approach to the work of art so that other forms of reaction suppressed or sublimated by the aesthetic reaction might be considered; with the consequence that this dimension has been neglected in research. Now, the power of images can be brought back to the question of their sensible force. This is probably one of the best manners to reconcile iconography and style or meaning and form.

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ANNE DERBES

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My initial focus as a student of art history was the one I was taught as an undergraduate: analysis of a work’s style to identify the artist and date. In my first graduate course, a survey of trecento painting, the instructor began by pairing Giotto’s Lamentation in the Arena Chapel with the Nerezi *Threnos*. That was life-changing: I turned from matters of style to issues that were to me far more compelling. Though scholars had assumed the unidirectional, unvarying “influence” of Byzantine art on Italian painting, in writing my dissertation on duecento passion iconography, I argued that these assumptions were flawed; while passion images changed fundamentally over the course of the thirteenth century, painters were far more selective in response to stimuli from the Byzantine east than had been imagined. I then asked the obvious question: if not “Byzantine influence,” how can we understand these changes? Surely the sponsors of these works had a role in shaping them, and though my subsequent research has taken different directions, the relation between a given work, those who initiated it, those who paid for it, and their possible motivations has remained a constant interest.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Panofsky’s work, especially *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, was fundamental: from it I learned to think about the interpretation of a work in its cultural contexts as an alternative to the connoisseurial approach then in vogue. Feminist scholarship has been critically important to me; I cannot point to a single book, but to a group of scholars whose work on gender and ideology has shaped mine, most prominently Diane Wolfthal and Pamela Sheingorn. I should also cite Linda Seidel’s early article, “Salome and the Canons”; Annemarie Weyl Carr’s essay, “Women as Artists in the Middle Ages: ‘The Dark is Light Enough’”; and Caroline Walker Bynum’s work, especially the essays in *Fragmentation and Redemption*. Most recently, as I studied the baptistery of Padua, I found scholarship on ritual to be very helpful; publications by Victor Turner, Richard Trexler, and Bissera Pentcheva were all instrumental.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Traditional art history is unquestionably dated: limited in its narrow approach to visual images and, at times, tainted in its relationship to the marketplace. Even so, medievalists must sometimes depend on its methods to determine when, where, and by whom a work might have been produced. Amy Neff and I are currently studying a puzzling multi-scene panel in Palma de Mallorca; the panel is ascribed to an Italian artist, but without solid evidence. We must rely on traditional methods, both stylistic and iconographic, to identify its painter. These methods often point in the same direction – but not always; visually and often compositionally the panel is strikingly Palaeologan, but at times its iconography is clearly non-Byzantine. Moreover, close visual analysis indicates that our painter collaborated with a local artisan. In any case, these methods offer only the starting point of our study: they are necessary but far from sufficient for us to interpret the painting. In short, integrating traditional methods with new approaches seems the best avenue going forward. Future developments in technical art history may well allow the field to move beyond such methods; even now technical analysis is an important tool of the art historian.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

Anthropological and phenomenological approaches to visual images have greatly benefited my research, especially in the last decade. In working on the baptistery of Padua, I came to understand its images, both painted and sculpted, as participating in the ritual experience: the images respond to and echo the actions of the celebrant, the ritual garb of the initiates, and the words of the hymns chanted in procession to the baptistery and at the font. I came to understand, too, the ways in which ritual can bring together a disparate community and engage those present in a sense of common purpose; both architecturally and programmatically, the baptistery participates in the work of (temporarily) uniting the congregation. Toward the end of my research, I was able to witness the rites of Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday in Padua, and as a result gained a clearer understanding of the power of ritual to move even the agnostic observer. The spectacle rouses the senses: the scents of smoke and incense, the sounds of the chants, and the jostling of the throng immerse those present in this multisensory experience, and the images, gleaming in a darkened interior, play a key role in this enterprise.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

I believe strongly in the primacy of the image; for me, interpretation begins with looking closely at the work itself. Also important to me is the understanding that images are

not neutral; they are almost always ideologically inflected in one way or another. The work that they do has interested me throughout my career. Finally, I believe that complex works of art such as fresco programs or multi-scene panel paintings are largely collaborative: products of exchange among the maker(s) and funder(s) of the works, and whomever the funders may have consulted. I would argue that the more complex the work, the more likely it is that several interested parties played a role in shaping it. To cite just one example, an altarpiece, now lost, in Padua's San Benedetto was funded by two laywomen, and a third woman, the abbess, paid for its transportation and installation in the church. It seems reasonable that all of these women, as well as the painter(s), would have had a voice in decisions regarding the altarpiece. Though a focus on the artist as the creative genius solely responsible for a particular work may now seem dated, it still lingers in certain circles.

6. What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

I think all but the most conservative scholars today would agree that meaning is not fixed but contingent on many things, among them those you list in question 7, and that "meaning" is not singular but plural; surely images were understood in different ways. Generally, though, I assume that visually engaged medieval viewers were sensitive to the choices made by the creator(s) of the work. In other words, many viewers would have taken note of the size, scale, and placement of figures; of their gestures, clothing, and physiognomy; of the colors used; of the relationships between a given image and those in proximity to it. All of these choices would likely have functioned as visual cues, conveying messages to the attentive viewer. Beyond that, images may have often served as visual cues to viewers to think of familiar prayers, hymns, biblical passages, and ritual actions, and these associations too would have enlarged the meaning of a particular work.

7. To what extent is "meaning" determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

Bissera Pentcheva's work on icons is a pioneering study in this vein. The Padua baptistry of Padua, a building in which I spent many hours, also provides a response. The baptistry has several doors, only one of which is used by visitors today. In the fourteenth century, the laity would normally enter from the east, but on ceremonial occasions such as solemn baptism, the congregation would enter from the processional entrance on the west. The viewer's initial vantage point differs according to the door used to enter. Those entering from the east are first confronted with the tomb monument of Fina Buzzacaroni, the woman who paid for the baptistry's spectacular interior; the size and grandeur of the monument immediately draw the viewer's attention. Only those entering from the west are granted a direct view of Christ, Mary, saints and angels in the dome, reinforcing the connection between the sacrament and salvation. The natural light in the interior also changes, and the most important images in the space are the most lavishly gilded, catch-

ing the shifting light; these images would also have gleamed most brightly by the light of the candles on the altar and carried in processions on feast days.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Yes, I think so. At least we are now raising questions about viewership that previous generations of art historians did not ask.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

If we define an image as one component of a larger work – one fresco in a program, or one scene in a multi-scene panel painting – then it is clear that these components interact, responding to one another both visually and thematically. This has long been known about the Arena Chapel frescoes; it is also true for the frescoes in the Padua baptistery and for the individual narratives in the Mallorca panel that Amy Neff and I are currently working on. But it is true as well for works separated both geographically and chronologically; for instance, the dome of the Padua baptistery is an intervisual reworking of the east dome of San Marco in Venice.

As for informing viewers' understanding of experience, the baptistery's images would have prompted parishioners to think not only of baptism proper but also of ritual practices in the cathedral next door; for instance, in many respects the fresco of the Holy Women at the Tomb corresponds closely to the liturgical drama as it was enacted locally, at the cathedral. I would assume that images in other ritual spaces similarly informed their viewers' understanding of the rites performed there or in close proximity.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

An image's materiality often conveys meaning. Compelling work has been done by scholars who study works in various media such as rock crystal or stained glass, but costly materials used in fresco and panel painting – gold leaf, ultramarine – of course signify importance. Diane Wolfthal's book on Netherlandish canvas painting is an important study of the Franciscan use of humble materials.

Another approach is to consider the current state of the material used. The graffiti in the Arena Chapel frescoes provide one example: visitors attacked the demons in hell and scratched out eyes of malefactors, such as the personification of *Iniustitia*, thus enlarging the meaning of the blinding of Lucifer in the chapel's quatrefoil. Megan Holmes' work in progress on such interventions in panel painting promises to be most interesting in this regard. Pious touch also has altered images' original appearance: the face of Mary Magdalen in Coppo's Lamentation in the San Gimignano cross has been effaced, presumably by devout touching; in a panel in Berlin, the Magdalen's face has disappeared from the Way to Calvary, probably in the same way. Joanna Cannon's classic essay on devotion to the Virgin's foot explores the same phenomenon.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

The term “social life” of images has been used in connection with images in public spaces, and the frescoes in baptisteries clearly interact with the lives of viewers: in Venice, Florence, and Padua, among other cities, the local baptistery depicts infants and young children, often wearing white, often in the arms of parents. Such images would have both evoked the children brought to the baptistery for the rite of initiation and prompted other adult viewers to bring their own children to the church for the rite. Perhaps the term might apply as well to private works such as manuscripts. A northern Italian manuscript in the British Library, the *Passio* of St. Margaret, was likely used as a birth aid by women in labor; it includes the text of the *peperit* charm, an incantation chanted by laboring women and their attendants to encourage the infant to come forth. The page with the *peperit* chant depicts a confinement scene, and both text and image are smeared, possibly by tears or the saliva of kisses. In either case, the smears suggest the powerful interaction between an image and its users.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Almost all the senses, obviously sound (the chanting of hymns, for instance) but also touch (the hand of the celebrant) and smell (incense, smoke), play a huge role in ritual, as Thomas Aquinas noted. Images in ritual spaces often correspond to the hymns, touches, even the scents that the congregation would have known in local ritual practice. As one example, the Padua baptistery's drum includes an unusually detailed cycle of the life of Jacob; in Padua, on each Sunday in Lent, congregants and clergy processed to the baptistery as the cantor and choir chanted responsories, and on two Sundays, these responsories focus on events in the life of Jacob that are depicted in the baptistery. Similarly, on Easter Sunday, approaching the font, the choir chanted “Praise the name of the Lord”; the baptistery includes, close to the font, a huge fresco of the Entry into Jerusalem, the biblical event when Christ was similarly greeted.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

If we understand a given work, such as an altarpiece in a church, as part of an entire ensemble, then the ways that it interacts with other aspects of its environment are clearly important. I've touched on this in my responses above, but to expand: in the Padua baptistery, the gestures of the holy figures in the drum and on the walls of the church often echo those of a specific living being, the celebrant in the rite of baptism. The celebrant's gestures – placing his hand on the head or chest of the initiate – thus enlarge the meaning of the images, and vice versa; in that sense, he becomes part of the larger program of images.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Spolia represent one obvious instance of transferring and transforming images; figurative spolia, such as the appropriation of Byzantine images in duecento painting, are less obvious but equally important. In the case that I know best, that of Byzantine passion images taken and at times reshaped by Italian painters and patrons, especially in Franciscan commissions, it was important for me to understand as much as possible about the Franciscan order: the centrality of the passion to the order, with its founder uniquely honored by the stigmata; the ways in which members of the order described the passion in devotional texts and in sermons; the order's involvement in the eastern Mediterranean.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

That's a good question; the only answer that comes to me is the need for scholars to immerse themselves as fully as possible in the cultures they study, whether western European or not. Even those of us who study western European art live at a considerable remove, chronological and cultural, from the people who made and saw and used the images we study.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

I would welcome further study of gender issues in medieval art, and especially in medieval Italian art; so much remains to be done. But new generations of scholars will find their own approaches and questions to ask.

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JAS ELSNER

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My original formal training as an art historian was in Byzantine Art and Iconoclasm. That means simultaneously in visual/material *and* conceptual art history, embedded in archaeologically-attested materials as well as those preserved above ground, with a strong focus on integration in related questions of religion, rhetoric (especially polemic and apologetic), highly complex and unreliable literary sources with philological difficulties, anthropology and disputed historical contexts. One may say all these strands have remained in my work as it has extended back to Roman and Greek antiquity, forwards to later medieval, early modern and recent receptions of Classical art, and across Eurasia to Islamic, Chinese and Indian art. The approaches I have most championed include the viewing of art in relation to different kinds of materiality and the significantly understudied three-dimensional semiotics of the ways objects (like boxes, polyptychs, buildings) offer themselves to experience. A continuing interest in rhetoric has led both to the study of the historiography of the discipline in its own right and to a specific focus on the problems of ekphrasis as an intermedial discourse designed tendentially to ‘translate’ the silent materiality of works of art into items appropriable by text, textual argument and analysis.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Oh dear. Very difficult! I have spent so much time at war with Gombrich’s *Art and Illusion* (1960), which is brilliant, brilliantly written and wrong-headed. His version of naturalism (and notably his subtle Eurocentric argument for the superiority of European models of representation) continues to be a target for attack! Because I work on late antiquity, I too have been caught (like so many of my predecessors) in the great war between Riegl’s *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* and Strzygowski’s *Orient oder Rom* (both published in 1901). Both are superb as explorations of empirical data – the former in its rigorous formalist descriptions and range of materials, the latter in its pioneering movement outside the geographic norms of its time into the arts of the late antique east and late ancient Egypt; both are fundamentally wrong – Riegl in the proposition of *Kunstwollen* as some

kind of salvific underpinning for the discipline and Strzygowski in the racism that ended up so sympathetic to National Socialism. I see most of what the discipline has been doing in our time as the legacy of the line between *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* before World War 1 and *Art and Illusion* in the wake of World War 2.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

I don't believe new approaches have really changed things very much. The great value of the traditional discipline is its rigorous standards (formalist, stylistic, iconographic, and philological), which will always form the empirical basis. We are now past the post-structuralist wave that glutted the field with a lot of literary-derived theoretics that have less applicability to material culture than its cleverer exponents imagined. I think 'theory' needs always to be flexible and adopted *ad hoc* in relation to the topic at issue in any given art historical account. Some of the more recent approaches I very much do espouse, like comparativism or an ecologically-grounded art history, are themselves rooted in the old universalist ambitions of the great generations of art historians in the first half of the twentieth century and in the traditional instinct to put objects into contexts.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

We live in the present. The most interesting aspect of a historiographical study of the field is that you may imagine you are looking at the study of Roman art or Renaissance art, but in fact you are looking at the playing out of ideologies and political/social positions held by the participants at the time of writing in relation to those topics. We are no different. Current debates ('decolonizing the curriculum', questions of gender and sexuality, the environmental crisis) are 'where we are at', as they say, and ramify against what we write now. In my case, my current work is comparative (looking at art in the world religions and especially early Indian Buddhist art by comparison with late antique early Christian and late ancient Jewish art, all of roughly the same periods), but it has also inevitably confronted questions of landscape ecology and colonial histories...

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

We live in a revolutionary era of the image: the rise of the digital, the streaming culture of movies and series, texts and novels recalibrated (usually in trivialising forms) into visual epitomes as films or documentaries, advertising in still and moving images, AI, all aspects of our lives conducted by screen, the video recording of our every move, the faking of truth in all kinds of ways using the psychological power of images in eliciting impulses to desire or aversion, the arousal of anger... This incredible revolution (at least as

great as the move from roll to codex or the rise of the printing in the history of the book, but now so much directed translinguistically to the use of images) is what we live *now*. We cannot have the distance to grasp or assess it, but it is driving our study of art more than any notion or concept.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I am not a fan of the idea of images as some kind of instrumental conveyor of ‘messages’ or ‘concepts’. This is too linguistic a model for how art works. Nor do I like the metaphors of ‘communication’ or ‘conveyance’. Images ‘speak’ silently and with multiple meanings depending on the psychological and cultural experience of those who view them. They cannot be entirely controlled (although the attempts to do so are frequent) and they always occupy a spectrum of potential significances. Meaning is something viewers may choose to impute into art, but also to withhold from assenting to. One issue in the current culture and the rise of screens is the concomitant loss of a sense of the materiality of objects – three dimensions, tactility, weight, tangibility, smell. All these are part of what we might call ‘meaning’.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

Since I do think relevant meaning (which is not the same as authorial intention or understandings at different viewing eras) is constructed at the point of reception, such factors as *mise-en-scène* strategies, visibility conditions and the experiential dimension are essential. These can to some extent be controlled by the maker or propagator of images, but – even in so ritually circumscribed a space as a church – the choices of what to look at, in what order and with what obedience to or disregard of decorum makes a great deal of difference.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

I do not believe in progress or evolutionary development when it comes to the human sciences. Why should we be more advanced or intelligent about issues of visual subtlety, visual appearance or viewing than that old enemy (and lover) of art Plato or than a great apologist of painting like Leonardo? Why should our art history, so less learned than that of Riegl, Panofsky or Wind, be better than theirs? No one has thought through the psychological complexities of the visual or of its description more brilliantly than Philostratus (whose *Imagines* were written in the third century AD) – the subject of a book I am currently engaged on with my friend Michael Squire. So we are only better equipped in the sense that we have (if we pay attention) access to the deep thinking of the past and we have issues of our own, compelling to our time, that were not necessarily foregrounded at other times. However, that does not mean progress!

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

I do think images comment on other images and on their viewers' viewing of them. At any rate, so many of the reliefs I am studying now (from the great stūpa of Amarāvātī in south eastern India, 1st century BC to 3rd century AD) stage their scenes in the context of representing multitudes viewing them and the events they depict. That observation – that scenes are staged with a surrounding of viewers within the image – is equally true of imagery in Roman art or Attic painted pots. The Amarāvātī sculptures perform a commentarial role both on other images and on other monuments at the site. That commentary plays out against the scriptures to which they allude and the commentaries on those scriptures on which they riff. That problematic of images playing on other images, commenting and being commented on, is no different from the ways Christian art plays on other Christian art, sometimes on earlier pagan art and always on Scripture, nor is it so different from the use of digital imagery in film or on the web. Sometimes contiguities work by careful choice (e.g. an art historian's powerpoint), often by the happenstance of what google throws up or Pinterest offers to a random click.... What you see is framed by what else is present and you as the viewer have the choice to go with that or edit the context out...

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

I think materiality is key, all the more so in the traditional fields because our dominant means of communication now is online and virtual. Of course, virtuality also has its materialities (from AI glasses to computers to screens) but these are not the materialities of the objects visualised. My father was a potter and I remain keenly aware of the need to complete a pot by handling, lifting, cupping it, as of the need to complete a painting by viewing it in the flesh... How old fashioned and conservative I have become!

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Clearly, both the idea of a social life to images and the rich recent art history of this theme have real substance. Whether we take this as a matter of patronage and making, or of viewing and reception, or more anthropologically according to something like the 'nexus' proposed by Alfred Gell, it is obvious that images stand in a space between their makers, promoters and users, supplying different kinds of signification to all these groups as well as to individuals within them. How much further current approaches can get in this area, I am less sure. But there is a case for attempting to construct parallel and comparative social lives for similar kinds of images (or for the same images that move between cultures though trade or gift exchange).

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

The sole emphasis on sight is a terrible aberration and the result among modern students of too much internet! All objects have a smell (remember the not wholly pleasant

cow-glue in old books and the dry scent of dust). All objects have weight. Ekphrasis in antiquity is obsessed with the sounds, smells, even tastes of the visual (including the ways it plays in the imagination), since the visual is really a route into the synaesthetic. No image executed in pre-digital materials is fully flat or dematerialised: even analogue photographs have negatives and positives played out on the surfaces of the paper chosen for the print. In my fields of work, the play of engraving and stippling on metal or stone against the voluminous implications of deep relief carving (even in 'flat' reliefs as opposed to fully 3-d sculpture) is essential for the material, visual and rhetorical articulation of almost all ancient art (Classical, Chinese, Indian, Mesoamerican). And the thickness or thinness of paint on plaster or paper or canvas or board is no less important than colour, form and design.... This is before we start on questions of function such as works of art that are intended to supply scent (like censers) or light (like lamps).

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that "iconicity" (or "visual efficacy") is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

It has always been the case in monumental art that the choice of a site is as much part of the monument as the man-made addition to the site that might transform the whole into 'art'. The 3000 BC stone circle at Castlerigg in Cumbria is small – nothing like Stonehenge – but nonetheless a substantial monumental act in the mountains. What it does, *in its site*, is to define the circle of mountains around it (visible as circling peaks across 360 degrees from the spot) as precisely that – a totally natural, magical circle whose phenomenological and environmental circularity is defined through or made sensibly present for human participants by the smaller circle of stones (made from the materials of those mountains but differently and humanly configured). The dialogue is what makes the art. It is in the category of all great landscape art (Smithson, Goldsworthy, Ai Wei Wei etc) but in a different league.... How can we exclude the non-figurative, landscapes, natural materials, living beings from art, iconicity or art history?

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

I think part of the nature of art is its magical quality of transformation – the metamorphosis of raw materials into something alive in a different way from those materials in the viewer's experience. That goes for all kinds of bricolage, spoliation, appropriation, copying, replication and so forth. The problem with generalized hermeneutic tools here is that the historical and contextual situations are different in all cases and the hermeneutics need to be adapted to the discursive story being told by the art historian.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

This is a fundamental question. It has two elements. First, it is actually a disaster that English should be the lingua franca: the great strength of art history (and I write as an English-speaker) is its multiple European languages/conceptual systems of expression: reducing them to one is to write out so much of what has been done and what is possible. The aesthetic and philosophical sensibilities of what can be said in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian are different from and massively enriching by contrast with what can be said in English. Second, all these European languages are grounded in Eurocentric assumptions founded in the Christian reception of the Classical tradition and their joint reflections on images. This entire tradition is totally inadequate to cultural systems founded on entirely different conceptual models – notably, for instance, the rejection of real presence in the ‘emptiness’ of Buddhist traditions in e.g. India, China, Korea and Japan, the rejection of linear time and the denial of the notion of a single lifetime as the one and only life of a given human being or animal in traditions from Hinduism to many oral cultures in Australasia or Africa and so forth. Whatever is meant by concepts like ‘art’, ‘image’, ‘relief’, ‘sculpture’, etc., in the multiple cultures west, south and east of Europe has never been properly studied – and to reduce these multiple things to deeply ancestral European terminologies is frankly reductive and ridiculous (quite apart from neo-Colonialist apologetic politics, whether explicit or not).

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

Above all, we need two huge projects. First, to grasp the key terms relevant to art history in all the ancient and living literate cultures/languages east of Europe – Arabic, Persian and so forth as far as Japanese – as well as south (one thinks of ancient Egyptian, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Yoruba as well as Islamic north African) and as far as is possible looking also at the literate ancient (pre-European) cultures of the Americas. That is a philological project for hundreds of scholars gathering all written references and understanding the concepts within their own cultural encyclopaedias and taxonomies of meanings across time. Second, there needs to be an anthropological project of the same kind looking at the extremely rich conceptual languages for what we think of as ‘images’ in the vast range of oral cultures (for whom literacy is a post-colonial creation) in the Americas, Africa, Australasia. I realise this is a fantasy: no one will ever fund such a thing and few people are equipped to conduct the enterprise. But the result would be the possibility to create a genuinely global, non-Eurocentric art history, capable of comparativism and of a robust critique of colonial assumptions.

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PABLO ESCALANTE GONZALBO

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My research is situated in the field of the transformation of pre-Columbian artistic expressions under the circumstances of colonization. One of the challenges of this area of knowledge is the need to recognize forms and meanings potentially belonging to two different traditions, and to value their connecting routes. It can be compared with the study of Christian art of Late Antiquity, insofar as it is necessary to consider pagan symbolic traditions, as well as the new languages generated in Christian thought.

My work has taken care of two aspects of this transformation of indigenous art: On the one hand, I have dealt with a set of artistic manifestations that formed an integrated whole and reached their full visibility only within liturgy. On the other hand, I have studied pictographic codices produced by native artists throughout the sixteenth century, in which the rationality of the changes can be explored in detail.

I would highlight three specific methodological challenges: 1) Characterize Mesoamerican religiosity and liturgy as it survived the cataclysm of state religions after the Conquest. 2) Define the ways of action of religious orders to conduct the process of syncretism. 3) Build the category of Mesoamerican pictographic language.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

In *Islands of History*, by Marshall Sahlins (Chicago 1985), I found approaches that stimulated my reflection on the symbolic expressions of cultural diversity in colonization contexts. The book gave me tools to inquire about how traditions determine cognitive criteria. In *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, by E. H. Gombrich (Princeton 1960) I obtained very useful clues to meditate on what today we would call the construction of pictorial languages, and especially some guidelines that have allowed me to build a working definition of the concept of “Pictographic language”. And, thirdly, I read an Italian version of several papers by Aby Warburg, under the title *La rinascita del paganesimo antico*, originally *Gesammelte Schriften*, recollected

by Gertrud Bing (Leipzig-Berlin 1932). There I could see acute insights that guided my inquiry into the use of humanist sources in New Spain, and a line of thought on the Paganism/Christianity relationship, which has accompanied my vision of the sixteenth century since then.

3. What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?

I find that any form of methodological extremism that proclaims the superiority of one research strategy and the obsolescence of the others can impoverish Art history. I also believe that the instrumental utility of some research steps is often confused with the explanation strategy, which should be as comprehensive as possible. That said, I find that the exploration of style is a necessary tool to identify basic aspects of geographical or ethnic affiliation, and more complex aspects regarding the intentionality of works of art. I also think that iconography, as an assessment, even if provisional, of the potential meanings of an image, offers a starting point for other revisions.

The dichotomy iconography/style is a naïve appreciation: no scholar can ignore that style acts as a factor in the construction of meaning, that stylistic variations respond to needs for meaning.

The writings of classic authors of iconography, such as Edgar Wind or Erwin Panofsky were quite complex constructions, difficult to overcome; they implied a great humanistic erudition, philological strategies, as well as very lucid notions of the History of ideas and the analysis of social contexts.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

Some of the recent turns in the history of images are the continuation of methodological explorations begun long ago. In recent decades, for example, a way has been found to introduce semiotics among the tools of the art historian, without the previous levels of conflict and misunderstanding.

Studies on reception, whose long history Peter Burke reminds us, have served in these days to open new routes in the knowledge of images. I appreciate and share Burke’s idea that “the more distant the two cultures are, the more visible the reception process becomes”, which makes this approach especially useful for shedding light on images in the context of the relationship between The West and the indigenous worlds.

Some studies on the cultural patterns of colonial societies have proposed very innovative approaches as to what we could call “the double reading” of objects: objects related to native traditions, and at the same time inserted in the order of European and Christian customs, and even in the world market. In this respect, the work of Thomas B.F. Cummins seems exemplary to me.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

One of the most relevant notions that have been constructed in the history of art in recent decades is that of *pictorial language*: a type of analysis that transcends the boundaries between formal and iconographic studies, and that also considers the complex problems of materiality. The exploration of pictorial language has relied in some way on the methodological legacy of structural semiotics, and on studies, quite recent, on the *gaze* as a determining *historical fact* in artistic processes.

Colonial artifacts and images show, on the one hand, the decomposition of native techniques and styles and, on the other, a variety of adaptation strategies to coexist with European forms. Images immersed in domination/negotiation dynamics usually show a delicate balance in the construction of meanings; they take advantage of different metaphorical levels of symbols in search of religious and cultural compatibility. This circumstance of my object of study inclines me to seek more comprehensive methodological approaches, capable of exploring the semantic routes created by procedures such as analogy and juxtaposition. The question of colonial images goes far beyond the “coexistence of styles”: it is precisely about the creation of new plastic languages.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I work with images and liturgical spaces, and with pictorial representations of the territory that seek to intervene in the negotiations between indigenous people and Spanish colonists. From that study experience, and meditating on previous research, I would say that *the meaning of an image is the way in which its visual configuration confirms a belief*.

I think of an example, which I will explain without details. The members of an indigenous brotherhood meet in the cloister of the monastery, there they make smaller processions than those carried out in the atrium. The pavements of the cloister have been flattened with red gravel, as red were the stones of the cave in which their ancestors saw the sacred sign that motivated them to stop their migration and found the city State. In the cloister here are images of jaguars, as in native founding legends. On the top of the fountain stands the sculpture of an eagle, brought from the ancient settlement which the friars have forced them to abandon. In the procession they carry crosses adorned with feathers and flowers.

This whole set of images has a deep meaning for the community: we are Christians, we are pilgrims, our ethnic history is part of the history of salvation.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

Most liturgical images were embedded in complex assemblages and only within them did they have full meaning. Spaces, routes, and illuminations, as well as ornaments, costumes and other images were part of such sets.

This becomes evident in the spectacular *autos sacramentales* and in rural processions, but it was something very widespread, especially in the liturgy of the 16th century.

Even relatively sober ceremonies, such as the procession of a brotherhood through the corridors of the cloister, formed part, together with the images, of the same unit of meaning. The narrative of the Passion of Christ, which was the most common pictorial program in the lower cloisters of New Spain, had to be combined with the march of the believers to complete a meaning such as "His sacrifice produces our *salvation*".

Incense or gunpowder smoke was used in New Spain, and still today, to form a cloud that surrounds some processional images. At certain festivals, the offering of bread and wine is also caused to rise from a cloud of smoke. The device of the cloud produces the notion/sensation of wonder and signals the crossing of the border between the divine and the human.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

I think a distinction can be made between two types of studies on human relationship to images. Those that deal with a more intellectual relationship, based on leisurely observation, and linked to aesthetic judgment and literature. And, on the other hand, those that address a more emotional, passionate relationship, based on the gaze, even on glance. At the risk of simplifying things, we could say that these are two forms of relationship with images, one elitist (courtesan or bourgeois) and the other popular, or popular collective.

Works like Michael Baxandall's have taught us to what extent there is a social regulation of styles, including an elitist social construction of pictorial languages. Other studies have warned us of the power of images, *quasi* acting subjects, in various contexts.

Peter Burke constructed a fairly complete model that contemplates the intellectual construction of images, the variations that result from that construction, and the collective responses to images.

There is an asymmetry that we should consider in more transversal investigations: the elitist response to images is such that it can modify images/ the popular response is such that it can accept (or reject, for that matter) images as facts of power.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

From time to time, the concern of some groups about the possibility that images teach something other than what should be accepted has been revealed. That fear shows a strong belief in the ability of images to instruct. The time of the Counter-Reformation is exemplary; and it is particularly striking what we see within the corpus of precepts and discussions on painting in the Spanish seventeenth century: a remarkable conviction in the pedagogical usefulness of the image!

I hesitate to accept that radical faith in the ability of images to document the people's conceptions. Along with the images of the Counter-Reformation, sermons and catechesis

were developed, and there was a general care for the respect of orthodoxy, fueled by the real risk that the Inquisition represented. In that context, images could confirm more than instruct, celebrate more than explain.

I tend to think of the efficacy of the image rather in terms of its ability to make beliefs visible. If the *Divina Comedia* described, for educated people, a topography of Heaven and Hell, the sermons simplified and disseminated it: and the paintings offered a visible synthesis.

The painting can say as much as “Thus travels the light of Glory ... Something like this is the way to empyrean heaven ...”.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

I think there is no doubt that materiality is part of the message. And today we can approach the material consistency of images better than ever. For centuries, materials have been understood as conveyors of certain values, such as rusticity or nobility, inevitably connoting the meaning of the works. To this traditional assessment, we should add a relatively recent understanding of materials as the origins of the meaning process, at least in some cultures and in certain types of works. I believe that the use that many abstract artists made of materials, as objective or natural referents, not only favored the aesthetic approach of the public, but also promoted a new interest in “understanding” materials. I think of Tàpies, or Pollock.

However, I am more familiar with non-Western and syncretic art and its ceremonial contexts. Some progress has been made in identifying the cosmological meaning of certain materials. And, thus, it turns out that we can affirm that, in the first place, it is jade: the green stone is the main source of meaning. And then there are its forms, like the ax or the drop of water, that qualify its meaning. The same can happen with the quetzal feather or the skin of a jaguar.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users*

The sentence “the life of images” is a beautiful poetic figure. As soon as we forget that it is a metaphor, we will begin to move away from understanding the social and aesthetic processes that create the illusion that images live. The expression has been linked to the name of some authors such as Fritz Saxl and John Berger, in part due to the distortion produced when translating their works.¹ A similar expression was used, indeed, by Henri Focillon in *La vie des formes* (Paris, 1934).

The works of David Freedberg and Peter Burke, each in their own way, represent fine examples of how to face the problem: understanding the efficacy of images in the cultural contexts that determine how they are perceived, and exploring the social process of feeding/receiving meanings.

We use bold expressions like Michael Fried’s “absorption”, Alfred Gell’s “captivation”, and even Fritz Saxl’s “magnetic power of images”. And I wonder if we are not, sometimes, beginning to imagine that, indeed, there is something in the images that makes them *act on* us.

I believe that the best way to profit from the theoretical advances on the interaction and response of people to images would be to deepen our knowledge of the social relationships underlying these apparent relationships of attraction.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Most of the pre-Hispanic images that we know were literally immersed in long and complex ceremonies. Consider, for example, groups of young people who entered a square dancing and singing to the rhythm of drums and flutes. They were soon engulfed in copal smoke from the braziers. They could smell the scent of flowers that saturated rugs and parapets. As for the images of their gods (those we see in museum showcases today): consider that they were painted in bright colours, impregnated with blood or charcoal, covered with blankets and feather ornaments. Those who participated in the celebration did not go there to contemplate the images; rather they appeared before the images and were “observed” by them. The gods, whose effigies had been activated for a few days with the temporary inlay of precious stones, were deemed to be actually present.

Without music, without cyclical movements, without the lash of the fragrances of smoke and flowers, there was no ritual event, nor was the aesthetic episode consummated.

Privileging silent observation is the result of our experience in museums. In the indigenous world, even after the conquest, the festival was the space of images par excellence, and it was a multisensory space.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

It is not possible to study the indigenous cultures of central Mexico and their plastic expressions and not arrive to the vision of the landscape as a powerful component in ceremonial precincts, in ritual displacements, in visual or oral narratives about identity.

It is an interesting paradox that peoples that developed an intense urbanism, such as the Nahuatl, had remained attentive to the reading of landscape, to the point of replicating it in the ceremonial complexes of their cities. Myths of origin and myths of foundation marked the landscape, inch by inch, in a symbolic narrative of possession and protection that was repeated in the ceremonies of the year. In fact, ceremonial itineraries constantly crossed from the countryside to the city. In *lienzos* and codices, this iconic landscape was formulated in pictographic terms.

The pre-Hispanic notions of migration, sacred destiny and ethnic identity were linked, after the conquest, to Christian conceptions of pilgrimage, salvation, and Christian community. The landscape was re-signified, and the processions gave new vitality to this multiple system of references: territory, pictorial representation, urban-cosmogram.

Art history must deal with that symbolic device that is landscape and consider rich interdiscursivities: as in topography/myth/pictography/architecture.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

I have faced three modalities of transferring images to new contexts. One of them is the exhibition of *debris*, which implies an unequivocal reference to another era. It occurs, for example, when the broken image of an indigenous god is placed face down on the wall of a church. As a defeated warrior of the *Psychomachia*.

A second modality is *syncretism*: the coexistence of the symbolic repertoire of two religious traditions, under the predominance of one of them and with analogy as a guide. In the case of New Spain, the understanding of syncretic images and programs requires the parallel analysis of written and pictographic testimonies, of liturgical episodes, and of the repertoires and plastic languages of the two traditions.

A third modality is *eclecticism*. The cases that I have been able to explore show a disarray, but not a disdain for the harmonization of meanings. The works produced after the collapse of the Teotihuacan empire, in which Mayan, Oaxacan and Teotihuacan motifs and symbols coexist are paradigmatic. There is a provisional confluence without a stable hegemony.

Is eclecticism always the expression of a period of crisis? And is syncretism typical of a society in transition? I think so, in both matters.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

In the case of Hispanic America, and since the sixteenth century, the recognition of indigenous cultures has been carried out within the framework of the Spanish language and the classical and Christian philosophical traditions. In the 19th century, the criteria of scientific rationality and new ethnic prejudices were incorporated. So, anglophone hegemony is only the last leg of the process.

Impossible to escape the system of thought that gave rise to our current way of analysing the world. However, the historical sciences have some mechanisms of review and self-criticism. Since the 1970s, for instance, research on the indigenous worldviews, as well as translations and philological studies, has intensified. This has allowed new inquiries with alternative explanations that are not restricted by Western views of art and religion.

Faced with the issue of the English-speaking predominance in art history scholarship, I believe that the challenge of the Hispanic American countries goes beyond the delicate task of translating the concepts. The biggest problem is our theoretical and conceptual dependence on North American and European academic circles. In other words, the scarcity of our own theoretical production.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

Sometimes partisan positions within the academic endeavor make me uneasy, even more so if they proclaim the death of the previous ways of investigating. The best works of art history that I know, those with the greatest explanatory capacity for complex problems, are those that integrate various methodological procedures, and can incorporate new analysis strategies without ignoring the resources that are at the origins of the discipline. When I examine with my students the works of Svetlana Alpers, for example, we have this feeling that the tools of the old masters and new approaches can coexist in solid and deeply historical explanations.

Personally, I think it would be helpful for art history to revisit its relationships with social history. Concepts such as *ideology*, whose application to the study of images Nicos Hadjinicolaou probed, or *hegemony*, so interesting in the study of culture, can enrich the current panorama in the analysis of images. I have the impression that our success in understanding the processes of construction of meanings, and of responding to images, could be completed with the reconsideration of the cultural conflict typical of divergent interests in history. There are social circumstances outside the canvas or the wall that we do not always make visible in our explanation.

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1. In its translation into Spanish, *Lectures of Fritz Saxl*, edited by Gertrude Bing, (London 1957) bear the title *La vida de las Imágenes* (Madrid 1989). The book *About looking*, by John Berger (New York 1980), received a new title in its German translation: *Das Leben der Bilder oder die Kunst des Sehens* (Berlin 1981).

IVAN FOLETTI

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Trained at Lausanne University, I was initially mainly interested in traditional iconology. As early as in my MA studies, I shifted my attention toward the interaction between spaces, images, and rituals. This interaction between representation and “performativity” has been further developed, especially in the last ten years, with a growing interest in the role of beholders and their perception of images. In the last few years, I have been more and more fascinated by images in the broadest sense of the term – e.g., architectural layouts, urban structures, processions, pilgrims’ bodies – and their impact on human cognition. In certain cases, I have also investigated objects and images with immense pedagogical, olfactive, and aural potential. Visuality, in these cases, was virtually impossible to dissociate from other phenomena.

In a certain sense, I have moved from conception to perception, and to the experience of visual acts. However, I believe it is also essential to add that my perspective has always been challenged by the history of art history.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

It is practically impossible to say what the most influential books for my understanding of images have been. But I would certainly start with the short story *The Portrait* by Nikolai Gogol. This moralizing and romantic tale about art explores the life and power of images. Reading this novel as a teenager, I was fascinated by its ideal of the artist who should never betray his talent and “sell his soul”. More interesting from a scholarly perspective was the full realization of how visibility is an instrument of both taste and artistic research.

Two other books transformed my understanding of images. The first is *My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok, and the second is *Neither God nor Man* by Herbert Leon Kessler. Both books discuss the role of the invisible God in visual culture. The first is the literary confession of a Jewish artist from the Bronx, discovering his identity as a painter. He transgresses the rules of his Hassidic community to depict a Crucifixion featuring his

mother's face. Kessler's book unites the image of the Crucified Christ with the Judeo-Christian debate on images.

3. What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between "style" and "iconography"? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?

I would distinguish between methodologies and scholarly traditions. As for the first, iconographic and formal analysis are simply the basis of art history and visual studies. Without them, it is hard to imagine any systematic use of other methodological tools. However, I strongly disagree with the use of any methodology as an end or as a must. Each object and image require a unique approach. Furthermore, I believe that any obsessive or artificial use of one specific methodology by an entire school of art history can destroy the field. I am therefore convinced that all possible methodological tools should be used to access the meaning and relevance of images, in the past and in the present.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different "turns", each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

Without a doubt, I've benefited from several of them, from the amazing challenges posed by the anthropology of images, most notably developed by Hans Belting, the debates initiated by the "material turn" and, lastly, within the framework of the "sensual turn" promoted by Pentcheva and Lidov. Once again, however, these tools should serve the final goal of understanding and explaining objects and images.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

From the "power of images" to "hierotopy", "sensual icon", "Bildakt", "icon of space" and the concept of "agency", the notions used in present-day scholarship are numerous. They are all, to some extent, important to the development of the field. The two most relevant, for me, are very close to one another: the notions of "spiritual eye", developed by Kessler, and "iconic presence", established by Belting. Both are instruments that enable us to better understand the role of images as thresholds between the tangible world and what lies beyond. For a medievalist, I see these as crucial tools to make better sense of past men and women's relationships to images.

6. What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

The "meaning" of any image should be divided into two main categories: pre-cultural and cultural. The first layer of understanding occurs in the first moments the beholder is faced with an image. This understanding is "intuitive" and mainly determined by colors

and lines. The second level arises from the beholder's cultural knowledge and is understood through iconography and/or inscriptions accompanying the image. The meaning of images and objects can be reinforced or weakened by the materials used in its making: a golden image has a very different meaning from a wooden one (if the wood, of course, does not imitate gold).

7. To what extent is "meaning" determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

The *mise-en-scène* of an image, as well as any performer and/or guide explaining it, obviously has a fundamental impact on its meaning. A Christological cycle of mosaics could be understood in a completely different way if used during a bishop's homily – the story of Christ's life can represent an anti-heretical visual project. A hidden image, revealed only periodically, will of course be more attractive, an aspect which also enhances its meaning. In the second case, "meaning" can take on a very important social dimension as well, an aspect again closely linked to the materiality of the image itself.

8. In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?

I believe we certainly have more tools and data to better understand the expectations of the potential viewer. On the one hand, textual evidence can be accessed more easily thanks to digital tools: image databases are making comparative approaches easier, and of course research in neuroscience is paving the way for unexpected discoveries. On the other hand, we should admit that our training is of much lower quality in some essential aspects: compared to scholars a century ago, we have an ultimately lower overall culture of literary sources, and our knowledge of other disciplines is much weaker. For the smart-phone generation, the growing problem of concentration and personal memory represents a clear weakness. We have more tools but less knowledge.

9 To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?

I believe knowledge of images is an obvious tool to better understand other visual elements. This is particularly true for pre-modern images, where the repetition of patterns and/or prestigious models is essential to visual culture. In a more banal way, certain images can enable the viewer to reconstruct other missing ones, contributing to a more comprehensive outlook.

10. What is your assessment of the materiality of images?

As stated above, the material dimension of an image is absolutely fundamental in all stages of its life, from conception to use and reception. A golden sculpture covered with

shining precious stones could be both an image of a saint and a metaphorical image of Heavenly Jerusalem. An object's materiality cannot be dissociated from its meaning. In this regard, our perspective is truly biased, due to the modern hierarchy of the arts and digital technologies. A painting on wood may be considered more relevant for scholarship because it was done by Giotto, than an ivory altar, which in the past would have been considered more valuable because of its materiality. The screen, then, as a threshold, obviously flattens any possible material dimension. It is perhaps not surprising that the material turn arrived precisely when personal screens started to dominate society.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

As mentioned previously, the interaction between images and rituals has played a crucial role in my own understanding of art history. This is a classic case where images have a social life. They can contribute to inclusion in or exclusion from a community and become real actors within social groups. “Walking images” (e.g., devotional images in procession) interact directly with the viewer, who can, in certain cultures (thanks to masks or paintings), become an embodied image himself.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Definitely the latter. Images imply a multisensorial experience. In my research, the most classic example are the 5th century doors of Santa Sabina in Rome. These are composed of carved wooden panels with images in relief that can be touched. Engraved in yellow cypress wood, they originally had a very intense scent, like the smell of incense. And as recently discovered, they were also conceived as an acoustic box to amplify the sound from inside the basilica. And this is in addition to the bishop, who possibly used them as counterparts to his preaching.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

I absolutely believe that the image notion should be expanded to all these phenomena. Within my research group, we have been investigating issues related to landscape as part of a visual act for at least five years. Especially in the Armenian context, the combination of material – such as the color of stones – with the flora and the surrounding environment play a key role in the understanding of space as an image. Furthermore, much of the early medieval culture I am investigating is non-figurative, while being extremely meaningful as an image. We can cite, for example, aniconic reliquaries, where only the association of materials have a clear visual meaning. I would also like to mention the research of Bissera Pentcheva and the question of “aural” images “decorating” aniconic spaces by sound.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

When speaking of objects and images reappropriated for different contexts, the first notion we encounter is of course the widely-studied “spolia”. As shown by Dale Kinney, this is a largely abused word. However, the idea of “memory” constructed through ancient material culture is fundamental. Within collections, especially in museums, object stories can also play a pivotal role in suggesting new narratives for otherwise “mute” objects. The mutilation of images can obviously be a tool of rare violence, while reappropriation of faces has been recognized as an anthropological act of domination.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

I believe that the way English is now becoming the only possibility for scholarship in the humanities could indeed make it an instrument of colonial domination. As is demonstrated by the recent dominance of British universities in European Research Council grants, the perfect mastery of English as a native language remains a clear advantage. Besides this competition, it could contribute to the flattening of intellectual dynamics. On the other hand, especially for countries that never spoke any of the dominant languages of academia, “scholarly English” is a chance to bring new contributions to the global scene. Basically, I see the hegemony of English as a very dangerous issue, especially on the part of Anglo-Saxon editors and institutions, but also as a great opportunity to make the research of linguistic minorities more accessible.

From a terminological perspective, this is obviously a challenge for global art history. We are currently working on a project dealing with the translation of Western medievalist terminology into the Chinese context, and we should definitely consider how the issues of translation and diversity are still very much present in the multicultural spaces still existing within our field.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

I do believe that Art History needs to undergo a significant self-transformation, moving from individual research to “laboratories” of the human sciences. The amount of knowledge and the acceleration of data production does not leave us many other alternatives. At the same time, such a collaboration may, if used properly, allow us to overcome one of the main limitations of traditional academia, i.e., its extremely hierarchical structure. Art History also needs more “real” transdisciplinary research, in the sense of collaborative projects with a shared goal. By this, however, I am not speaking of the sometimes very empty requests of some grant agencies. On the contrary, I believe in transdisciplinary dialogue only as the result of a true shared enthusiasm for research.

At the same time, we need a different place for humanities in society, with less precarious positions. The current situation is devastating for both young researchers and senior scholars – the first broken by insecurity, the second unable to build on stable ground and at the same time tempted by the abuse of power. In this context, I believe new ethical standards in the field are essential: too many publications appear simply for career-related purposes or because of cronyism – justified by these precarious situations. If the field becomes a career-oriented industry above all, it will lose its essential purpose, not to mention its relevance to society.

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BEATE FRICKE

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Originally, I wanted to enroll in an art history program and focus on the study of arts of the Americas, just having returned from travelling through Guatemala and Honduras for a couple of months. However, the last chair position in Germany for then so-called Pre-Columbian art had been abandoned in the 1980s, contrary to the former plan to create a department of world art history at the University of Heidelberg. When continuing instead with medieval art and turning my attention to relics, reliquaries, so-called cult images, and the theory of images and visual culture in the Latin West, I was still inspired by anthropological approaches, which led me to pursue questions such as what has triggered major changes in the veneration of images and in visual culture more generally. I was interested in the powers attributed to and residing in a vessel, not an image, and how its creation generated questions about artistic imagination as well as philosophical discussions regarding the nature of visibility, humanity, and time.

When I changed to the anglophone academic system, my research shifted to concerns about how we can understand and represent the diversity of how the past is inscribed into the present. My attention shifted to different types of archival traditions, to artistic reflections embedded into the works created by pre-modern artists, and, more generally, to new ways of addressing the gaps in what is all too often presented as linear traditions. I started to be interested in overcoming the homogeneity ascribed by institutions and by practices of preserving memory and cultural heritage to a past that never was as pure, as male, nor as religious as it is often still staged. Embarking into Eurasia-Africa lines of orientation, overcoming the language limitations and narratives resulting in them, was and still is my aim.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Miguel Ángel Asturias, *Hombres de Maíz*; Mary Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*; Kubler, *Shape of Time*.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Since these are three different questions, one looking back, one asking for an evaluation of the impact, and one looking forward, I would like to answer the parts separately.

1. The described opposition originates in the relatively defined points of departure, i.e., the “artist” vs. a clearly defined culture or region in a specific period, and in attempts to negotiate their relationship. None of these concepts has survived in their original homogeneity and definition.

2. Since then, art history has broadened the fields and types of objects of study to encompass visual culture, thereby merging high/low artistic cultures, including indigenous cultures and traditions of memory, and beginning to acknowledge the diversity of practices in the conservation of different pasts.

3. We need to understand the impact of the incompleteness and scatteredness of the surviving objects/monuments and related archives and archival traditions. Only after understanding how our past and present approaches have created dominant and even false narratives can we collaboratively invent new future approaches across the thresholds currently dividing us into subfields and more or less privileged academic cultures.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

One could say I benefited greatly from the so-called turns such as the Pictorial/Iconic Turn, the Material Turn, The Global Turn, Art & Science, etc. Several protagonists contributing to these turns have definitely inspired me, yet I felt and feel not defined by these turns. I would not subscribe to one of the respective approaches “only.” Each turn creates a focus, thus not only opening but also narrowing perspectives, and this is especially the case when such terminology is applied retroactively. Once a turn is labelled as a specific “... (put in random adjective) turn” and articles and/or monographs describing it are published, this particular turn is usually already over. Furthermore, I often realize that significant scholarship contributing to the rise of such turns has often been published years or even decades earlier. E.g. Edward Bevan’s “Holy Images” 1940 has inspired Ilene Forsyth’s “Throne of Wisdom”, 1972, Hans Belting’s “Bild und Kult. Das Bild im Zeitalter vor der Ära der Kunst” / “Likeness and Presence. The image in the era before art”, 1990 and Gerhard Wolf’s “Salus Populi Romani. Eine Geschichte römischer Kultbilder,” 1990, long before the *pictorial* turn described by T. W. Mitchell (1992), or the *iconic turn* proclaimed by Gottfried Boehm (1994). Thinking in “turns” is mostly triggered by attempts to look back, to categorize what has happened before, not what is going on now.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

In a forthcoming collaborative monograph, Finbarr Barry Flood and I try to find terms for our work – terms that do not carry long histories and cultural baggage from a specific, and therefore dominant, culture. The term “flotsam” has proven to be particularly helpful in identifying objects as well as bridges and differences regarding the archival traditions and the archives between the two fields of our expertise (the Latin West and the Islamic World).

In addition to this, we need to understand which images are available to us and why, and to inquire into questions such as these: which images are lost, which are still there, which are published, which have never been published, which are digitally accessible, and, finally, what biases are inscribed into the structures providing us these images? When and how was meta-data produced for now digitally available images? What images have not or will never enter these databases and why is that?

And last, but not least, the reflections about the word “image” itself has always proven to be extremely complicated and productive. As a German-native speaker, the image/picture differentiation in English has constantly affected my approach, stimulating my interest in terminological traditions condensed in terms such as *Bild*, *imago*, פֶּסֶל (pesel), εἰκών (eikon), تماثيل/صور (sura/timthal), to name just a few. We tried to be transparent about the potential implications of the terms applied to specific objects, about the way in which preferred terms have changed over time, and about the religious attitudes towards them in different moments of time and different regions of the world.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

Meaning is what we construct retrospectively on the basis of the remaining “tesserae”, the stones of the mosaic, – the fragmented remainders of the past. But there are three different types of meaning resulting from this reconstruction: 1. Visual objects, in their entirety, can act like a single *tessera* of the larger mosaic. 2. They can also represent the entire mosaic. 3. In our attempts at writing history, we can focus on the reconstruction of such a mosaic, on a methodological and/or theoretical level. Processed-based inquiry, with its premises and assumptions, meta-narratives brought with us as members of a specific culture, ethnic group, and gender, also contributes significantly to the construction of “meaning” in visual objects. In the process of interrogating processes, it is determined the kind of value placed upon particular modes of meaning-making: whether one sees value in the process of reconstruction itself, in the cultures of loss and oblivion, in the visual culture which they evoke, or in the contemporary visual tradition created by these “mosaics of the past”.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

The “meaning” distilled from our attempts to identify historical layers of conveying sense is often a stark reflection of our current conditions. We are actively debating what

defines our present condition: climate change, inequalities in our present societies, returning nationalisms, a lack of access to knowledge and education in specific social groups or in disfavored regions. So, we should always keep the impact of our premises in mind, the current conditions of our thinking guiding our research interests, and our attention for *mise-en-scène* strategies in a past “we see now”.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Yes and no – access to extant scholarship and options to publish new knowledge are increasingly limited for many scholars because of rising fees, paywalls, reduced funding for purchasing publications. Each culture, each subfield of our discipline yields different answers to the question how the relationship between visual appearance and its reception has historically changed over the arch of time. Global/World Art history has demonstrated that we have always been global/globally connected. Yet we cannot stop here, and we should not fall back into the study of regional phenomena or national paradigms, and instead learn from each other and expand our knowledge together. Methodologically, the increase in diversity of scholars, regions, methods, is only beginning, and we need more and different forms of collaboration to approach the relationship between visual appearance of an object and the expectation of its viewers in different cultures. Only in dialogue we can learn to acknowledge our cultural premises and try to overcome them via the development of new approaches.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Images can help us to reveal a past not recorded by written sources. They can help us to write about a past not documented by authorities, clerics, mostly male and white, from privileged parts of societies, and from cultures whose past is continued, institutionally, whose language still exists, whose myths and stories have been recorded. Several cultures are only preserved through excavations, or known from tombs, or they have not written down their myths and histories in form of chronicles, and their archives, institutions, and written documents have been destroyed. We should work together and turn challenges, disparities, and imbalances into the basis for collaborative efforts to develop new methods together, methods to strive for a better understanding of the past revealed by and in visual cultures. Images can tell the other side of the “officially” recorded history; they can provide insight into the everyday lives of people, or into the realities of underrepresented, suppressed, or disenfranchised groups in a society, for example by showing the meaning, the impact, and the contribution of slave labor to the production of works of art. Images, if not studied according to certain established master-narratives, can diversify recorded voices; they are symptoms of the impact of theft, and especially of cultural constructions of “heritage”. They make us conscious of the hegemonies embedded in the dominant narratives coining our discipline, our methods, and our thinking and vision of the past.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Material in the context of making makes me raise questions such as these: what type of ingredients do you need, where do they come from, which trade connections contributed to their semination, what form of knowledge do you need to use the material and to work with it, or to achieve specific effects? What material forms condition the perception of images – reflection, light sources, visual or physical access, barriers like grilles, screens, veils, etc. How do specific materials change over the arch of time; has the color changed, or the surface, its haptic character, its smell or taste? Which material carries which specific meaning in which region and religion? How was this meaning attributed to a material communicated, perceived, defined, and/or disseminated? And, last but not least, how does the materiality of images interact with the spirituality of its recipients? Which beliefs contributed to this relationship, who articulated them, and how did they change over the course of time and in different religions? I am thinking of discourses such as the nature of four elements, or the relationship between macro- and microcosm that can be found in several religions, regions, and periods. Materiality, we might say, is a reciprocal kind of concept; the material through which an artwork or image is rendered takes on its own resonances, which in turn inform the criteria through which material can be perceived in the first place.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

We can approach the social life of images through the method of reconstruction: a reflection on how the “life-world” (Husserl) or “life-forms” (Wittgenstein) have been recorded, and how we as art historian reconstruct the past. Life-world, a term coined by Edmund Husserl (who uses the German term *Lebenswelt*), may be conceived as a universe of what is self-evident or given within a specific practice, a world that subjects share and experience together. Essential here is the embeddedness of theoretical insights into life-related practical contexts, e.g. geometry originated in the need to remeasure the land after flooding of the Nile, Euphrates or Tigris, and later turned into a practice for measuring everything. For Husserl, this leads to a tension between the scientific/technic aspects of life and ethical/practical questions of life, resulting in a major crisis, in which the relevance of sciences and technology overshadows ethical and practical aspects of life.

As an art historian unearthing embedded and interwoven life-worlds in pre-modernity and in cultures whose intellectual and spiritual heritage is only partially recorded, and of which several social groups are not represented at all, particular challenges are at stake: How do we embark into the historical layers of what has been recorded about the relationship between viewers and users? What kinds of images have survived and what kind of experiences? Can we restore past conceptions of the universe, and which parts of the societies and the people do they represent? Who is excluded? The differentiation of universes being self-evident or given is huge with regard to pre-modern cultures – each made up by different ideas about perception, vision, cognition and especially different religious traditions. Some images were made to be never seen, others were made to be seen in very different ways and charged with different roles in religious practices.

Furthermore, the very same object can change its statute many times throughout history, a cannon can be a military tool, then a display of power as booty, turn into a gift, a work of a craftsman, a work of art, and last, but not least, a work displayed in a museum or in a virtual exhibition. Each of these changes defines the social life of the object. With each change, the relationship to its “users” and viewers are reset, and redefined, and trigger new types of visual experiences.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

In my book about the statue of Ste Foy of Conques I have tried to show that the lived experience by people venerating a statue including a relic and the official theological discourses were often very different yet influenced each other mutually. This interest in stark oppositions – the official or theoretical discussions about images, their limits, their roles, and their capacities, and the experience and practice in a religious or even profane world – has continued to coin my research. That the same object is capable of yielding a multitude of very ambivalent insights still intrigues me. It also has led to my research for another of my projects, my forthcoming book about illuminations of Genesis as an archive of implicit articulations and reflections by medieval artists about origins: the beginnings, potentials, and limits of their creativity, their self-reflection of sorts about what an artist is. How was or could “artistic” practice become a subject of self-reflection, providing truth into human and/or divine creation. In another research project about bronze censers, out of which will soon come a volume, of concern is the multisensory nature of incense, smell, and taste, and the problems of the sense that we tend to favor in our work as art historians.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

In multiple cultures, the iconicity of structures, such as landscape, or of specific materials, rituals, or of a combination of site, time, and artisans or collaborators play a more important role than “art” or the production of works of “art” conventionally defined according to rather eurocentric, sinocentric, or dominant narratives in the anglophone art history that have coined the discipline of “art history” since its origins. If we take up the challenge of opening up the canon, of re-equilibrating, re-calibrating, and revisioning the mentioned dominant narratives and structures, we also seriously need to change how the discipline operates logistically, financially, technologically, and so on. Perhaps most important are access to scholarship (OpenAccess and/or the reestablishment of scholar-led publishing) and access to education and training for working in conservation and for institutions preserving cultural heritage. More generally speaking, we need to develop new methods and narratives together across the subfields of our entire discipline, and to learn from scholars working in the global south, especially about the Arts of the Americas, of

Africa, the Oceanic Islands, but also in Korea, Central Asia, and so on. Bridging the divide between scholars working on different periods could help to ease the inclusion of iconicity attributed to non-figurative objects.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Any fiction of a past, for example the opening of the so-called grottos (Domus Aurea in Rome), or the invention of grotesques in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian or French art and poetry, can lead to productive misunderstandings. These developments have contributed to ideas of Renaissances, and discussions about continuity or rupture within the history of visual cultures.

Furthermore, there are insights to be found in theoretical discussions about how such former contexts transformed into new ones, or the degree to which original context can and should be conveyed in places for which the object was not intended, like the display of the sacred in a museum. How can we bridge the sacred and profane in a secularized world? How to address religious or nationalistic re-inventions of the past?

However, most pressing are questions surrounding how we can recover the cultural heritage of indigenous people after long periods of colonization and suppression? How do we tackle inequalities of accessibility to one's own cultural heritage, for example in the case of the Benin bronzes or works from Afghanistan? These issues pose new challenges, leading us to reconsider what defines cultural heritage, and to define good practices of restitution we only begin to conceive of.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

Key to avoiding such transfers and implicit re-colonization of the discipline and its material, especially in an age in which digital publishing should provide more and not less access to scholarship, are the following approaches.

1. Understanding and describing the problems in dominant narratives and lineages of the anglophone world, in which categories developed by white, male thinkers like Hegel, Kant, Riegl or Wölfflin, and subsequently translated into English, are still key references for contemporary discourses; this, to me, is a surprisingly narrow canon and is based on an irritating presumption of continuity if seen from a twenty-first-century perspective outside of the anglophone world.

2. Develop new categories, methods, and terms together with art historians working in different periods or regions of our discipline, ideally from another academic context, writing usually in another language and/or from another part of the world.

3. Respect and understand the alterity of academic writing in different parts of the world. If a piece of writing in English written by a non-native speaker seems to have "no argument" from the perspective of a scholar from the anglophone world, that does not

mean there is none. The inequitable weighing of ideas based often on Anglophone perspectives, conventions, and criteria is just one problem in our discipline that would benefit greatly from a more open transferal of ideas. Equally pressing is the need to accommodate different cultures of academic writing, which in turn might foster wider appreciation for what is perceived to be new or innovative, and thus relevant and deserving of publication. The turn towards publishing in English needs to be combined with new strategies of publishing: new types of journals, new formats, and scholars (not for-profit-presses) designing and running them. OpenAccess should be the norm, not the exception. Non-native publishers in English should not just succumb to the collapsing structures of an anglophone academic world, which has outsourced significant aspects of quality control and selection process to the editorial offices and to scholars working for for-profit publishers.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

On a most basic level, we should study different pre-modern cultures without surviving texts, thereby focusing on art historical methods and theories for reconstructing the past. We should come up with new forms of collaboration that should receive more, not less credit. We need interdisciplinary collaborations to understand the shared heritage of fields understood in modernity as opposed (e.g. medicine and religion). Furthermore, a collaborative approach is needed for the systematic analysis of how loss is described, reconstructed, and addressed in Art History – with particular regard to the discrepancy between cultures whose monuments and objects are exclusively known through archeological findings versus cultures with continuities in language, institutional and religious practice, especially in regions whose past is told differently in different states, according to modern hegemonies.

Before any strides can be taken in this direction, it is important to note how even the act of envisioning the future of the discipline comes with immense hurdles. One of the central tenets of the aforementioned book project on “flotsam” with Finbarr Barry Flood was to try to write new histories of objects without written archives, and we were constantly faced with the question of whether our own imagined new approaches might also be a product of the Eurocentric perspectives from which we were hoping to depart, with the act of “discovering” gaps in the scholarly imagination not exactly without colonialist underpinnings. As I have sketched elsewhere in this survey, I find collaboration to be one of the most fundamental tools for our discipline today, and I believe that only by collaborating in the present can we begin to act in a direction that hopefully will eventually materialize into one that is forward-thinking.

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THOMAS KAFFENBERGER

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Formed as a building archaeologist, my original research focus was the uncovering of ‘objective evidence’, the reconstruction of original shapes and establishing of chronologies of medieval architectures. During my work on Eastern Mediterranean materials, though, I became aware of the limits of this methodology as well as of a traditional stylistic analysis. Both approaches remained of importance to me, in order to reach a solid base for interpretation – e.g., the creation of a comprehensive catalogue of medieval Greek Churches in Cyprus, each discussed with respect to their formal aspects and chronologies. However, this did not allow me to further elucidate the role of the investigated buildings within the societies they were built and used by, in this case the multi-denominational, culturally diverse environment of late medieval Cyprus. At this point my focus of interest started including questions of the potentially ‘meaning-conveying’, iconographic dimension embedded in numerous building projects of the medieval period (such as choice and reuse of materials, referential systems in chosen shapes and forms, interaction between spaces, images and beholders), which led to a better understanding of the multi-layered roles of buildings such as for example the Greek cathedral of Famagusta, Cyprus.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

In the beginning, I found books using the approach of traditional building archaeology particularly instructive – as an example I can mention *Der Dom zu Speyer* by Walter Haas et al., 1972, which formed my appreciation for the meticulous investigation of the material legacy. My interest in a further contextualisation of works of architecture was among others fostered by the seminal *Die gotische Architektur in Frankreich 1130-1270* of Dieter Kimpel and Robert Suckale, already published in 1985. The authors address the complex issue of the interdependence between form (‘style’) and function and prompt reflexion about the semantic readability of stylistic choices. This approach, de-

spite its age, is still influential for my approach to architectures, as it takes into account the complex historic realities surrounding each creation of a building in the Middle Ages, also paving way for the inclusion of more updated approaches e.g. of a hierarchisation of spaces.

Also Stephan Albrecht's *Die Inszenierung der Vergangenheit im Mittelalter. Die Klöster von Glastonbury und Saint-Denis* had an important impact on my approach to medieval architecture, pointing out the potential of architectures to be imbued with relic-like qualities in order to stage an institution's tradition and historic value.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between "style" and "iconography"? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

An attempt to "fully overcome traditional art history", as occasionally preached, appears hardly fruitful. A solid analysis of the objects we are dealing with, as much as their historic realities by no means absent from older studies, still forms the base of our understanding, even if often more implicitly than explicitly. Notwithstanding, dualist distinctions often prove to be a limiting factor in the study of art. While style and iconography can evidently be clearly outlined through precise definitions, only a more fluid perception of phenomena, an acknowledgement of their interplay, allows for a productive use of both notions. If we speak about the iconography of architecture, where we encounter a different mechanism of semiotics than in most imagery due to the former's non-figurative nature, an integrated, combined methodology has proven to be most fruitful. Conclusively I would maintain that insisting on the use of a single approach – instead of a combination chosen for a specific set of questions and objects – will often be nothing more than an intellectual exercise for its own sake.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different "turns", each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

The enhanced interest in certain approach angles has, despite the long-standing tradition of an iconographic reading of architectures, clearly helped to form new ideas about the potential iconicity of built environments. Foremost, the "spatial turn" with its focus on conceptual and actual spaces played an important role. It enabled the development of a framework within which an architecture is not solely perceived as the sum of its walls, but as one element in a relational network with the imagery it contains, the beholders it was conceived for, the cityscape or landscape it forms part of etc. Somewhat connected are also the effects of the "anthropological turn", more specifically the turn towards how humans affected the creation of architecture, and in turn its impact on society. My personal research has benefitted from the latter context in that it provides methodological tools for a valorisation of "minor" works of architecture, which serve as key to an understanding of the multi-layered nature of past societies.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

Important aspects for the study of images in more recent research include the performativity, the interactive nature of the objects, which reflect onto the beholder and have the capacity to affect him/her. This is of special relevance to architectural iconography: here, the “image” is not confined to a flat surface or a restricted volume; it contains people, spectators and accounts for the latter’s spatial mobility and potential reactivity to what they behold. Aspects of this could be subsumed under the notion of “Raumbild” (“image-space”), which has however been used in rather diverse contexts and can be charged with different meanings.

A notion specifically useful for my own research has been one of the *dicta* of the sociology of spaces, which sees a space as a relational arrangement of beings and social goods in a place. Despite its general nature, it underlines the impossibility of discussing spaces without taking into account the factor of movable and immovable objects and the perspective of a (mobile) viewer.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

A recurring problem in the discussion of “meaning in architecture” is the multifaceted nature of buildings, which at the same time serve a practical purpose (as a container for goods, for social actions), but also as marker of places and as objects structuring landscapes and cityscapes, ultimately as conveyer of political and religious realities. “Meaning” already occurs on a pre-iconographic level: the distinguishable shape of a building signals to the beholder, that he/she is for example approaching a church, a market hall, a bridge. This aspect is well illustrated by the debate around the “correct and suitable” architecture for train stations around 1900, where a distinguishable, intuitively recognisable shape for this new type of building was being sought. While a certain cultural embedding is necessary in the general sense for the perception of all “meaning” in architecture, further levels of meaning are conveyed to those with more profound visual and cultural experience. A specific choice of rare, expensive materials can be interpreted as a general message of venerability, or, with an enhanced cultural background, might refer to a very specific historic context explaining the use of a specific valuable material instead of another.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

In my opinion, meaning in architecture is always created on the one hand through an interplay of appearance and form, spatial staging, the arrangement of movable objects etc., and on the other hand through the cultural experience of the beholder, paired with the “immaterial narrative”. Meaning could already vary according to the expectations of the beholder and the mode of their interaction with the building: in the case of a church

this could be to find a space for prayer and worship, for burial and redemption, but also for refuge, physical security, and such. Cultural habits can imbue an architecture with meaning, often in an interplay between the conscious organisation of spaces, the form of the architecture and the placement of images within; as example might suffice the use of church portals as places of legal decisions and judgement. An iconicity, in a stricter sense, might often require knowledge about the political context in which an architecture was created, require the beholder to have personally experienced other buildings related to the one in question. Oftentimes, the key to iconic values such as the demonstration of a patron's alliances, the evocation of Holy Sites etc. would be some sort of narrative replacing a potentially lacking personal experience of the beholder.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

While an awareness of new methods and new approach angles certainly enables us to draw a more balanced image of the relationship between artwork and beholder, this progress is limited by certain factors. Speaking specifically about the study of medieval architecture: despite the wider availability (yet not necessary knowledge) of primary textual sources and images, those materials still do not allow us to approach the actual experience of the beholder with certainty. Being aware of the potentially multifaceted nature of the latter is certainly an advancement, yet we must admit that we remain somewhat trapped in our period's subjective view projected onto the societies we study. Even more, the enormous flux of digital images surrounding us, the availability of reproductions, of digital tools might to some extent remove us further from the more authentic experience of architectures and artworks the early scholars of our field still enjoyed (as biased as their interpretations might often have been).

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

First, the experience of iconic qualities of architecture can be determined through the images placed within – e.g., the vault of a church can be turned into a simulation of heaven through the placement of angelic imagery, blue background etc. This in turn would evidently reflect back on the viewer's experience and perception of the architectural space, making its transcendental nature accessible.

Second, the contact with certain iconic architectures would further enhance the beholder's experience of other architectures, or even natural sites. If acquainted with the Mont St. Michel, or the Sacra di San Michele, a faithful person of the Middle Ages would presumably experience certain mountains, particularly those with churches on top as superior in terms of "closeness to the angelic spheres" (a parallel for the Byzantine world being chapels of St. Elijah on hilltops). In this way visual experience and once-heard narrative replaces the need for a further narrative later on and in some way even extends beyond the limits of said narratives.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

In architecture, materiality is on a first level a question of practical necessity; the availability of stones or wood, of easy-to-work or problematic materials. On a second level it becomes a question of aesthetics, a general enhancement of splendour evidently indicating a higher 'value', venerability of a building and its associated patrons. On a third level, materiality plays an important role in the iconicity of architecture. Often this happens through the use of particularly distinctive materials: if embedded in the floor or attached to walls, they can mark the places of particular liturgical or ceremonial importance. But also the material itself can be imbued with further significance through *mise-en-scène* or narratives: for Charlemagne it was of relevance that the marble columns used in his palatine chapel had been brought from Ravenna; for the Venetians the value of the *spolia* used on the façade of St Mark was not solely their (potentially imitable) artistic quality, but also the fact that they were physically brought from Constantinople, turning the material itself into the conveyor of a political message. Finally, the in itself nondescript material of an older building's fabric can be charged with veneration-worthy qualities: in the crypt of St. Denis, most prominently, the remains of the ancient basilica are not only kept but embellished to serve as visual connector with the institution's past.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Buildings and the space(s) they contain are highly intertwined with the societies that surround them. On the one hand, the viewer's experience, rituals, and performance are often the key to the iconographic understanding of buildings. For example, a centralised building might or might not evoke the presence of the Holy Sepulchre to a viewer acquainted with the latter's shape. If said church is additionally used for burial purposes, and perhaps hosts relics of the cross or related liturgies, specifically this use, this entanglement of the building with social actions 'unlocks' the whole extent of the building's iconicity.

On the other hand, architectures can form and shape social behaviour through their various levels of meaning. They can create points of attraction and specifically direct movement, on a small scale within spaces (e.g., orientation towards singled out, specifically staged places), on a larger scale across cities, landscapes (e.g., in the form of pilgrimages).

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

While hard to grasp, to re-imagine, the role of a multisensorial experience cannot be underestimated in a past viewer's experience of architectures. The importance of tactile properties goes hand in hand with the perception of materiality. Taste is harder to connect to architectures, yet phenomena like the ingestion of pulverised fragments of images supposed to be of healing qualities might also be traceable in particularly venerated architectures. The factor of scent certainly plays a role in the performative dimension of

spaces, e.g., to convey proximities to certain places within a church building during liturgies. An important example of my personal research field are the soundscapes of multicultural medieval societies. The use of bells, an inherently “Latin” custom, made its way to the Levant especially in the 13th and 14th centuries to concur with the *semantron* used by the Greeks. The investigation of patterns of appropriation of bells in the Greek sphere, in particular in monastic culture, has the potential to reveal a conscious direction of the faithful within a city, on the one hand, but also as an indicator of various liturgies throughout the day, adding the often-neglected factor of “time”.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Architecture itself is in some way the first level of a non-figurative object presenting iconicity on various levels. While not every notion expressed above can be transferred verbatim onto elements of landscape or natural materials, iconic properties of architecture can be enhanced by the latter – or in turn serve to enhance nature’s own iconic qualities. I would claim that one of the essential human acts of cultural behaviour is the appropriation of distinctive natural sites through the placement of buildings. This can be of practical nature – a watermill needs to stand next to a river – but often contains important symbolical and very generally “iconic” meaning – a specific river can come to be regarded as miracle-working, healing as consequence of the placement of a sanctuary next to it. Or vice versa: the social practice of considering a water source as miraculous can initiate the construction of a building, interacting with the performative practice previously established on site. A further example for the interplay between “iconic” nature and architecture would be the above mentioned “holy mountains”.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Works of architecture as a whole are, with rare exceptions, immobile. However, we can speak about the transfer of architectural ideas and models. The appropriation and transfer of those, their imitation in new spatial contexts, is of primary role in the perception of an iconography of architecture. Rather than suspecting an inherent semantic readability, it is a comparative analysis that leads to the uncovering of such transfer processes. Those imitations are by no means restricted to purely formal aspects but always include some of the previously discussed notions: contextual narrative, location, performative and liturgical aspects etc. One of the most useful hermeneutical keys are – to this day – the historical sources themselves, which can reflect the narrative attached to the visual and still visible aspects of a building. Evidently textual sources, such as pilgrim’s reports, need to be treated carefully as well in order to distinguish idealised topoi and the reflexion of general narrative from the actual experience of the respective authors.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

The gradual introduction of English as common scholarly language came with the advantage of enabling intensified international exchange. Ideas previously blocked within a restricted scientific circle and bound to the language they were expressed in, can now be more easily shared, appreciated, and integrated in further studies. However, the extent of the methodological caveats becomes clear if we look at only the classical Western European scientific cultures: diverging terminologies even between German, Italian and French lead to a simplification and potential distortion if transferred into English. The entire thought process is impacted by the language it is led in: for example, subtle notions of uncertainty, for which the German language provides ample options, are much harder to convey in English. Transferred onto a global perspective, such caveats are amplified as even seemingly simple notions of chronological organisation, as basic as “medieval”, cannot be applied universally. Here, a suitable way forward might be to not discard local scholarly traditions and the language that they are built upon, but instead allowing for more informed academic translations that can comment on those notions that are native to one academic context but absent from the other tradition.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

I see the main challenge for the nearer future in the exterior tendency to structure humanities the same as other sciences. The problematic need to ensure funding by complying with systems often created for fields in which there is a high frequency turnover of projects and publications, just like the quantitative rather than qualitative evaluation of publications, creates an unfavourable climate for more time-consuming groundwork or studies approaching large corpora of objects. An avalanche of new publications is bound to have a significantly shorter lifecycle than many of the older studies. Instead of adapting to those externally requested frameworks, humanities would profit from the development of more suitable, own structures of evaluation and evolution. For example, I would like to see more opportunities created to pursue research detached from the requirement of rapid publication and the pressure to use novel methodologies even on object groups previously not investigated. Rather, I'd favour a stronger return of studies originating from the object(s) and developing individual combinations of approaches suitable to uncover the layers of meaning of the objects in question. While I am aware of the “traditionalist” allure this might have, I am convinced that the relevance of research in our field lies also in the sustainability of results, in their relatability several research generations from now.

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YOSHIE KOJIMA

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My current research focuses on the reception and transformation of Western Christian images in Japan during the Catholic (Counter-) Reformation and the following period by Hidden Christians, including the so-called Kakure Kirishitan, who chose not to reconcile with Catholic orthodoxy, maintaining separate and distinctive religious practices developed in nearly three centuries of isolation. Originally, my intention was to survey how Christian sacred images of Western origin transformed as they became indigenous and amalgamated with domestic religious images, such as those of Shinto and Buddhism. However, as the investigation progressed, it has become increasingly clear that for the Kakure Kirishitan, their sacred images have been subjectively legitimated, adhering not to the original religious context but to the formalities and forms that were, paradoxically, substantial and inherited from their ancestors, who supported their faith at the cost of their own lives. In such a framework, the notion of iconographical orthodoxy is relative and conditioned by formalities and forms.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Kouya Tagita, *Shouwa-jidai no Senpuku Kirishitan* [*Hidden Christians of Showa Era*], Tokyo, Kokushokankokai (1978). This is the first and most extensive study on the Kakure Kirishitan (Hidden Christians). The author, born in 1896, was a scientist, autodidactic folklorist, and historian who devoted his life to researching the Hidden Christians. While there has been no comprehensive study of the art of the Hidden Christians, some important works have certainly addressed the reception of Western art in Japan during the Catholic (Counter-) Reformation period. Such studies include Mitsuru Sakamoto et al.'s *Namban Bijutsu Sō-Mokuroku, Youfū-ga-Hen, Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsu-kan Kenkyū Hōkoku 75* [*An Essay of Catalogue Raisonné of Namban Art: Japanese Early European-Style Painting - Bulletin of the National Museum of Japanese History 75*] (1997). As

for Western literature, Henri Focillon's *La vie des formes* (1st print: E. Leroux, 1934) has been helpful in contemplating how the "life of the forms" is eloquent, which is why it takes on its own connotation.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between "style" and "iconography"? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Given that style and iconography are defined by the environment of a certain period or region, the two should not be strictly distinguished. However, difficulties might arise if they are conflated and discussed methodologically, as each has its own autonomous development. Rather than introducing new approaches, however, perhaps we should first examine the linkage between style and iconography in a specific environment, such as with an individual religious sect in a specific region. To give an example, the Buddhist statue (statues?) of the early Heian period in Japan, carved from one tree, which emphasizes volume and characteristic solemnity, is closely related to esoteric Buddhism and the esoteric-related iconography of the time. Artworks like this could be discussed in a more comprehensive and macroscopic way.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different "turns", each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

New scholarly debates – such as those taken up by Michele Bacci, Georges Didi-Huberman, Herbert Kessler, Carlo Severi, and Victor Stoichita – have provided guidelines for my current research. For Japanese scholarship, I would point to Sueki Fumihika, who is not an art historian but a more general historian who strongly contributed to deepen our knowledge of the history of Japanese thought and religions.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

If I had to guess, I would say that 'fundamental' notions such as function, agency, and materiality as well as formality and type are not related to style or iconography. Such notions function as identifiers or containers for variable and relative representations. Looking at, for example, sacred images of the Kakure Kirishitan, consider, for instance, that the formality and type of the moon was originally associated with the immaculate conception, which has gradually been conceived as the norm for all sorts of representations of the Virgin Mary and other female sacred images, though at times it has been viewed as something completely different and linked to indigenous beliefs.

6. *What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

Naturally, meaning in visual objects is different from the meaning conveyed by words. Visual objects can operate as a more direct way of conveying meaning in the sense that the object or form being viewed has meaning in itself.

7. To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

This depends on how much the society and the community that perceive the images are culturally, socially, and historically related to the society and community that created the images. Even the meanings of universal motifs, such as the sun, moon, trees, and flowers, are defined on the basis of viewers’ contexts.

8. In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?

We are now far better equipped to understand this relationship than when we discussed the history of form in developmental-historical terms and learned that formalism was central to the methodology of art history. At the same time, however, the boundaries between art history and other disciplines, such as history, philosophy, and anthropology, are becoming increasingly blurred, making it difficult to discuss art history as a larger, self-contained narrative.

9. To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?

In order to perceive and experience reality, people rely on images more than they might at first think. This is why, in every age and region, heads of religions have used images to spread their beliefs and rulers have used images to govern. Images can be directly perceived without being interpreted and can often be more eloquent than words in both good and bad ways.

10. What is your assessment of the materiality of images?

Materiality is relevant to me because I am currently researching religious images that were used as tools for faith by the Kakure Kirishitan. Material existence itself has been crucial for them. Some of the Kakure Kirishitan communities that originally did not produce sacred images in order to avoid detection have gradually adopted other religions’ holy images due to the need to have a material existence. Materiality is also important for the study of *Fumi-e*, which means “trampled sacred images.” These copper or brass reliefs, originally imported from Europe and then reproduced in Japan, were used to identify Hidden Christians. Thus, the materiality of *Fumi-e* has affected both Hidden Christians and their persecutors.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

An image may be considered to have an autonomous social life, whether intended or not by the viewer or user. For example, not to mention the art historical odyssey of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in the Western world, the non-Western world also has its own autonomous social life surrounding this painting. In Japan, for example, this work has not only become an icon for Western art and Leonardo's mythology but has also been reproduced in various forms as a symbol of something unfamiliar but Western and lofty.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

As long as the experience of images is spatial and temporal, multiple senses can play roles in how they are perceived. The sacred images of the Kakure Kirishitan, used together with a very special oration in absolute secrecy, are highly interesting. The Latin *Catechismus Romanus*, for example, has been handed down orally. However, the meaning has been lost, and the work is now understood as holy sounds or spells. This links to the gradual oblivescence of the original meaning of sacred images. Over time, the sounds – not the words – and the forms – not the icons – have taken on other meanings.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

To the extent that nonfigurative objects evoke specific concepts, notions, and ideas, this may be included in an art historical narrative. For instance, with a certain shape of landscape for Pure Land Buddhism (*Jōdo* in Japanese, which means “celestial realm”), the imagery would be closely related not only to painting but also to Buddhist garden art in Japan.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

In general, for studies of transfer, transformation, and the reshaping of images across multiple civilizations, we would first need knowledge of multiple languages, including classical languages. Translation of the basic texts relevant to those studies would also be important.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

Taking into account the state of scholarship on Western art as well as traditional art of non-Western world, such as those of China and Japan, even today the world of art historians is divided roughly into a Western-language context and non-Western, especially East Asian, language context. Therefore, strictly speaking, English is not the *lingua franca* here. The majority of important studies on East Asian art are written in the original languages and are not yet translated into Western ones. I believe that notions informed by a basically Western European understanding of images have always had the potential to become universal, but as a matter of course, that depends on the imagination of scholars.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

One of the issues we need to address is how to resolve the persistently present but unconsciously concealed boundaries between the worlds of scholarship operating in Western and non-Western languages.

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ADEN KUMLER

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My first experiences studying medieval art, at the University of Chicago in the 1990s, were shaped by the emphasis on “word and image” relations that had already transformed iconography and iconology at that time. The integration of semiotics, psychoanalytic theory, and, not least, the history of gender and sexuality in the classes I took made studying medieval art quite thrilling. My first publications, including my first book (based on my dissertation), focused on questions of how medieval images produced meaning in collaboration and in tension with texts, primarily vernacular-language texts focused on aspects of Christian religious truth and practice. In the last ten years, like many other art historian colleagues focused on periods before 1500 CE, I have increasingly integrated consideration of materials and material culture in my research and teaching. Often described as “the material turn”, recent interest in historical conceptions of materials and the material world, as well as the very material “stuff” of images is not a radical new direction in art history, but rather a return, with a number of vital differences, to fundamental questions of form, facture, and process. Although it might be described as displacing the focus on “images” and image-theory that dominated scholarship in my field in prior decades, I think images and their theoretical stakes remain a central preoccupation.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Reflecting on this question, I find that essay-length studies have been far more important for my research than books. Nonetheless, books have played crucial roles in shaping the questions that interest me most. From a much longer list, three books that have decisively shaped my perception and thinking are: Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1988); Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011); Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

By “traditional” art history, the question seems to evoke iconography, iconology, the connoisseurial tradition’s taxonomies of “styles” and “schools,” and art historical stemmatic criticism’s investment in tracing the diachronic transformation and continuity of “motifs”. Whereas in the study of medieval art I think both iconography and Panofskyian iconology still play central roles, the connoisseurial and the stemmatic approaches have fallen out of fashion. This, I suspect, because they are today judged to depend upon highly mechanistic, sometimes teleological accounts of how art is made that are of little use in addressing questions of *why* art is made, or how works play formative roles within cultures. From this vantage, they seem to ill-suited to investigation of the cultural, social, and political – that is to say, anthropological – dynamics that have most interested art historians since the 1960s. The rejection of such “old fashioned” art historical methods, has in turn produced a curious state of affairs. On the one hand, very few art historians active today have been trained in the techniques of close observation and comparison that defined the *habitus* of pre-1960s connoisseurship, with the result that many academic art historians effectively delegate the work of dating, localization, and attribution to colleagues working in museums and in the art market. At the same time, at least among historians of medieval art, growing interest in artistic processes, techniques and materials, and in makers would seem to call for a critical revival of the first-hand skilled forms of empirical observation that “old-fashioned” connoisseurship and stemmatic criticism practiced. In my view, a reinvestment in these practices would be welcome, provided that it was resolutely sceptical, self-aware and critically interested in how an art historian’s contemporary moment shapes their perception. Past concern for adjudicating “quality” seems to me to be at best irrelevant to, and, at worst, obfuscating of most historical questions we want to bring to works of art and to artifacts today, but surely meticulous, comparative close-looking can do much more than pronounce upon quality.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

In my lifetime, art history has taken numerous “turns”: to reception, to post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, to the history of gender and sexuality, to word-image relations, the “iconic turn,” the “material turn,” etc. Each of these (re)orientations has enriched my understanding of the images, works of art, objects, and historical-cultural practices I study. Cumulatively, these “turns” have expanded my conception of what an image has been and can be, what objects can do, and – perhaps most importantly – they have diversified both the questions and the ways of pursuing answers that I bring to my research, teaching, and writing. The heuristic contribution seems most vital to me: that is, the ways that successive “turns” open up new possibilities for question formation, new impulses to be *curious*

about works of art and culture. It's a sign of the discipline's vitality that art history keeps "turning." So much so, that rather than naming and trumpeting each "turn," perhaps we should simply acknowledge the inventive energy of the discipline as a quasi-constant.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

I find that the concept of the meta-image – that is, images that thematize or question their own status and effects as images – has proven to be enduringly illuminating. Skilful analyses of such reflexive images have effectively demonstrated how "the image" has been diversely theorized in images: a trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon of central significance to anyone interested in images and their histories. In the study of medieval images, important recent work on diagrams has, in my view, opened up new vistas for how we can perceive and interpret seemingly non-mimetic images in ways that recognize their representational power, that is their denotative (and sometimes connotative) work, as well as modes of thinking-in-images that were central to medieval European cultures.¹ As a final observation, I think the explosion of interest in art historiography, that is in the history of art history itself, is significant. The best work in this vein offers us new critical perspectives on the concepts and blindspots that have both enabled and limited our understanding of images.

6. *What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I take a rather promiscuous approach to this question. In practice, I find that I distinguish – and occasionally collapse – several species of "meaning" when analyzing a given work. Thus, to discuss meaning "in" a work of art often invites consideration of the maker(s) intention(s): all the cumulative, often minute decisions and actions that first specified the object as a physical and hermeneutic existent. When a work presents representational or picture-like elements to perception, then the project of interpreting meaning "in" the work turns to established iconographic and iconological questions: What is depicted? How is it depicted? What historical pre-existing knowledge is demanded or activated by the work's depictive aspect? But, as much recent scholarship has emphasized, non-mimetic elements, as well as materials, size, format, techniques, placement, and use are themselves powerfully involved in the "meaning" of works of art. And, of course, meaning often changes profoundly over time. Accordingly, I find it surpassingly difficult to isolate the meaning "in" any given medieval work; one is always already confronted with a complex situation in which "meaning" is produced, variously, by conditions leading to the start of the process of making, informing that process, and accruing to and/or vanishing from the work, *in situ* or in movement, through time. For these reasons, to address "meaning" in relation to works is always a complex and necessarily selective undertaking. The challenge is to be clear-sighted and self-aware about how one privileges certain meaning-producing or meaning-imputing dynamics, and excludes others.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

I think extra-formal factors are quite important to how any image was seen in the past and they continue to inform how a given image or work is seen. Put dogmatically: we never perceive or interpret images in a vacuum. And, of course, this is part of the real challenge of interpreting historical images: we never have access to the initial *mise-en-scène* of the image, both in an empirical sense and in an apperceptual sense. The experiential dynamics that condition the perception of images have, I think, in recent years really come to the center of scholarly attention. The growing number of scholars who are committed to a multi-sensory art history indicate how seriously and ambitiously the experiential dimension of perception is now taken. As an historian convinced that the body has a history (or rather, *histories*), and that sensorial experience is a cultural fact, I remain quite skeptical about how an emphasis on sensual experience can avoid positing the human sensorium as quasi-transcendent or trans-historical. My first encounter with the *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* volumes published by Zone books (1989) made me a cultural constructivist when it comes to questions touching on human embodied experience of images.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

In broad terms, I think the open-ended project of studying images and their beholders has produced an ever-growing body of knowledge and a diversification of questions and interpretive approaches that have both expanded and deepened how we can conceive of and understand the interplay of images' appearances and the expectations of viewers. To this continuous process, the advent of digital images and the concomitant explosion of images of images, offers us an historically unprecedented *musée imaginaire*. I can still recall lectures from my BA studies in which a majority of the slides projected were in black and white and studying for exams involved making notes from black and white photographs. The proliferation of images accessible online makes all kinds of research possible in ways that would have been unthinkable in the past. At the same time, however, this phenomenon also has the effect of radically widening the gulf between the expectations we bring to historical images today and the expectations historical beholders likely brought to the images they encountered. To put this simply, any student of medieval art today with an internet connection has access to a far more expansive corpus of medieval images than any medieval beholder – even the most privileged, widely travelled, and “art loving” medieval beholder – ever had. This state of affairs makes scholars today potentially better equipped to ask *longue durée* questions, but I think it also makes it harder for us to grasp the historically conditioned, quite contingent dynamics of expectation and perception that informed how people in the past experienced works of art. At the very least, the proliferation of digital images of historical works of art, objects, and images should

prompt us to think even more critically about how and to what ends we deploy those techniques of comparison and distinction that remain central to art historical practice.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

In a word: massively. A transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon, intervisuality is always at play when an image is encountered and any intellectual, affective, or creative process is sparked by that encounter. So too, in my own research I find again and again traces of contact and mutual relation between images and other aspects of medieval realities and experiences, be they material, conceptual and/or imaginative. Thus, for example, the recourse to images and artifacts in medieval Christian theology and philosophy – most notably, in thought experiments – demonstrates how people in the past “thought with” the visual-material culture around them. To take the passage of light through a transparent vessel as a starting point for thinking about the physics of light or the mystery of a virgin becoming pregnant with a god-man is to attempt to understand “reality” with a mental image likely derived from “real-world” experiences with transparent vessels, but plausibly also catalysed by images of the Annuciation. Put bluntly in terms of method: iconographic and iconological interpretation would be nonsensical undertakings if images could not inform other images, both directly and obliquely.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

As I explored in an essay from 2019, the term “materiality” is exceedingly elastic.² I have yet to encounter a deployment of the term that makes clear its sense and utility, in distinction to “matter,” “materials,” “physical substance,” “facture,” etc. If one takes the question as asking how the material form of a work conditions our apperception of that work, I would answer that the material form is always of paramount importance. This assertion can be readily tested by comparing an encounter with a work re-mediated through ekphrasis, photography, or line-drawing with a first-hand experience of the same work. If by “materiality” one refers not to the empirical constitution and presence of an image, but rather to the constellation of ideas about matter, materials, and images that potentially informed its making and reception, the answer I’d give is the same. A maker and a perceiver’s premises or ideas about matter, materials, images, and whatever is culturally designated as immaterial or transmaterial (e.g., concepts like beauty, ugliness, divinity, the demonic, nature, history, fraud, value, etc.) inevitably inform both the making and the perceiving of images.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

A matter of principle, I am resistant to granting human-like agency to images and so, by extension, I am resistant to propositions that would grant images a “social life.” At the same time, however, it is clear that certain images in medieval Europe were understood to

exert themselves upon the world and to act in ways that we might readily define as social or anti-social. In medieval Christian contexts, figural images of Christ, Mary and the saints offer the most obvious and wide-spread exemplification of this phenomenon. And of course, medieval Christians devised a variety of ways of understanding and/or justifying such images' sociality. I find such emic accounts of how images were understood to interrelate with human beings, with nature, and with other images quite important, but as an historian I am equally interested in how people in the past conferred "social life" upon images. Considered from this angle (i.e., anthropologically), we need not assume anything. The evidence for medieval Christians cultivating relationships with images, particularly religious images, *as if they were people* is irrefutable.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

For medieval people it seems clear that the experience of images was often a multi-sensory affair. Given that many medieval images are consubstantial with the forms of functional objects, the haptic dimension of experiencing images is obvious. Nonetheless, until recently, the experience of touching or handling images received relatively less attention from scholars working on medieval art. Following several decades in which scholarly attention was fixated on vision and theories of vision, the recent enthusiasm for a multi-sensory approach to images is, fundamentally, a welcome corrective. In this newer work, the importance of touch, sound, and smell to medieval experiences of images, architecture, and the built environment has already been amply demonstrated.³ Thus, when Herb Kessler revised and expanded his 2004 book *Seeing Medieval Art* he quite significantly re-titled it *Experiencing Medieval Art*.⁴ Attention to the sense of taste in relation to medieval images, however, has not yet garnered much attention, although historians of medieval Christian exegesis and mysticism have shown that visionary experiences often involved gustatory sensations, charged with religious significance and much work has been done on the visual aesthetics of elite dining in the period. A small number of studies have examined the physical ingestion of images in medieval and early modern cultures: this work should prompt us to integrate taste more fully in our accounts of how images were experienced in the medieval past.⁵

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that "iconicity" (or "visual efficacy") is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

I am convinced that "artistic images" have never enjoyed a monopoly upon iconicity. The transhistorical, pluri-cultural phenomenon of the "chance image" demonstrates that people have repeatedly discerned images, including iconic representations, in natural materials and phenomena.⁶ The history of landscape architecture and garden-making also testifies to how intensely non-figurative works have attained and/or been invested with iconicity. So too, with respect to living beings, one could read Kantorowicz's *The King's*

Two Bodies as a study in a longue durée tradition of iconicity, organized in relation to the living and the deceased body of the ruler. In the medieval period, it seems clear that iconicity is sometimes a property of “artistic images,” but it is by no means their “exclusive” property. As an art historian focused on the medieval period, I think the pressing question is not whether non-figurative objects can be included in our art historical narratives, but rather how our art historical narratives should change in response to the vital play of iconicity within *and* beyond “artistic images.”

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Which hermeneutic tools are *not* useful in our analyses of such phenomena? Arguably, all historic works of art are subject to the dynamics inventoried in the question. Collectively, changing aesthetic values, conceptions of the work of art, ideas about what is involved in experiencing images, as well as the insistently empirical dynamics of historical change (ranging from transformed landscapes and built environments to the inevitable alterations and/or restorations of works extant today) powerfully condition both how a work is materially constituted, how it appears, and how it is received. These are the inescapable pre-conditions of our encounters with historical works of art and they call for all the forms of attention and analysis we can muster.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

As someone who researches and writes exclusively on “western” art, I hardly feel qualified to answer this question proscriptively. I have certainly found the critical examination of emic terms undertaken by colleagues working in fields other than my own to be illuminating. As a recent case in point, in an essay that appeared in a book I recently co-edited with Beate Fricke, Kristopher Kersey offers a sensitive examination of how several Japanese terms associated with concepts of impermanence (*aware*, *mujō*, and *mappō*), have been taken up by essentializing accounts of “Japanese aesthetics” (particularly, Japanese Buddhist aesthetics). As Kersey shows, such scholarly recourse to emic terms effectively strips them of their complex historicity, and obscures how impermanence, futurity, and loss were aesthetically conceived and explored in twelfth-century Japan.⁷

This question, and the status quo it evokes, points to the profound inadequacy of the binary “western” / “non-western.” Although this binary names a reductive taxonomy that has shaped the writing and teaching of art history profoundly, and continues to do so, I nonetheless I think it should be more actively interrogated and dismantled. It lumps together the majority of world cultures under the rubric “non-western,” designates art and artifacts made in the western hemisphere as “non-western” (e.g., works created in Mesoamerica and by North American first nations), and represses the fact of major discontinuities and tensions within the art and art-theoretical vocabularies of the so-called “West.”

16. Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?

One desideratum – by no means the only one – is intensified exchange and research collaboration between those of us trained in the discipline of art history and colleagues trained in archaeology and technical art history/conservation studies. I am convinced that such collaboration would lead to exciting insights, both empirical and theoretical. Whereas I see some momentum towards integrating the findings of technical art history in the teaching and research done by “traditional” art historians, the majority of art historians and archaeologists continue to work along more or less separate tracks. We often are siloed in separate programs within universities, hold separate conferences, and publish in different journals. Of course, this was not always the case. To offer a concrete example of how collaboration between art historians, conservation scientists, and archaeologists could produce insights that each specialization could not achieve alone: the role of destruction, waste, loss and damage in the making and experiencing of artifacts and art works is an area of research that merits greater attention and theorization. Examining these ubiquitous dynamics from collaborative, interdisciplinary perspectives would, I think, deepen and transform how we can perceive and interpret images’ complex, transitive conjunctions of presence and absence.

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1. For salutary points of entry into a much larger bibliography, see: J. F. Hamburger, R. Maurus, *Diagramming Devotion: Berthold of Nuremberg's Transformation of Hrabanus Maurus's Poems in Praise of the Cross*, Chicago and London 2019; S. Bogen, *Der Körper des Diagramms: Präsentationsfiguren, mnemonische Hände, vermessene Menschen*, K. Marek et al. (eds.), *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, 2nd (rev) Munich 2008, pp. 61-81; S. Bogen, F. Thürlemann, *Jenseits der Opposition von Text und Bild: Überlegungen zu einer Theorie des Diagramms und des Diagrammatischen*, A. Patschovsky (ed.), *Die Bildwelt der Diagramme Joachims von Fiore: Zur Medialität religiös-politischer Programme im Mittelalter*, Ostfildern 2003, pp. 1-22; D. Ganz, *The Cross on the Book: Diagram, Ornament, Materiality*, M. Brown, I. Garipzanov and B. Tilghman (eds.), *Graphic Devices and the Early Decorated Book*, Woodbridge 2017, pp. 243-264; K. Müller, 'Admirabilis forma numeri': *Diagramm und Ornament in mittelalterlichen Abschriften von Boethius' 'De arithmetica'*, Ornament. Motiv - Modus - Bild, München 2012, pp. 181-210; B. Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art*, Regensburg 2003; B. Kühnel, *Carolingian Diagrams, Images of the Invisible*, in G. de Nie, K. F. Morrison and M. Mostert, *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Papers from "Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400-1000" (Utrecht, 11-13 December 2003)*, Turnhout 2005, pp. 359-389; U. Ernst, *Diagramm und Figurengedicht. Betrachtungen zu zwei affinen Formen visueller Kommunikation*, «Comunicare e significare nell'alto medioevo, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo» 52 (2005), pp. 539-571; K. Müller, *Irritierende Variabilität. Die mittelalterliche Reproduktion von Wissen im Diagramm*, B. Bussmann et al. (eds.), *Übertragungen: Formen und Konzepte von Reproduktion in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Berlin and New York 2005, pp. 415-436; K. Müller, *Visuelle Weltaneignung: astronomische und kosmologische Diagramme in Handschriften des Mittelalters*, (Historische Semantik 11), Göttingen 2008.

2. A. Kumler, *Materials, Materia, 'Materiality,'* C. Rudolph (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 2nd ed., Hoboken, NJ, pp. 95-117.

3. See, for example, E. Palazzo, *L'invention chrétienne des cinq sens dans la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge*, Paris 2014; B. V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, University Park, PA 2010; B. V. Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia. Sound, Space, and Spirit in Byzantium*, University Park, PA 2017; Niall Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life*, University Park, PA 2016; M. Bagnoli (ed.), *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe* (Exhibition, the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, October 16, 2016 - January 8, 2017, the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, February 4 - April 30, 2017), Baltimore 2016; F. Griffiths, K. Starkey, *Sensory Reflections Traces of Experience in Medieval Artifacts*, Berlin and Boston 2020; M. G. Shoaf, *Monumental Sounds: Art and Listening before Dante*, Leiden 2021; T. E. A. Dale, *Pygmalion's Power: Romanesque Sculpture, the Senses, and Religious Experience*, University Park, PA 2019; R. Betancourt, *Sight, Touch, and Imagination in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2018; R. Betancourt, *Performing the Gospels in Byzantium: Sight, Sound, and Space in the Divine Liturgy*, Cambridge 2020; E. Palazzo, *L'activation sensorielle de l'art dans la liturgie au Moyen Âge. Etat de la question et perspectives*, G. Rodríguez, G. Coronado Schwindt (eds.), *Abordajes sensoriales del mundo medieval*, Mar del Plata 2017, pp. 3-14; E. Palazzo (ed.), *Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge*, Paris 2016.

4. H. L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, Peterborough 2004; H. L. Kessler, *Experiencing Medieval Art*, Toronto, Buffalo and London 2019.

5. See, for example: F. Barry Flood, *Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam*, in S. M. Promey (ed.), *Sensational Religion*, New Haven 2014, pp. 459-494; G. Vikan, *Ruminations on Edible Icons: Originals and Copies in the Art of Byzantium*, K. Preciado (ed.) *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, Washington, D. C. 1989, pp. 47-59; M. Schaller, *Bilder essen? Einverleibte »Schluckbildchen« und »Schabmadonnen«*, F. Eberling, E. Paetzold and M. Schaller, *Einverleibungen. Imaginationen - Praktiken - Machtbeziehungen*, Berlin 2021, pp. 138-165.

6. On "chance" or "potential images," with critical consideration of prior scholarship, see D. Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art*, London 2002.

7. K. Kersey, *Impermanence, Futurity, and Loss in Twelfth-Century Japan*, B. Fricke, A. Kumler (eds.), *Destroyed—Disappeared—Lost—Never Were*, University Park, PA 2022.

OYA PANCAROĞLU

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

I came to study images in the context of my PhD thesis (completed in 2000) in which I sought to understand why figural imagery began to play a pervasive role in the visual culture of the Persianate world starting in the late 12th century – a phenomenon that lasted for less than a century. At the time, I was mainly interested in the images themselves and their immediate companions – inscriptions (in the case of objects and tiles) and texts (in the case of manuscripts) – and tried to establish connections that had either been ignored or denied in the extant scholarship. Since then, my interest has expanded to include questions about forms of objects on which images appear and the role of compositions that blur the supposed borders between image, ornament, and writing.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, 1987); Jacques Le Goff, *L’imaginaire médiéval* (Paris, 1994); Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (Santa Monica, 1995).

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

“Traditional” (European/Western) art history has maintained all manner of rigidity, often riding on the easy premise of “one size fits all”. The impulse to classify and categorize is understandable and perhaps necessary for preliminary stages of research but becomes unproductive and distorting when it becomes the end goal, resulting in art that is pigeonholed and straitjacketed. Perhaps it becomes more manageable and gives the impression of “furthered” research but, in effect, the application of too many rigid distinc-

tions becomes reductive. I am generally wary of any wholesale prescription of approaches to employ, whether “traditional” or not. Each field within the global landscape of art history has its own set of conditions against which any prescription of methodology should be tested.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

I came into the field in 1990s as a graduate student and my earliest memory of such a “turn” involved the notion of the “gaze”. At the time, especially in the mid-nineties in the United States, this was a rather loud drumbeat but, frankly, I found myself reacting to its loudness by avoiding it. Probably I was reacting to what seemed to me to be its blanket adoption, its trendiness at the time. Since then, my out-of-sync relationship to the sequence of “turns” has not changed much. That is to say, all or most of the debates generated by these turns are interesting or beneficial and no doubt I have benefitted from some of them by osmosis or otherwise, but I personally find it hard to participate in a collective scholarly debate at the “moment” that it becomes “hot”. And, some 25 years later, the “gaze” as a “cooled off” notion is much more palatable to me.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

In my field (medieval Islamic art), the notions that have been relevant in the last 20-30 years in the study of images include narrativity, portability (especially for objects but also images), spatiality and theories about ornament. Narrativity had interested me from the beginning, but I delved into ornament only in the last decade or so. I feel it has expanded my horizons considerably because the images I study tend to be “ornamental” as much as narrative and it has helped me to face this reality. Moreover, because I also do research on architecture, I find that thinking about ornament unites my two areas of interest, further expanding my horizons.

6. What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

I don’t think that I have a “specific” understanding of meaning. I try to keep an open mind about meaning in the sense that I think it is contingent upon context and conditions and therefore changeable. But, of course, that doesn’t stop me from proposing meanings every now and then. For the period and region that I study, I find that images conveyed messages primarily by maintaining an affinity to a basic repertoire (a “set menu”, if you will) that established their relevance while, at the same time, achieving some kind of inflection or modulation, especially, but not exclusively, by means of particular combinations with other images, texts or ornamentation.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

All of those factors certainly have an impact on the generation and re-generation of meaning. Social protocol around the image, too, can be a determinant. Who owns the image, who has access to it and how... these things add weight to meanings.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Probably so, on the average. But it is not always possible to arrive at an understanding of viewers' expectations. We can guess but we don't always have the means to know. Still, the complexity of image-viewer relationship should always be born in mind.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Interrelationships among images as well as between images and, for example, human-made environments are some of the most fundamental questions that image studies require. Figuring these interrelationships out should ideally be more than a formal exercise. If we can approach the question of *why* those interrelationships exist, then we may come that much closer to the agency of images with regard to perception.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Does the “materiality of images” refer to the material(s) out of which the image is created or to something about the image that brings material (or the idea thereof) to the foreground? Perhaps these two make up two sides of the same medallion. Or perhaps the question is deliberately ambiguous. Why do certain images go with certain materials? There is a category of early Islamic (8th-10th c.) figurines (assumed to be toys) that are made exclusively from bone and encountered largely in archaeological contexts. Perhaps they were also made from wood, but wood does not survive in archaeological contexts to the same degree as bone. Hence, it's not clear how much importance should be attached to bone as exclusive material in this case but, at the same time, the materiality of bone seems to be a defining element for the formal aspects of the figurine. So, I would take the question of materiality on a case-by-case basis.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Discovering the “social life” of images requires some sense of the context(s) of their placement and/or movement. For images related to veneration (icons, votive statues, etc.) we can already be one step ahead in the game because of the basic functional interactivi-

ty of such images and our sense of their intended context even when they are removed from it. Similarly, a Roman villa with its preserved mosaic floors or wall paintings *in situ* opens up a whole vista for glimpsing into the “social life” of the images in the various spaces of the Roman household. When there is a total loss of context, however, sometimes it is only the image itself that can be interrogated about its social life and often images don’t reveal everything.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Sight is a fundamental but not exclusive sense in the experience of images. Hearing, touching and possibly tasting can also be involved. From the late 12th to the early 13th century in Iran, we have a large body of ceramic vessels (especially bowls and plates) painted with images and inscribed with poetry. As poetry was a performative literary genre, these poems were quite possibly read out loud. In order to see the image and read the poem, the vessels required handling, hence touching. As vessels, they were potentially used for serving food in them, inviting the sense of tasting to the experience.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Iconicity does not have to be limited to artistic images and does not have to be a concept exclusive to art history. It would be more interesting and possibly more productive to see another discipline deal with this issue.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

This is a broad and varied category of images. And each case is different, requiring a different set of tools.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

I think the problem is not so much that some important notions about images have been developed vis-a-vis European/Western artistic production but rather the tenacious creed that those productions are somehow unrelated to anything else in the world and have a natural conceptual predominance. Thus, “medieval art” without any qualification is assumed to be European medieval art and all other medieval arts are expected to be qualified, geographically or ethnically. Even with those qualifications provided, however, the “others” continue to be lumped together as “non-western” this or that. This persistent

western vs. non-western dichotomy is, frankly, meaningless from a historical point of view. The status quo needs to be disturbed and, to my mind, one way to do this is to stop using non-European qualifiers as signposts and to reject “non-European” or “non-Western” as acceptable categories. Once the playing field is evened out, the applicability of notions across contexts can be assessed without the weight of biases.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

I think art history in general would benefit from greater emphasis on breadth of coverage. If every scholar pushed herself or himself beyond his or her comfort zone in terms of chronology, geography and/or medium, art history would be a more connected world.

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PAMELA PATTON

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Iconography has been at the center of my research and publications on medieval Iberian art over the past 30 years, and I’ve seen the boundaries and potential of iconographic studies change considerably over that time. My training in the late 1980s and early 90s was extremely traditional: I was taught to think of iconography, and especially the pictorial narratives that I studied for my dissertation and first book (*Pictorial Narrative in the Romanesque Cloister*, 2004), in terms of Weitzmannian model-copy stemmata and presumed textual models. However, coming of age as a scholar in the 90s also enabled me to profit from the disruptive approach to iconographic studies taken by such scholars as Michael Camille, Madeline Caviness, and Keith Moxey, who explored how the meaning of images could be shaped by such factors as folk and oral traditions, space and place, and the variable cultural frameworks of successive medieval viewers. Over time, their ideas transformed the potential I saw in iconographic work, and in my second book (*Art of Estrangement*, 2012) and subsequent scholarship, they played a key role in my investigation of the ways in which artists and patrons deployed visual images to promote community ideologies, proclaim identity, and stake out cultural affiliations and oppositions for their viewers.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Michael Camille’s *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (1992) sets out cogently his revolutionary vision for iconographic studies; this and his other work encouraged me to think more flexibly about how images made meaning in the Middle Ages. The essays in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s *The Post-Colonial Middle Ages* (2001) offered an influential argument for the ways in which postcolonial theory could apply to medieval society and culture, providing an important lens for my understanding of how images could be used to negotiate identity and difference in the Middle Ages. And the many works published by Jerrilyn Dodds, including her articles and exhibition catalogs as well as her *Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Medieval Culture* (2008), co-

authored with María Rosa Menocal and Abigail Krasner Balbale, shaped my thinking about the ways in which the significance of images originating in one cultural context might transform when adopted in other, neighboring ones.

3. What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?

There’s value in mastering the various old-fashioned ways in which a work of art might be approached – for example, one has to be able to differentiate a color choice or compositional detail that derives from stylistic tradition from those drawn from iconographic conventions, and one needs connoisseurial skills to assess the formal and material properties of a work of art. But there’s little to be gained by trying to narrow one’s scholarship to just one methodological focus, whether style, iconography, or even a particular theoretical approach, and doing so risks neglecting other dimensions of a problem that might lead to a better answer for it. I prefer to think of methodology as an array of tools in a toolbox: each research topic raises object- and context-specific questions that will be better answered by some tools than others, and we should use the ones that help us most. There’s no point in trying to drill a hole with a hammer.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

As suggested above, I’ve found the poststructuralist and postcolonial turns especially relevant to my iconographic research. Poststructuralism helped me to break open the field’s rigidified assumptions about how iconographic traditions developed and made meaning, while postcolonial theory called attention to the ways in which medieval power relationships and notions of identity could shape the production, presentation, and reception of the works of art I study. More recently, I’ve found critical race studies quite important to my work on skin color and identity in medieval Iberia; here, it highlights the racial and racist dynamics that contributed to the ways in which some images were produced and understood, and that still can shape the ways in which we currently study them.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

Poststructuralism and the many other theoretical approaches with which it intersects (feminist theory, reception theory, postcolonial theory, to name a few) effectively created a watershed moment for image studies: they offered an alternative to the formulaic image-text equivalencies once dominant in the field while also making room for more context- and reception-oriented research. Removing the traditional iconographic “rules” in this way does carry some risk, in that it opens space for scholarship that may become over-

ly speculative or subjective. However, if researchers maintain the high evidentiary standards that such work deserves, the resulting scholarship can be both innovative and persuasively grounded. This is a challenge I consider constantly in pursuing my own research.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I can address this best for my own field of medieval art. Modern ideas about how medieval images made meaning has broadened significantly in recent decades. Rather than assuming a stable context in which a medieval image always means the same thing, we now can see meaning as subject to variations produced by the interaction of multiple parties – the artist, the patron or stakeholder(s), and the viewers – and in relation to visual traditions that were often, but not always, fully shared by all of them. Looking at iconography in this way permits a richer sense of how images “mean” because it combines awareness of what the artist and/or patron presumably intended with awareness the meanings to be drawn from it by a potentially diverse group of viewers, under varying conditions. In this model, meaning is not just “conveyed” from a maker to a passive recipient but is also drawn from the work by a viewer who may understand the image in unforeseen ways. All aspects of this interchange tell us something about what the work of art meant within medieval society, and all are worth examining.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

If one agrees that meaning is determined in part by the viewer’s experience and cultural background, then these must affect which visual aspects of the work they’ll see as significant and how they will interpret them. But ultimately, these visual aspects are what trigger the apprehension of meaning.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

I think we are, in the sense that we’re now more open to considering the viewer’s side of the equation when we assess the meaning of an image. However, I also believe this to be an ongoing process: there’s always more we still don’t know about human experience in the past, and we’ll surely continue learning and revising our views so long as our field exists.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Again, my response relates to the Middle Ages, where images seem strongly to have informed their viewers’ understanding of the world. In the absence of widespread literacy or significant chances to travel, images provided medieval people with one way of mak-

ing sense of the world. They could impart (and revise) core cultural narratives, chart the changes of the seasons, articulate political and social relationships, and envision foreign places and peoples. Such functions are suggested, for example, by widespread medieval traditions of public ruler portraiture, by the propagandistic imagery of western European church portals, and by world maps represented as hosting the so-called “Monstrous Races.” I’m not suggesting that images consistently served as “Bibles of the illiterate,” as they’re sometimes described, but I do believe that they often were used to articulate and reinforce key concepts and values within a shared community.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Materiality can shape the meaning of a work in important ways, and of course it often bore meaning itself. The expensive pigments of a purple-dyed manuscript or the gems added to a crucifix brought connotations of wealth, authority, and/or global reach to the core iconography of these works; the marks left on an ivory from rubbing or kissing it shed light on its religious and social role. This is why it remains so important to study works of art in physical form, not merely through photographic images, and to train students to recognize what kinds of things the materials of the object can tell them.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

If we grant that meaning is made not just by the creation of a work of art, but by its reception and use by viewers, then understanding how such viewers interacted with it in different times and places necessarily will enrich our sense of that meaning. Examples of such interactions are numerous: the veneration of an icon; the purchase of a pilgrim badge that is then displayed on clothing; the handling of an amulet; the annotations of ownership and other signs of use in a manuscript. In my view, some of the most exciting scholarship under way our field today has to do with this.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

The context within which a work is viewed logically must have an impact on its reception. While at times this may be accidental, there are some cases in which the artist seems to have previsioned or even planned for such phenomenological complexity. An excellent case from my field is Patricia Blessing’s recent treatment the carved stucco designs in the cloister of San Fernando in the monastery of Las Huelgas (“Weaving on the Wall: Architecture and Textiles at the Monastery of Las Huelgas de Burgos,” *Studies in Iconography* 40 [2019]: 137–182). Blessing identifies the large carved roundels of the cloister vault as visual and haptic echoes of the Andalusí silks imported and worn by the monastery’s elite Castilian patrons; she shows how their translation into architectural form activated the liminal potential of the cloister to assert the foundation’s ties to royalty and dynastic power.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

The designation of the form as iconic must involve some human agency, whether it's the transformation of distinctive landscape elements at sites such as Sinai or Montserrat into meaningful visual signs or the representation of the Cross through gesture. Because these are human-made images, I would argue that their significance could be studied using many of the same approaches that scholars use to study meaning in figurative objects.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Good models for this are abundant in my research field of medieval Iberia, where the cross-cultural and transcultural use of images and objects is common. The most successful work of this kind has been case-specific, pursuing socio-cultural evidence of how a particular transferred image or type of image was likely to have been understood in its new context. Because contexts and viewership in Iberia were so variable, it's sometimes hard to draw conclusions that are broadly applicable beyond the level of case studies: as I've argued, for example, a silk textile sold as a luxury good in Cairo had a quite different connotation when it was used to line a Christian reliquary in León, and still another when it was represented pictorially as the costume of the devil in a fresco at the latter site (“Demons and Diversity in León,” *Medieval Encounters*, 25, nos. 1-2 [2019], 150-179). In such cases, a closely focused study tends to yield more conclusive answers.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

As a US scholar who publishes mainly in English, I'm acutely aware of this challenge. The first steps are to recognize how tightly language can be tied to cultural paradigms that may not apply well to one's topic, and to recognize when these might steer one's arguments into anachronism or inaccuracy. It's critically important to define one's terms when such language comes into play: for example, if one chooses, as I do, to use the word “race” in the study of the Middle Ages – an era when neither the word itself nor a strict equivalent for it existed – one has to acknowledge what that term means in modern English and which of its dimensions one finds applicable and relevant to a medieval context. Another step is to listen carefully to scholars whose roots and training extend beyond traditional Euro-American discourse, whose perspectives can challenge and revise the cultural assumptions European or North American may bring to their research.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

As a medievalist, I'd like to see scholars continue to broaden the geographical and cultural parameters of iconographic studies, including not only the lands directly contiguous to European and Byzantine zones but also the more far-flung areas with which these connected indirectly through trade, such as west Africa or central and east Asia along the Silk Routes. It's increasingly clear that these contacts affected the visual traditions of communities all along their paths, so they are well worth exploring. I also think the time has come to reassess what we have learned and might still learn from certain pioneers of iconographic studies, such as Erwin Panofsky, whose third or "iconological" level of interpretation foreshadowed many of the context- and reception-oriented approaches that researchers use today. It's easy to reject foundational scholarship as outdated or superseded, but it sometimes offers quite relevant insights.

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SARIT SHALEV-EYNI

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

Since early in my research, I have been defining Jewish art as a special branch of local art, whose peculiar characteristics also shed light on the surrounding visual culture in which it developed. Instead of dealing with questions of influence or acculturation, I speak of a shared visual culture and general cultural arena, in which there was frequent and dynamic interaction between different groups. In this situation, images emerge as loci of identity, interreligious contact, cooperation, and clash between opposing views. Concentrating on book art, the main surviving medium, I adopted a holistic attitude to the manuscript, including, in addition to the contents of images, their visuality and materiality, codicology and palaeography, texts and contexts, issues of making and practice, combining all of this to use as a tool for reconstructing the social life expressed in the images and in the illuminated book as a whole. More recently, I introduced into my research the study of manuscripts as material objects, analysing their effect through their reception in the particular space in which they were viewed and activated.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1992); Herbert L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, Rethinking the Middle Ages 1 (NY, Broadview Press, 2004); Éric Palazzo, *L'invention chrétienne des cinq sens dans la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge* (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 2014).

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Iconography and style are the solid foundations of our discipline. While iconography has been greatly transformed during the last decades and adapted to suit present-day dis-

course (usually without mentioning the term), the research of style has been neglected, disappearing from the current art history discourse. Style is still the main tool for dating and locating works of art, which are crucial for the contextualization of images and objects of unknown origin. Beyond the traditional implications, stylistic analysis reveals important aspects of the visibility of the image/object. As such it has the potential to be integrated within the discussions of more updated approaches, seeking to understand aspects of effect, such as materiality and neuro-cognitive reception. Now, when the visibility of different materials used to design images and objects and their role in attracting viewers have been acknowledged, the specific stylistic analysis of different substances in various artefacts can reveal additional, valuable, aspects of their effect on viewers. In order to “free” style from the aspect of formality with which it is identified today, the old rigid parameters of the stylistic analysis should be replaced by flexible ones fitting the present discourse.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

The emergence of different “turns” has been a continuous source of inspiration. The “material turn” urged me to explore different materials and techniques and analyse the effect of their specific design on the final image and its impact in relevant spaces. The “sensorial” and “spatial” turns opened the way to my recent project “The Ashkenazi Prayer Book and the Liturgical Experience”, in which I consider the sensorial effects of the liturgical codex within the solemn interior of the synagogue. The research is based on a reconstruction of the almost entirely lost aural-visual aspects of the Ashkenazi liturgical prayer halls in which the manuscripts were designed to be used. Archaeological remnants of the original synagogue architecture together with visual data left in prayer books, inscriptions, or instructions written in the margins referring to tunes and other aspects of performance, have been combined into a mosaic of spoken words, voices, and images. This reconstruction enables us to reveal the mutual dynamics between the aural-visual liturgical experience and the liturgical illuminated books: the communal large codex used by the cantor who conducts the ceremony and those private smaller copies used by congregants during service.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

Among the more relevant notions in our present-day understanding of images are the central role played by objects in medieval culture, and the crucial effect of the immediate setting in which they were displayed and employed, on their reception. In my study of illuminated codices as material objects, I am interested in the differences and dynamics between the two main domains in which they were used: the public prayer hall in the presence of the entire community, and the intimate domestic area. Personal ritual books, which included both public and domestic ceremonial texts and were therefore in use in both domains, are of special interest. The effect of such a ritual codex in a communal

space designated as holy was entirely different than that in the ordinary, profane, space at home. On the other hand, the shared codex used in both settings acted also as a connecting link between them. This connection was especially effective in images depicting motifs which, though clearly identified with the public ritual domain, illustrated texts recited in the home. In the minds of the users, these images may have created a strong bond between the individual ritual at home and the communal experience in the public hall.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

Meanings of visual objects are flexible, depending on the context in which they appear, as well as their function and location in the public or domestic space in which they are used or displayed. In the case of figural and narrative components, messages are often conveyed in relation to the Scripture and other general or local beliefs and traditions. Potential meanings can be inherent in an image even early on in its production, reflecting the different profiles and outlooks of the producers, patrons and guides, each with his own motivation. This mosaic of people involved in the production was especially crucial in a case of a Christian craftsman designing an image from the Holy Scripture for a Jewish customer, sometimes with the involvement of a Jewish guide dictating the general contents, or requesting more specifically the inclusion of some post-biblical Jewish components. The artist could have followed the general or detailed instructions but, whether unintentionally or on purpose, have also left some traces of his own Christian perception that he was accustomed to. The reception of such multi-voiced images was especially complex and diverse.

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

Identical images can have different meanings depending on the setting. For instance, at the beginning of Sephardic *haggadah* manuscripts, an image of Isaac’s sacrifice within a cycle of full-page miniatures of biblical scenes followed by illustrations of contemporary family members performing the *seder* ritual would probably have connected the celebrants with the biblical past. A similar image, appearing in an Ashkenazi prayer book for the New Year, would have been received in terms of Abraham’s obedience to God’s demand to sacrifice his son, as an ancestral merit supporting the worshippers who stood in judgment on that day every year. The same image on a stained-glass window in a church would be perceived through its typological meaning as a prefiguration to the Crucifixion of Christ. Adjustment of the image to various visibility conditions within the spacious sacred interior is seen in thirteenth century stained-glass windows produced to suit different modes of viewing. Those looking from a distance saw the diverse geometrical patterns of series of windows, changing from one to another, creating together a kaleidoscope effect. Only when the viewer stood closely in front of the window was he able to follow the narratives in the small units and decipher the interrelations between different components.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Although some of the changes in the field were initiated as a result of approaches first developed outside of the discipline, they were adjusted successfully and now broaden immensely the scope of our understanding of image-viewer dynamics. Among the most crucial innovations are the recognition of the significance of the various aspects of the setting in which the image was exhibited or used: the comprehension that the connection with viewers was achieved not only through sight but through a whole range of sensorial stimulations, forming together a multi-dimensional experience that included viewing and the fundamental observation that images communicate with viewers not only through their contents but also their materiality. All these together have suggested a better framework of research, revealing many new aspects of image-viewer interactions that were previously hidden from us.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Common images circulated in different media and well-known to viewers may shed light on less familiar images, when allusions to the former are discerned. This can happen also in totally different, even contradictory, contexts. For example, in the Codex Manesse, a female lying in bed with an exposed breast, while a man with clasped hands kneels at the foot of the bed, could have reminded viewers of the contemporary version of the Nativity, in which Mary was depicted lying in bed in a similar position with a breast exposed. Such associations with well-known religious images, often seen in profane art, gave the viewer insight into issues of relations and tensions between carnal and spiritual concepts of love. Images could enrich the understanding of the courtly practice or religious ritual to which they were attached or to which they alluded. An image of a biblical narrative offered the viewer a better understanding of the service of the holiday commemorating the event being celebrated. Integrative images incorporating biblical narratives with contemporary celebrants, such as a kneeling nun or a biblical protagonist wearing a Jewish prayer shawl, would add a further dimension of comprehension and identification with the contents of the celebration.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Materials were experienced from a distance through the sense of sight. In the case of objects, the interaction with the user was direct and the sense of touch stimulated an additional dimension. A user could feel the thickness of the parchment while turning the pages. Attracted first by the eye, he/she could also pass his/her fingers over the rough painted areas, and on the voluminous shining gold leaf laid over raised gesso. Materiality of objects was integrated with function as well as with other, perishable materials related to their use. Wine flickering in a sparkling sumptuous cup made of silver used for the

home ritual of the Kiddush added an aroma of sanctity for the master of the house who performed the ritual and passed the cup between the other participants, who, each in his/her turn, experienced the integration of the expensive metal and wine. A couple sharing a precious cup in a courtly banquet had a similar effect with an additional sensual aspect, when one enjoyed the taste of the other's lips on the metal rim. Such a sensual dimension of materiality could also have been a by-product of a religious ritual practiced in a mixed domestic framework.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

The monumental sculptured facades of the Gothic cathedrals were public colored "screens" standing out in the urban everyday reality, attracting the eye not only of those entering the liturgical interior but also of the passers-by. Situated in the commercial center of the city, they were visible to inhabitants of all social strata, interrelating even with Jews, for whom these images were opposed to the foundations of their belief. Jewish spectators shared with their Christian contemporaries neuro-cognitive responses to human figures, faces, dynamic gestures and colors, which aroused in this case an urge to respond to the contents of these images. Jews could not decorate their prayer halls with figures and narratives but they did include them in their communal prayer books, where they manipulated some of the main images typical of the facades, such as the Coronation of the Virgin, or the defeated blinded Synagoga with whom contemporary Jews were identified. Jews responded to these visual forms, using them but in a new variation representing their own, opposed view. Manipulation of well-known images, also discerned in more subtle variations made by Christians in nearby sites, are a clear indication of social interrelationship.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

The sensorial effects of images/objects/codices viewed and used in association with ceremonies were multidimensional. In the case of a Latin or Hebrew liturgical book, the tactile dimension was related to its use as a material object while the aural dimension was aroused by the recitation or chanting of the texts that the book contained. The sensorial response had a special dramatic effect when the image depicted the biblical narrative that was commemorated on the specific holyday, being referred to in the hymn written alongside the image and recited aloud in the service. In some cases, the integration between the visual and aural dimensions was achieved not only in the mind of the users while viewing the images during the performance of the service, but in the actual image, in the form of quotations from the relevant liturgical text written in banderoles, which were incorporated next to the specific biblical protagonist as if he/she were speaking aloud. In images visualizing each of the Ten Commandments in an Ashkenazi prayer book, some of these quotations were verses of Aramaic hymns accompanying the public reading of the Commandments during the Shavuot service.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

A cross-like morphology and any gesture of crossing limbs, which were either designed by artists as a typological commentary on Old Testament narratives or actually seen in everyday life, were considered by Christians to be reliable Christological arguments. Jacob crossing his hands to bless Joseph’s sons, the huge bunch of grapes carried by the spies from Canaan, or the gates of Gaza carried away by Samson, were all designed in the shape of the cross as indications of a prefiguration of the crucifixion and related episodes. A person gazing on the typological window of the crucifixion in Chartres, for example, and then walking in the streets, would likely see the shape of the cross in different natural contexts around him. A prominent example is the case of the donkey, the main transportation vehicle in medieval times; the meeting between its spinal column and its shoulders has the shape of the cross, which according to a popular belief was regarded a Christological hint alluding to the fulfilment of Zachariah 9, 9. The cross-like shape of the donkey’s back was such a direct and convincing argument in popular debate that scholarly Jewish authorities felt obliged to instruct people on how to cope with it.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

The manipulation of the original item is meaningful in this context. Hebrew manuscripts were often transported from their original location in the wake of forced or voluntary migrations. Additions of notes and images in the new location testified to the new context of reception. More dramatic transitions were those cases in which images made for Jews were appropriated by Christians. In the case of an illuminated *haggadah* that reached the hands of the librarian of the Benedictine monastery in Tegernsee, a Latin introduction explaining the text and images was written by the Dominican friar Erhard von Pappenheim and copied on an additional quire at the beginning of the manuscript. Here, a Jewish ritual codex for domestic use was transformed into an illuminated study book for monks. Different strategies of appropriation can be discerned side by side as exemplified in two adjacent synagogues in Toledo, which were decorated with *mudejar* motifs in stucco and with Hebrew verses of Psalms running along the upper part of the walls. The two were reused as churches; one eliminated the original use by deleting the Hebrew inscriptions; the other left them as an act of Christological interpretation, according to which the Hebrew verses were incarnated in Christ.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

Many of the aspects prevalent in present-day research, such as the materiality, sensorial reception and social life of images, have the ability to be flexible enough to adjust to various visual cultures, as long as one is well aware of the fundamental differences between geo-cultural areas and the potential misinterpretation of non-European cultures as a result of one's western European orientation. Adhering to the images/objects themselves, their visuality and materiality, as well as a comprehensive contextualization (including also relevant local languages), which is always important, would, in such cases, play a significant role in suppressing our "western eye".

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

The present track of materiality and the multi-dimensional experience of reception have the potential to keep occupying our minds in the years to come as well, while also broadening the scope to include more ordinary materials and the domestic domain, which has been less researched. Research may also be further developed beyond the properties and meanings of the materials and their manufacture. In order to further understand the effect of materiality on medieval viewers one should add the visuality of different designs of the same material in various artefacts, namely the various ways materials were artistically manipulated in different cases and how the specific result could have affected the viewer's experience in changing locations. Focusing on the image-viewer dynamics, we may also (re)turn to the producers/designers, not as the "authors" of the image/object but as viewers of other images inspiring their work and as the first viewers of their own artefact.

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JEAN-MICHEL SPIESER

1. In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?

Actually, I was trained in “Lettres classiques”, the French equivalent to “Classics”, Greek, Latin, and French Literature. I turned quickly to Archaeology, in the French Archaeological School at Athens. Some years later, I got the charge of leading one of the French teams excavating in Caričin Grad and I was called to publish the Byzantine ceramics discovered in the recent excavation in Pergamon. Publishing Byzantine ceramics, as well as some other ceramic productions touches directly upon the question we are discussing today. A ceramic publication can look like an archaeological book, but also like an art historical book, at its best it includes both approaches. Through this archaeological experience, the importance of materiality permeated me deeply. Meanwhile, in the 1970s, my doctoral dissertation on Early Christian Thessaloniki introduced me to art historical issues. Little by little, also through my teaching duties and through personal interest, I shifted my scholarly work to the field of art history. I considered and still consider that artistic productions are to be approached in their historical contexts (historical in its broadest meaning). Therefore, art history is inevitably a transdisciplinary field. I tried to use at my best the inputs given by most of the various turns which structured our field, but without giving an absolute priority to one of them.

2. Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.

It is difficult for me to extract three books which played the most important role in orienting my research. I have the feeling that many books which I read, nourished my research, sometimes giving me direct inputs, sometimes leaving a conscious or even unconscious mark. These books came from various fields, expanding my horizons. Nevertheless, I will quote three books which may exemplify the orientations, which I tried to give to my research. Going far back in my memories, I cannot but mention the *Meditations on a hobby horse* by Ernst Gombrich. Already, I was taught in the importance of reception. An

archaeologist has also his place here: André Leroi-Gourhan, actually much more than an archaeologist, in his volumes of *Evolution et technique*, was, I think, the first to stress that the notion of “appropriation” should replace “influence”. As third mention, I opt for a book, not the most known, by Claude Lévy-Strauss, *La voie des masques*. I was amazed by his views on the masks of some North American native people. He stressed specially one point, the ways in which the same structures and appearances of a mask take on different meanings in different cultural contexts.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

I would like to emphasize first that “style” and “iconography” are only words, which refer to uncertain and vague notions. The evolution of a painter’s style during his or her life and the evolution of style in a cultural context during some decades or centuries are not all to be dealt with in the same terms. Such notions can be misused. This is not a reason to get rid of them. We should not forget that since the 19th century, with the help of these notions, art historians built up, little by little, a stable framework, which, consciously or unconsciously, we still use, even when new attributions, new dating proposals introduce some changes into it. When faced up with a new artefact, the first step to take is still to locate it within the framework. Of course, each work can give us many other answers if other questions are asked. Art history today cannot but pose new important questions that were overlooked in past times. But without some apparently old-fashioned notions, art history is at risk of being diluted no less than it is at risk of staying in old paths, if it does not go beyond.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

I am not sure that art history experienced turns only since the 1990s. I remember André Grabar, in the early 1960s, mentioning his interest in a “linguistic turn”. Of course, in the last decades, many turns succeed each other designing a kind of interlacing. The readers of this text have surely inferred from my answer to the second question that my research is grounded in an empirical approach. I am convinced that many methods and approaches can be appropriated for all fields in art history. Trying to understand the decoration of a Byzantine church, I have at my disposal less documentation, and not of the same kind as if I were studying the work of a seventeenth century painter. More than exploring all the ins and outs of one of the various turns, I tried to do my best with some notions. The most important benefit of all these turns has been to make obvious that art can no longer be studied, disputed, appreciated without considering its historical and sociological background, without getting some knowledge about perception, to give only some examples. New, various, and important insights in what we cannot but call artistic

productions became possible in the last decades. It would be reductive to hierarchise the various turns and ignore what is useful for a specific research.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

For instance, the notion of system gave a strong impetus to my research. It helps to understand how images, but also all other objects which belong to “art” in the largest sense of the word, from what is still usually called “minor arts” to architecture and urbanism, are embedded in the same cultural and historical context. This has nothing to do with some “Zeitgeist”, but this issue cannot be developed here. The same notion is also very helpful to understand the process of global changes such as Christianisation in the long late antiquity and provides insights as to the ways in which changes in art production are both subjects and agents in these processes. For individual works, of course, some other important notions gained in attraction in the recent decades. The most obvious, maybe, is the attention given to reception. But I think also that reception can be a treacherous notion. The most obvious difficulty is to get rid of the influence of today’s reception, our personal feeling, or a supposed mainstream reception, easily understood as some anthropological invariant. Furthermore, reception can be understood on various aesthetic, religious, cultural levels, which may sometimes be differentiated, sometimes not. But such reflections lead us to the meaning, topic of the next question.

6. What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

“Meaning” is not a notion as easy to understand as it seems at first glance. Of course, we can say that the subject of an image is its meaning. It sounds quite obvious for educated Western Europeans in front of an image displaying a biblical or a mythological subject. It is the same for an Australian Aboriginal in front of a picture painted by an Aboriginal painter; it can be the same for me also, but I have first to make some research or to be taught by an informer. But, usually, the mind of the viewer goes beyond this “meaning”. Do “meaning” and “message” equate? This question leads to another: do images convey messages? “Message” supposes an intention from the author and the hope that the message will be understood by the viewer. But can the image convey the message by itself without any preconception in the mind of the viewer? In other words, are the religious paintings by Guido Reni a support for meditation without preconception from the viewer? Could anybody acknowledge the spiritual message, being self-evident for Christians, without knowing anything about Christianity? Of course, the image’s aesthetic efficacy may stimulate various meditations, but is it then justified to speak about message?

7. To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

Actually, I think that I have, at least partially, already answered. As the readers may have understood, I am sceptical about the possibility that the mere visual appearance of images may be enough to make its meaning understandable. Of course, this could be true for images which have a conventional meaning, as is usually signposted in museums by a label under or beneath a picture. It is no more the same for many images in 20th century European painting, when the painter leaves free the imagination of the viewers, even if the use of a label may give an opposite conclusion. I don't know if something similar can be found in non-European cultures. Meaning is also supposed missing in decorative patterns. But this point would need a further development. For the visibility conditions or *mise-en-scène* strategies, I am not sure they determine the meaning. It has been argued that, for the viewer of the Trajan's column, the meaning was obvious even without walking around the column to follow the succession of the scenes or without distinctly seeing the upper part of the column. In the case of an image of worship, we can assume that "meaning" does not correspond to the representation itself, but to the effect it is expected to have on viewers: then an appropriate *mise-en-scène* has obviously an impact, but is this the meaning of "meaning"?

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

The huge development of humanities and social sciences, let us say in the last hundred years, brought many new approaches as to the relationship between images and their viewers. Other criteria for approaching an image than an explicit or implicit comparison with antiquity was a first and necessary step, followed by the affirmation that art is not a necessary concept to apprehend images. We know that social status and education play their part in the perception of images. We have some clues as to how the neurological components of perception may help to understand why images are felt as enjoyable or expressive, but it is a sensitive field. It would be a mistake to overestimate this approach. It could also lead to the "discovery" of supposed anthropological invariants. But it should not be set aside. As I already wrote above, the sensorial and cultural contexts are to be considered. It is difficult and not completely avoidable to withdraw from one's own cultural environment. This approach is necessary not only in the study of images produced in non-European cultures but also for the European past, starting with the 19th century even if it seems closer to us. But this distance does not imply that we should forget the basic tools of art history.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

In most human cultures, images are not isolated and are not understood or expected to be expressions of an individual self, something that is specific to modern cultures where originality is a kind of requisite for artistic production. But many images in our daily life are still embedded in a web of significations. In a way or another, each image refers to the

system in which it is included. It may be a quite common utilitarian system such as the highway code or a mental or spiritual system such as religious beliefs. For times closer to us, the art market can also be considered as a system in which each artistic production has its place. Having in mind such a fundamental property of images, in my opinion, it should become obvious that each image has numerous and various connections with other images as well with material or concrete items or with mental images, emotions, feelings, etc. Any image may explain, suggest, establish connections, thus inform the perception of the viewer. What may be difficult for the art historian, for the historian or the sociologist is to understand which connections a viewer is making when seeing a given image. I would even say, that, without direct evidence, it is not possible to get the genuine reaction from a given viewer, but a good knowledge of a milieu or a culture can allow the researcher to gain a kind of statistical response.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

As the reader may expect from my earlier answers, the materiality of images is a key issue. This assessment may be in relation with my archaeological past. But I think that it is as important for art historians as for archaeologists. This materiality can be seen from various points of view. Some appear as quite trivial, but, since they are trivial, they can be easily overlooked or forgotten in the understanding of an image. I mean materiality in the narrowest sense of the word: materials, techniques, and tools used for its production. Yet, I would say that such factors as an image's accessibility, its display in private, public, or remote places, its being located far from the viewer or meant to be seen face-to-face (and we should not forget that the invention of the museum changed deeply the accessibility of many images) belong to the materiality of an image. Some may argue that this is an overly expanded concept of materiality. One could say that, but it is part of a set of data, which can be objectively apprehended. I would have said an objective reality if this word had not become a kind of taboo for some people. Anyway, whatever name you give to this set of data, it is for me a necessary basis for any reflection or interpretation in the field of art history.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Each image has its place in a human society. So far it cannot but have a social life. The first step of this life brings it from the workshop of its producer to the place for which it was ordered, sometimes in a figurative sense when the painter has to go on site to paint a fresco on a wall. It may therefore be clear that the possibility to speak about the social life of an image is connected with necessary information about the patron or the recipient, often the same, but sometimes a larger community. A second (and further) step of this life is to be considered when the owner of an image changes. The most interesting challenge would then be to understand the possible changes in the relation between the image and the new owner or group of viewers. In some cases, it is obvious that the relation between images and users change, when an image moves from a private

dwelling to a museum or when a private dwelling becomes a place to visit. A church may even in same time be a place of worship and a place to admire paintings, with viewers reacting in different ways.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

All my answers to the previous questions tried to make clear that an image never involves only the sense of sight. But what else? It seems easy to think that touch has no relation with images. But if we consider that an ivory may also be conceived as an image, we can remember that Antony Cutler stresses the pleasure of touching an ivory. In quite another way, a believer can be happy to touch and to kiss an icon. But is the sensory experience in itself the most important part of this encounter? It is a set of mental attitude, which gives its meaning and strength to the bodily contact. Recently some researchers have been interested in the issue of the role of music and songs for the feeling of believers during the liturgy. It is easy to understand that in this context hearing gives or can give a new impetus to the sight of an image or of a set of images. We are near to the notion called *hierotopy* by Alexei Lidov. In my view, an image is never experienced by the sole sense of sight, but the mental disposition is crucial, and, through it, other senses can strengthen the feelings given by the sight.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

The first time I was asked to write about iconicity, I had a look in some dictionaries and I was puzzled that the usual definition did not seem to fit with art historical issues. Eventually I understood – properly I hope – that for the art historians who use this word, it means the possibility for a non-figurative item to become iconic, to have the capacity to be translated by an image or apprehended as an image. It is of course possible to include this property into an art historical narrative. Actually, the most trivial, even crude items may become iconic (see Duchamp), but I think that non-figurative objects, landscape, etc., are not iconic per se: rather, it is the sensibility of people living in a given time that ascribes iconicity to a scenery or to people who, in other times, did not seem worthy of iconicity. The development of objects considered to be worth qualifying as iconic is an important part of the art historical narrative. But I would leave open to discussion whether this narrative is fundamentally different from previous narratives which highlighted the evolution of the usual and most appreciated themes of the images?

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

I am not sure that we need new hermeneutic tools to analyse such phenomena. The first point should be to be aware when images are no more present in their original setting. It seems obvious for paintings or statues displayed in museums. But I am not sure that all art historical productions take account of this change of display, between an open space, the *cella* of a temple, or a private room of a patron and the public space of a museum. More interesting are changes in the past, as when an image of Aphrodite, originally intended as a cultic statue, became some centuries later the subject of erotic epigrams, or when images of a shepherd carrying a lamb came to be viewed by Christian people as allegories of Christ and were later displayed as such in museums. In all these cases, it is legitimate (and necessary) to analyse how we are affected by our contemporary sensibility and then to get the historical and anthropological tools which may help us to understand the meaning which could have had the same image within its original setting and cultural context. This context has to be known. It means that we need to have at our disposition hermeneutic tools which go beyond the usual art historical methods.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

This seems to be a twofold question (English vs other languages, Western or not, and Western understanding vs non-European images), but I will deal only with the second issue. We are practising art history and not dealing with mere conceptualizations of art, for all that they may be interesting. Historical elements are therefore an important part of our discourse. Of course, images are created in contexts where less value or no value was given to chronology or other historical elements. Even our Western analysis is able to take this into account and has to do it. Such an analysis can bring out some historical evolution of which their users, as producers or as viewers, were not aware. Let us make a comparison with religion: frequently people practising a religion think that their religion did never change. Historians of religion should not be blind to such evolutions. To summarise a development which would need more space, if we don't accept that the origin of the notion used, Western or not, is not the point, but the adequacy of the used concepts, and if we don't accept that historians or art historians can cross the boundaries of their own culture, we won't get history, but only soliloquies, an Orthodox about Orthodoxy or Byzantine art, an Indian about Indian art and religion...

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

It is surely presumptuous to try to foresee which innovation could give a new impetus to art history. It is easier to pay attention on what could threaten it. So many "turns" have enriched the practice of art history to such an extent that we run the risk of forgetting its foundations. We have always to deal with artefacts, made by a human being for a given purpose, for people supposed to understand it, living in a given time and in a given culture. All these components create a network, which has to be analysed. This has to be done

with the appropriate concepts, European or not. Art is not an isolated practice. The art historian should know the culture and the language or the languages of the culture to which the artefacts, which are of interest for him, belong. If this task is not pursued, art historians will be enclosed, unconsciously, in their own mental systems. For the same reason, art historians should keep away from trends and fads which are at risk to introduce biases caused by changes of sensibility in the contemporary world or by a questionable feeling of the superiority of contemporary trends in our field. Again, the knowledge of the cultural context is the best way not to yield to this evolution.

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NARCISSE SANTORES TCHANDEU

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

In the classical tradition of ethnology applied to the arts of Africa, my first research focused on the manifestations of sculpture in traditional medicine among the Bana, a Bamileke ethnic subgroup (Western Cameroon). If the question of functionalism was dominating, that of the phenomenological perception of the image, as a mental symbol, participating in the restoration of the psycho-physiological and sociological balance of being, opened up beautiful breaches in my general conception of ancient iconography in Africa. In this sense, the notion of symbolic efficiency, shaped in Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology* (*Anthropologie structurale*) (1958), invited us to go beyond the classic Western perception of the fixed, narrative, descriptive or reflexive image, in favour of an immersive, interactive and systemic vision. Such a transition was made possible by the phenomenal impact of the ritual which, like a placebo effect, clearly acts on the collective consciousness of a group of beliefs. By subsequently directing our research towards prehistoric arts, it was a question of testing the very essence of this mental structure of the image, in reality quite constant in the primitive human mind from one continent to another, but finding in the ancient extra-Western arts the most exemplary manifestations of its conceptual and material regeneration.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

In order, these books have allowed us to take a new critical look at research concerning the prehistory, history, and contemporaneity of art in Africa. On prehistory, E. Anati (2003)¹ provides a holistic approach to the origins of art from one continent to another. It highlights the most notorious and ancient concentrations in Africa, which bears witness to an early and diffuse historical awareness of the image on the continent, while challenging certain evolutionary assumptions on the matter. However, we must regret the author's tendency towards a lazy comparison between prehistoric arts and the tribal arts of

non-European societies. Quite disconnected from the classical tradition of ethnology, *African art* by J.-J. Kerchache et al. (1988),² dares take on a new philosophical approach, bouncing cheerfully on the formalist question well introduced by C. Einstein (1919), to come to an epistemological reflection on the very meaning of notions and their cultural transfer. This leads the authors to counterbalance a classic Western hierarchy of the visual arts, based on the art of representation, mimesis, and atmospheric perspective, in favour of an African conception whose art of “presentification”, dominated by symbolism and allegory, would determine its graduation. But we are still far from a metaphysics of creation which, following the example of British social anthropology, has been concerned with bringing the artist out of his anonymity. In the tradition of prolonged field experiments, the research of S. Kasfir (2000) on *Contemporary African Arts (L’art contemporain africain)* has the merit of freeing itself from the prerequisites of the aesthetic-stylistic classifications linked to university theories, but also those fixed by the globalized market and museum system. Also, the author approaches recent arts from a historical perspective that takes into account as much the survival of ancient iconography, struggling with colonial art workshops (the progenitors of the school of conventional art), than the rise of a new popular culture, in phase with the processes of industrialization (rise of the printing press) and urbanization.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Insofar as there does not exist a unilateral history of art (any more than that of thought), its classic object of study is probably not apprehended in the same way from one continent to the other. If in the West, the theoretical debate was animated by supporters of stylistic attributions or classifications (formal referents) and those of iconological approaches (cultural history of the image), in Africa a similar debate has opposed an ethnological vision to a formalist one. In terms of ethnology, it must be said that the pre-eminence of functionalist approaches has not completely superseded the arguments of some proponents of structuralism. Thus, the work *The way of masks (La voie des masques)* by C. Lévi-Strauss (1979) undoubtedly represents a fine experience in line with the Panofskyan school, in particular as concerns the structural analysis applied to the iconography of the masks of the Pacific Indians. In the tradition of formalism, *Negerplastik* by C. Einstein (1915) undoubtedly appears as one of the first scientific recognitions of the formal contribution of “negro art” to early 20th century artistic avant-gardes in Europe. A response to this formalistic tendency was given by scholars promoting different approaches, such as the ethno-aesthetics of J. Delange (1967)³ and L. Stéphan (1985),⁴ or the ethno-morphology applied to African art by L. Perrois (1966).⁵ In the absence of an ancient written tradition in Africa, the oral one, still relatively viable during the colonial periods, could nevertheless have offered valuable sources for other theories such as authorism, the social history of art, the ethnolinguistics, the psychology of art... Let us note, however, certain

pioneering authors in the field, such as L. S. Senghor (1956)⁶ or H. Memel-Foté (1967)⁷ on the subject of ethnolinguistics applied to African aesthetics; F. M. Olbrecht (1940)⁸ whose approach to stylistic signatures (as in the case of the “master of Buli”) is as decisive in the history of African art as the work of G. Morelli on Italian Renaissance paintings; M. Trowell (1966) and his avant-garde work on African design,⁹ just like the psychoanalytical theories introduced by Eckart von Sydow (1930),¹⁰ and well applied to the study of African fertility dolls by P. Roumeguere and G. Roumeguere Eberhardt (1960).¹¹

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

Beyond the classic relationships between art history and philosophy, the 1990s highlighted the permeability of the discipline to ICT, multimedia, and cultural industries, which had already been prefigured by movements such as the Bauhaus school and by discussed theories such as Benjamin’s “aura”. All fields and objects of study in the history of art are affected to a greater or lesser extent. Considering the example of our study (N. S. Tchandeu and S. Hassimi 2021) on the sculpted monoliths of the Cross River (Nigeria-Cameroon),¹² the discipline also took into account technological advances in terms of inventory and survey (drone, high-resolution photography), as well as 3D photogrammetric reconstruction of damaged specimens. In fact, the development of methods of visual anthropology contributed a lot to the scientific documentation of an ethnological dimension that is still alive, but in the process of irreversible disappearance in the face of accelerated processes of urbanization. Also, graphic art techniques such as comics and animation have become such popular mediums of communication that they do not even spare prehistoric arts in the cultural industries of image and movie. This gives us an opportunity to pay a posthumous tribute to a colleague torn from life very early, Bienvenu Gouem Gouem, SAFA (society of africanist archaeologists) prize 2021, for the comic strip on the archaeological site of Lom Pangar in Cameroon.¹³

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

The notions of “imaginary museum”, “transfiguration of the banal” and “aura” seem to us to have had a significant impact on the destiny of African art in particular and that of art history in general:

– the “imaginary museum” of A. Malraux (1962)¹⁴ which returns to the classic essence of the museum, that of displaying objects which, being deprived of their function, are supposed to be invested with an enhanced intrinsic expression of pure form. In fact, this relatively anthropocentric and “elitist” conception of the museum resists neither the perspectives of the “new museology”, which is more conceptual and participatory and involves the social and environmental body, nor the option of a living culture or even an interactive cosmology as perceived in the imaginary of art in Africa, even less than that of the virtual museum;

– the notion of the “transfiguration of the banal” introduced by Danto, in the shaping of an analytical aesthetics particularly suited to the understanding of “readymade” and conceptual art in general; we come to a questioning of the very definition of art, leading to a disintegration/dematerialization of the subject and the technique of representation to which the ideal contemplation responds;

– the notion of “aura” introduced by W. Benjamin, which subjected the uniqueness or authenticity of the work of art to the test of mass reproduction made possible by cultural industries (photography and cinematography in particular). In this process of industrialization, the “unique” or the “here and its now” are characterized in negative terms: handmade objects undergo a process of degradation and devaluation which strips it of their authority and sacredness. But finally, as N. Heinich (1983) pointed out,¹⁵ this theory does not really suits the game rules of “who loses wins”, since the reproduction techniques are the very cause of the existence of the aura, therefore of the triumph of the unique, both through the materialization of duplicates and through their omnipresence. Taking as an example the statue of Queen Bangwa (Cameroon), once very little known in the art world despite its singular plasticity, we have to believe that her photograph in 1934 with a model (Adrienne Fidelin) by Man Ray, has undoubtedly contributed to a renewed visibility of the object, to the point of reaching the sales record for an African sculpture in the 1990s.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

Everything depends first of all on the genre of image, in particular on its sensory, mental and intellectual perception, which varies according to whether the referent, relatively classic, is of a naturalist, symbolic or abstract order (in the sense of a formal, iconological, phenomenological, or psychological interpretation); or when it is a more complex contemporary, i.e., conceptual, experimental, interactive, generative, digital or robotic medium (such as a cerebral shock, a participatory or situational experience, or a fictional immersion). Then, just like people, the image has a cultural and social life whose genesis, evolution, exchanges, and cultural shocks determine its destiny. Also, beyond the simple anachronistic education of taste, dear to certain art critics, it is necessary to develop an image culture that may limit errors of interpretation over time and space. A major mistake would be to interpret images of yesterday or elsewhere with the codes of today or here. In these cases, because of its essentially symbolic mode of representation, African art has been particularly exposed to all sorts of misunderstandings dictated very often by a Eurocentric gaze. Thus, we recently discovered that the famous kneeling “beggar woman” of the Baluba (J. Maes 1935)¹⁶ is actually a worthy ritual pot-bearer of the Bakuba (J. Volper 2017);¹⁷ that the point-like prominences on the sculpted heads of the Ikoi do not represent horns, but very traditional hairstyles for women (K. Nicklin and L. Salomon 1984);¹⁸ that certain statues with berets do not represent ancestors but candidates for initiation (B.C. Bela 2006)...¹⁹ Examples are legion. But the external gaze alone does not justify all the faults, since *in situ*, the cultural shocks of the colonial peri-

ods in Africa have led to a very often irreversible and sometimes radical conversion of gaze, taste, and endogenous values. For the little anecdote, it happens to me, during some of my teachings at the University of Yaoundé 1, to project old photos of scarified Africans, with mutilated teeth, lips, ears, and/or genitals. Always taking care to remind students (in order to somehow capture their empathy) that these body arts were mostly shared by local communities before being banned during the colonial period, they are paradoxically met, barely a century later, with a general feeling of denial, rejection or refusal to assume such a heritage.

7. To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

As soon as we leave the classic register of art in itself or the imaginary museum, to visualize objects in an interactive, systemic, functional or ergonomic ecology, its meanings can be dependent as much on the art of communicating as a sign, symbol or icon, and as situational art related to the experience of perception in/ex situ, as well as empirical art, in terms of operability, finality and end of the image. The transfer of African objects from their ritual contexts to museum collections is quite indicative of a situational dynamic of the senses. Of course, within the museum, only the aesthetic sense is retained, although the latter, depending on the whim of the collector, can already be biased. This is the case, for example, with the *nkissi* statues of the Bavili: some collectors, worried about their “strange” combinations of nails and mirror, removed such elements from the wooden frame before exhibiting them. Even objects recognized for their aesthetic qualities, such as the engraved calabashes of the Fulani, sometimes do not escape a misunderstanding of their ethnological meaning, as their specific display seems to imply: we had the opportunity to observe one such misunderstanding at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum (S.-L. Betzogo, C. Evina Miaché et al. 2022).²⁰ Two different levels of reading justify this observation. The first, that of unity, highlights the exposure of each object on its concave face, a point of view that is no doubt satisfactory for western European optical conventions, but is entirely at odds with the Fulani ways of perception, which always display objects in a profile from which the peduncle has been amputated and from which the design is modulated. At the second level, that of the group, the mosaic-like museum exhibition clashes with the Fulani approach, which is dictated by a decreasing hierarchy of size in a north-south direction, in honor of the cardinal position of women (R. Dognin 1989).²¹ Considering the functional object par excellence, the mask, how can we hope that, in the imaginary museum, it will rediscover, in the eyes of the African, the phenomenological sense that irresistibly associates it with the wearer, with music, dance, season, time, circumstance, and a specific ritual place?

8. In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?

If we consider the entire history of the image, including that of its modern distribution circuits (museums, galleries, fairs, festivals, biennials, press and broadcast media, etc.), it is clear that the rise of ICT radically liberalized, democratized and dematerialized visual contents, while universalizing access to the current global village. All this to say that values – of industrialization and digitization, both linked to the liberal realities of post-modernism, correspond to the gradual erosion of classic and modern values – attached to the material, durable, sacred, elitist, exclusive or authentic dimensions of the artistic image, than to a new order of institutionalization, regulation and international validation of art. In this perspective, as much as one can question the current status of art and artists, grappling with the diktat of institutions (state, media and stock market) of validation, ideological-political programs and an increasingly more hermeneutic and prescriptive approach, we can also see a certain rupture between the most conceptual tendencies of contemporary art and beholders of all kinds. However, in this movement of rupture of the “paradigm of contemporary art” (N. Heinrich 2014),²² the cultural shock seems less marked in the pilot civilizations of the West, producers of “software” (sometimes to the detriment of the general public), than in other cultural traditions, such as those of Africa, which are collateral consumers of a program that is inseparable from colonial history. Thus, just as the “colonial museum” attracts a large audience only among expatriates who are more or less enamoured of exotic sensations, contemporary art exhibitions in African galleries (worthy daughters of Western parent galleries) seem to respond more to the requirements of programs and markets elsewhere, than to the aspirations of local audiences.

9. To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?

Like the child who is introduced to the realities of the world through the modelling of clay, or even the apprentice who is initiated into art by first copying the works of the master, the aestheticized or “artificialized” image (N. Heinrich 2012)²³ knows how to make being visible, thus allowing the transfer, at the level of art, of the Heideggerian ontological question “What is being?”. We come to the conclusion that as much as creating is an exhibition of the artist’s imaginative self, contemplating is the discovery of the public’s imaginary self. However, this play of the imagination has gradually been able to push its limits throughout the history of Western art, moving globally from the religious or symbolic capture of an extra-artistic referent (Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Renaissance) to the experience of art in itself (Modern), to the trivialization of the object of representation and its dematerialization (Contemporary). From this point of view, the advent of modern art, largely motivated by the democratization of the image via photography, once again makes it possible to take a detour to its other source of inspiration: African art. Indeed, by its pure forms, its independent volumes, its subjective planes and rhythms, its whimsical decorations and above all its freedom from the grip of any real extra-artistic referent, the latter constituted an undeniable plastic alternative to the reinvention of the modern Art. So, it is difficult to credit some of these artists who, driven by a certain snobbery, reject its influence on their work, as evidenced by the paradoxical attitude of P. Pi-

casso, a “passionate” collector of African art, whose denial of the latter’s influence on his own creation has remained famous: “Negro art, I don’t know”. Thus art, as mediocre as it may appear to some, has never really fulfilled its purpose unless it is a mockery of itself and its own history, but also when it knows how to destabilize our perception of reality and changes the beaten track.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

Whether it is materialized for purposes of contemplation, communication, apology, divinization, self-fulfilment, etc., the artistic image has not only known a sympathetic historical destiny, but has also been exposed to all sorts of misadventures, going from icono-*inhumane*, to icono-phobia, iconoclasm/chromoclasm, up to drifting into a contemporary conceptual or post-conceptual immateriality. Our judgment on the materiality of the image therefore remains fundamentally conditioned by the relationship of causality and end, the reasons for the production being able to be in adequacy or not with the finality. Considering the objects of African art on display in Western museums, their purely contemplative purpose would participate in the materiality of dead, inert, and inanimate images, in total contradiction with the reasons for their creation, in particular those of making living and moving images in the context of social and religious activities. In the Batéké (Bas-Congo) for example, icono-functional codes make it possible to distinguish on the one hand the living statue, animated by the *butti* spirit and provided with a mass of abdominal remedy. On the other hand, mention can be made of the dead statue *tege*, whose absence or drug discharge signals the spirit’s absence. But as we have already indicated, the strangeness of such assembled sculptures, including the famous “fetishes” *nkissi* with nails and mirrors of the Bavili, very often led collectors to strip the wooden frame of all its accessories.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

On this subject, the sociology of art has often replaced ethnology in Africa, linking the status of art or artists on the one hand, the geographical determinism of the environment and the classification of forms of social organization on the other hand. In the latter case, some authors such as S. P. Blier (1998)²⁴ have been able to highlight the characteristics of a court art or royal art, made by promising professional, sometimes ennobled, artists, who very often gave shape to cooperatives. The latter gave birth to works whose major characteristics – the precious or non-precious nature of their materials (gold, silver, bronze, ivory, iron, pearls, wood, etc.), the type of decoration (figurative or geometric), or their more or less monumental aspect – are codified by social hierarchies. By differentiation, in the so-called not centralized societies or with strong initiatory institutions, we observe the activity of artists with more intermittent statuses, even quite marginalized in certain cases (as with, e.g., blacksmiths-sculptors). Their production is characterized by an art that is more sober in materials and relatively modest in size, predominated by the theme of initiatory brotherhoods with masks, figures of ancestors, and agrarian rites. Tak-

ing into account this time the determinism of the environment, the example of architectural expressions makes it possible to take the measure of the great stylistic ensembles: those of Sudano-Sahelian Africa whose masterpieces are undoubtedly the cob architecture from the famous mosques of the Kanga Moussa era; those of forest areas of Africa where the reign of wood was best celebrated by the monumental palaces with pillars and carved opening frames in Grassfield, Cameroon; those of the Guinean coasts adapting the constructions to support on piles or to an ingenious water sealing system such as the Yoruba/Edo/Ashanti “impluvium” architecture; those between the Rift Valley and the Rhodesian complex which bequeathed some wonders of humanity in terms of Stone Architecture such as the rock churches of Lalibela (Ethiopia) and Great Zimbabwe. But it also happens in some cases that the works do not obey any of these geo or socio-structural constructions, either because their ancient production is totally foreign to the current societies which have fortuitously inherited them; or since the geographical distance from the original focus of production leads to a heavy loss of meaning, as much linguistically as epistemologically and metaphysically.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

In Western civilizations where the classical classification of the arts, at least from Plato to Schopenhauer via Hegel, is well defined, it is necessary to believe that the evolution of the conception of art (*techné*, plastic arts and visual arts), corresponds to the gradual shift from an initially mechanical or tactile experience of the image to a purely retinal and finally analogical and digital perception. This very taxonomic, exclusive, and evolutionary approach to the notion of visual image is paralleled in African traditions by a more functional, inclusive, participatory, and organically dynamic experience. The example of the traditional cult called *Bwuiti-Ombwiri* (N. S. Tchandeu 2021),²⁵ very widespread and still very much alive in several groups (Apindji, Mitsogho, Fang) of the equatorial forest, gives a good overview of the perception of the image as a phenomenon of “total art”, which brings together the visual, rhythmic, tactile, and even gustatory arts, in a process of contemplation of the *Bwuiti-Ombwiri* spirit. Thus, any faithful of the *Bwuiti-Ombwiri* who accesses the temple dedicated to it, must first taste the hallucinogenic plant called *iboga*. This introductory rite prepares everyone for a cosmic journey in which the decor and atmosphere of the temple participate from start to finish: players of the famous zithers with cephalomorphic necks; singers in chorus and dance steps following a well-codified choreography; a central pillar whose iconography often traces the myth of the *Bwuiti-Ombwiri* spirit and its cosmic power. All of this prefigures in a certain way certain revolutions in modern and contemporary arts, in terms of breaking taxonomic boundaries between art forms and the promotion of multimedia.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

Of course, and that's the whole history of contemporary art, at least since the ready-made. But this entire still involves a conceptual process that justifies the public being exposed, consciously or not, to a cognitive/reflective/destabilizing experience in relation to the transfiguration of the ordinary, the diversion of the causality of the object or even to the re-sublimation of the waste. To take the example of one of my favorite objects of study, megaliths, research in the Mandara Mountains (Cameroon-Nigeria) (N. S Tchan-deu and A. Mezop-Temgoua 2017)²⁶ highlights stones erected by man, and those that are natural, but whose unique appearance and/or history justify their being re-appropriated and personified in the name of a "rock spirit". But worked by man or not, all these stones have in reality no visual and emotional charge in the eyes of the mountain dwellers, unless they bear traces, constantly revitalized, of the deposits and anointing of consecrated products (white millet wine, blood and sacrificial guts of animals). And among the expected visual effects, the most impressive is undoubtedly a kind of litho-phobia which justifies that the mountain dweller, especially of the female sex, avoids touching, or even staring at these representations for a long time and too closely. Moreover, in the Bamileke country (Cameroon) where certain megaliths, called *tsu-Ssi* (literally, places of God) are located in "sacred groves", they have participated for several centuries in sustainably saving the ecosystem and preventing the exploitation of inalienable resources (N. S. Tchan-deu, W. V. Kengne et al., 2021).²⁷ Also, the concept of "art of sacred environments" has necessarily been integrated into our work, which of course does not have the same semantic content as the contemporary notion of land art, but does not move away from it in the perspective of returning art to nature.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

We have already mentioned the problem of the interpretation out of context of the image, whether the transfer is of a temporal order (productions of societies that have disappeared but re-appropriated by new ones), or of a spatial order (transcontinental mobility of images). If it is no longer necessary to return to the anecdotal case of African images transferred to Western museums, it is on the contrary necessary to be interested in the opposite phenomenon, very often trivialized, that of the transfer of images and especially of the Western imagination in the African postcolonial context. In the case, for example, of the apologetic monuments of administrators, civil servants and soldiers, one can observe in several African countries a rise in iconoclastic movements (and this also extends to the former colonial powers). Mainly oriented against controversial personalities, these movements experienced a great student momentum in South Africa with its "Rhodes must fall" period (March 2015). In Cameroon, the activist A. Blaise Essama became famous by repeatedly decapitating the head of the statue of French General Leclerc, even pushing his movement to unbolt about 50 public space signs with French surnames. These textbook cases well justify the theory of "necropolitics" of A. Mbembé (2006),²⁸ presenting such representations as being the extension of "a form of racial terror", supposed to "bring back into the scene of the present the dead who, during their lifetime,

tormented, often by the sword, the existence of Africans". Beyond simple material representations, one must look far into the colonial institutionalization of workshops and art schools of European tradition, to realize to what extent Western imagination has profoundly upset the conception of art, of image or representation in Africa. In fact, several generations of post-colonial artists have been nurtured in ignorance of their iconographic heritage, in favour of an appetite for the history of "high art", from its antiquity to its contemporary forms. But in this process of socio-cultural transformation, the artistic genius has also been able to find original ways of self-fulfilment, in particular by appropriating certain processes or recent art movements (recycling, assemblage, installation/public art, performance, pop art, graphic design, etc.), following semiological codes specific to traditions and local cultural realities.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

The question often arises when it is necessary to determine the presence or not of a notion of the history of art through extra-Western languages, or even worse, when it is a question of applying theories of analysis and interpretation specific to the history of Western art movements to non-Western contexts. In the first case, from L. S. Senghor (1956)²⁹ to R. Somé 1998,³⁰ via R. F. Thompson (1971),³¹ there is luckily enough a relatively rich literature on the designation, in African languages, of the notions concerning classical aesthetics (beautiful, good, good, ugly, pleasant, perfect, etc.), art and representation. This allows us to notice that even if the art historical discipline was largely built in the West, the notion of art has been an object of debate throughout its history. First relegated to the domain of *techné* in Antiquity, the Latin notion of *ars* or *artes* will gradually undergo a conceptual shift of emphasis from the technical means towards the final outcome, culminating with the fairly recent conceptualization of "artistic creation". In fact, since the existence of the art as a cultural phenomenon is witnessed in all human groups (F. Boas 1927),³² the cultural meaning of the notion of art is less problematic, than the paradigms specific to each culture in terms of identification, analysis, interpretation and classification of images. It is therefore not surprising if the societies which have most engaged in conceptualizing the subject, including that much discussed of evolutionism, have also established themselves as a standard for measuring and classifying the forms of arts from one continent to another. What should be done to moderate or counterbalance this trend? Let's hope that the human civilizations that have mainly practiced oral traditions become aware of encouraging new generations to research and write the history of their artistic heritage.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

In relation to the international orientation of research in art history, the economy of my regrets would readily be expressed on two levels: on the diachronic level, where the

discipline struggles to conquer the field of the oldest arts (prehistory and antiquity), almost abandoned to archaeology, while literature becomes more dense when it goes from the arts of the Renaissance to the Contemporary; on the synchronic level, highlighting this time a resignation from the history of art to the benefit of ethnology when one approaches non-Western classical arts, a paradoxically nuanced observation on the subject of postcolonial productions, often projected as forms of collateral extension of Western modern and contemporary arts. This allows us to conclude by noting that, as the avant-gardes of modern art have been able to reinvent themselves by resourcing in the arts that were once condemned in the mists of time, the history of art would also benefit from revitalizing its theories and research methods from those horizons where it does not dare or does not dare enough.

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MARIA VASSILAKI

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My first approach to art history adopted the current trend of the time to use iconography and style as the main vehicles to understand and interpret the art produced in Byzantium. This is what I had been taught to do while at university during my undergraduate years. I still do not regret it as a method, no matter how traditional is considered to be nowadays, as it does teach you a certain and solid (?) way of approaching, seeing, and interpreting art. My postgraduate years in London took me to a different path and introduced me to issues of inter- or trans-disciplinarity from a transcultural perspective. The notion of society, and of the ‘other’; the use of art to express issues of oppression and repression; all these have become the tools of my research.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Μανόλης Χατζηδάκης, *Εικόνες της Πάτμου. Ζητήματα βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής ζωγραφικής* (Αθήνα: Εθνική Τράπεζα της Ελλάδος, 1977¹, 1995²) Also in English: Manolis Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos. Questions of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Painting* (Athens: National Bank of Greece, 1985); Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul. Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Style and iconography are the foundation stones of art historical discourse. Despite the bad reputation they have received in the recent past, they remain useful analytical tools in the hands of open-minded art historians. The ultimate goal of any visual analysis is the

uncovering of an image's intrinsic meaning by framing it within its specific time, location and culture. Meaning should be in the heart of an art historical enquiry and if applied wisely, both style and iconography can be useful means to the desired end.

Stylistic analysis is especially effective for Byzantine art, where the overwhelming majority of artefacts are unsigned and need to be dated with precision. However, when it limits itself to a descriptive and formalistic analysis it becomes connoisseurship, an esoteric and rather elitist way of viewing art.

Style and iconography are two traditional art historical approaches which should not – and indeed cannot – be replaced, as they both form the basis of any art historical analysis. Once their limitations as analytical tools are acknowledged, they can be used but always with the aim of historical contextualisation in mind.

4. Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?

My research has benefitted from debates examining issues of patronage, audience reception, feminism, and the role of the artist.

5. In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?

One of the most important notions for our understanding of images is ritual. Rituals are focused interactions that are to be found at the heart of all social demonstrations. They employ symbolisms that generate group emotions which in turn form patterns of communication that are the backbone of any organized society. In this respect, the analysis of ritual practices is a deeper form of cultural analysis.

6. What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?

Meaning in visual objects is created by a specific visual language with its own code of communication, which engages the mind in a powerful and transformative way. The unspoken codes and symbols contained in this visual language are perceived by the analysis of the sight and of the mind, which form a visual literacy that differs for each era. Line and colour, shadow, light, symbols and narration, are both tools and elements of conveying a message via an image.

7. To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?

It is, but the question is how can we describe and interpret the experiential dimension of viewers, who lived many centuries ago and in circumstances completely different from ours, which sometimes is difficult or even impossible to understand and define.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

We're definitely better equipped, but I'm not sure to what extent we can define the expectations of viewers, who are different from us. In any case, I find it very difficult to understand and interpret how different the viewers of the past had been in comparison with us.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers' understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Images alone may not usually suffice in providing their viewers with other viewers' notions about them. There is the danger of overstretching the evidence of reality and experience if we take it for granted that "images can contribute to inform their viewers' understanding of other images and other aspects of reality and experience".

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

The materiality of images is an approach that complements the formal analysis of images in terms of style and iconography. Although images are usually examined for their visual properties they are also physical objects that can be held, touched, sensed. These material properties are vital in facilitating a rethinking of the traditional art historical representation of images and complementing our understanding of them.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the "social life" of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

The term "social life of images" is a theoretical and methodological approach of analysing images in public spaces as part of a wider visual dialogue that involves both the patron and the viewer. This analytical framework seeks to situate the image in a spatial and temporal context, while considering the social factors influencing the image, leading to an analysis of the political dynamics of an image and its potential symbolic power to influence public discourse. Thus, the viewer and/or user of an image becomes an indispensable agent in the art historical analysis of an image. Although art objects and artworks are produced to satisfy a certain demand, practical or spiritual, once they are publicly displayed, they acquire a meaning attributed to them by their viewers and users, which can be different than that of the original patron. This is the mechanism by which they can reveal the dynamics of a social system.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Modern theoretical approaches, varying from phenomenology and cognitive psychology to social and cultural anthropology, have manifested that 'sight' alone is not enough to 'see'. In order for sight to become vision, perception, cognition and ultimately memo-

ry, the human mind experiences a multi-sensory process, involving touch, smell, hearing and even taste. In recent years this viewpoint has also been applied to Byzantine art and archaeology, placing all kind of images, be it frescoes, icons, relics and inscriptions, in the centre of a synesthetic religious experience.

No matter how appealing this cross-disciplinary approach may be, it should always be remembered that the main goal of images in Byzantium was to bring the faithful in contact with the divine. In my opinion, we should be careful not to superimpose modern sensibilities or the latest research trends upon the medieval viewer. It is equally important to bear in mind that, with the exception of frescoes, all other medieval images are viewed and experienced in the safe and often sterile environment of a museum, which limits a holistic and sensual perception of images.

13. Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?

The issue here is the translation and understanding of the term iconicity in other languages and especially in Greek. As is widely known, the term icon and εἰκών do not carry the same meaning, although the former is typically the translation of the latter and vice versa. Similarly, the term iconicity, when translated as εἰκονικότητα, it refers to virtual reality (εἰκονικός = virtual) rather than the similarity between the form and meaning of a subject. Therefore, the use of the term is rather problematic in some languages and we should begin by clarifying the nuanced use of the term in various languages.

14. Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?

Hermeneutics is broadly defined as the theory and practice of interpretation. In art history, these interpretative approaches are meant to shed light on specific intentions and beliefs involved in the production of the art historical object/artefact. Essentially, the aim of a hermeneutic methodology is to unveil the wider cultural and social forces that may have influenced the final artistic outcome. Thus, when analysing medieval images with this perspective in mind, it is vital that we take into account the fact that the vast majority of them have been transferred outside their natural habitat, which was mainly the church. With the exception of frescoes, images, be it icons or other liturgical objects, are nowadays to be found in museums and other collections. It is therefore vital to take this into account, if we are to interpret in a way that can be justified by the social and historical context of the time a specific image was produced.

15. English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?

The problem with the global use of English as the *lingua franca* is not so much in the application of Western European notions on the understanding of images but the ubiquitous use of English as a reading and writing language for medieval art history. Bibliographical references these days tend to be mainly – if not solely – in English, which goes to show that primary sources and past publications in non-English languages are ignored with a light heart. It is of course impossible to demand that modern scholars speak, read, or understand more than two languages, as was the case for the founding fathers of the discipline, but this is an issue we should keep in mind, when training younger academics. Perhaps a third foreign language should be a pre-requisite for doctoral studies and a fourth should also be a taught option.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

An innovative approach and an ultra-fresh mind. To me what really matters above all is the use of common sense while interpreting and analysing issues of art of the past.

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ANNEMARIE WEYL CARR

1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

What first seduced me in art history was the translation process: saying adequately what one saw. It characteristically addressed signed works of attested excellence with literary subjects – though there was always the challenge of verbalizing why some anonymous or subjectless work deserved respect – and its intention was deeply humanistic: to mobilize one’s own educated and cultivated sensibilities. Renaissance painting seemed its ideal site. Learning to “see” Romanesque art was a long, earnest effort that finally forced me to look at things, not style and literacy. Manuscripts liberated me from the hegemony of both artist and masterpiece – manuscripts were the product of multiple hands and eras, spoke to multiple senses, assumed meaning on radically different levels, and absolutely could not be assigned significance on grounds of quality alone. Nonetheless, I still craved images. Here Cyprus entranced me. I encountered it in the Crusader era, which imposed an earnest immersion in the role of art as an instrument of social critique. It has been not the Crusader mélange, however, but the intensity of Byzantine images – even modest Byzantine images – that truly challenges me. How to address them adequately is my biggest challenge.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

Hans Belting’s *Bild und Kult* forced me into thinking about images rather than art. It both drew my attention to icons – which till then I had, like my mentor Hugo Buchthal, “done my best to avoid” – and at the same time dispelled the notion that icons were immaterial “windows on another world.” The eye rests, indeed leans on, the icon’s surface. Robert Farris Thompson’s *Face of the Gods. Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas* (Munich, 1993) made a deep impression on me, because it offered me whole new ways of thinking about talking about art – in terms of verbs; of faces as altars (and vice versa); or of his quotation from Robert Motherwell that “the function of the artist is to

make actual the spiritual, so that it is there to be possessed" (by whom?). I devoted careful, methodical attention to Robin Cormack's *Writing in Gold* and later *Painting the Soul*, deeply appreciative of the way he laid out one critical question posed by the shift from appreciation to reception and agency, and talked them through. But really, *books* were less impressive than the *articles* of people like Barbara Zeitler, Lucy-Anne Hunt, and Robert Nelson, because they were tackling real objects, not just ideas.

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between "style" and "iconography"? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

It's easy enough to drop art historical notions like name artists, or masterpieces. However, since I work on images that function through powerful visual and liturgical canons, style and iconography play an ongoing role in my thinking. They can be variously used in varied combinations, but I cannot imagine dismissing them. This said, less and less of what art history treats actually does consist of images with either visual or literary canons; an "image" can be as composite as a cityscape or as intangible as a sound, and "style" can run from brushstroke to what Margaret Conkey so deliciously called "styles of use." There are questions about setting; material, weight and value; modes of exchange or transmission; access and conditions of perceptibility; issues of power and identity – and there is room in art history for many dispensations. However, I don't believe the mere fact that something is visual makes it material for art history. It needs philosophical ballast; material culture has different parameters. And I believe that we owe it to each other to verbalize very clearly what we believe we have *seen* in an artifact. We need to engage thought, and we need to enable sight.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different "turns", each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

What first challenged me in art history was the translation process, and I regarded it as deeply humanistic: designed to mobilize one's own educated and cultivated sensibilities in response to the artist. All of this shifted as works of art became diagnostic tools of social critique. Looking became a way of exposing relationships of power; artistic individuality lost force in the face of group identities – gender, class, ethnicity, religious or ideological affiliation; and an essentially humanistic response became a confession of one's parochial inability to see beyond the limits of one's own history and education. The visual became a form of social science. This is much what I do in Crusader Cyprus. More recently, I sense a frustration with the visual itself. Any directed response is not merely visual, or even merely social, but organic, engaging a vast network of neuromuscular systems that run beyond individual senses into the physical and environmental forces that bodies interact with. Efforts to make neurobiology, environmental ecology, the chemistry of materials, the physics of sound an integral part both of artifacts themselves and

their adequate appreciation is drawing us into uneasy domains that are hard to anchor in the terminology of either art or history. We need to remain in some basic way a humanistic endeavor.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

I am older than a lot of this group, and I've seen the "obvious" message of many of the artifacts I study and love change radically over time. I loved art history because I could "see" things' messages; I loved icons because they subjected words to their own truth. But in the end, artifacts rely on perceivers and so lead deeply volatile lives. I'm sobered by the layered complexity of their lives in time. What is the most honest way to address it? Shifting theoretical lenses become distinct performances, interesting perhaps if they're adroit, but eerily independent of the artifact itself. Is there anything beyond "what you make of it if you try on *this* lens"?

6. *What is your specific understanding of "meaning" in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

My understanding has become very tied to the material I work on, where it has at least two forms: 1) can a work make visible and resonant within itself at least a portion of what I have come to understand about the subject from the writings of the Greek fathers, ancient or more recent; 2) can it stimulate my serious effort to see how that particular burden of content has been tailored to engage the needs and concerns of a living audience, whether contemporary with or after the time and place of its production. The means are capacious: selection, elaboration or exclusion of thematic elements are of course important, but so are scale; material, color and texture; accessibility; location (relative to what?); illumination; hierarchy; compositional or locational rhythm, sequence, cadence, and surprise; exposure or occlusion, especially by clothing; varied forms of writing ... But I have never seriously abandoned the role of a topic or subject.

7. *To what extent is "meaning" determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

How something looks can't be separated from how it works. To some extent, anything inside the work is functioning through the conditions in which it is being seen, and they can't be separated. But there are many degrees of separation, and most of them offer some degree of *both* gain and loss. The obligation incumbent on all of us is to be clear about what we are and aren't seeing. *Mise-en-scène* is fickle: I spent my early years on Cyprus lamenting that churches were dark, icons occluded, interiors dilapidated, and people self-involved; today I spend my life yearning for precisely that lost "authenticity." But both conditions offer some gifts, and they make the same demands: are you really seeing what can be seen?

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

My generation has been so fortunate: in our ample opportunities for frequent travel to see “the real thing” or the “real place”; in our incredible cameras and visual enhancement devices to bring “the real thing” to our fingertips; in our ability to move with unprecedented confidence across multiple linguistic, religious, and cultural systems. And we’ve had a good century of critical theory to nudge us to ask who is looking and how. So yes, I think we are better equipped today to probe the relationship between the way things look and the ways they are seen. But we have left behind us a clearly perceptible history of shifting romanticisms in the interpretation of peoples and their things. So are we getting closer to truth, or just grasping different parts of the elephant? As historians – even *visual* historians (as long as we remain that way) – we remain subject to the distorting lenses of our own intellectual fashions.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

I really believe it is by seeing, not reading, that we learn to see. A text can alert us to the fact that someone saw X in a certain artifact, but it is when WE see it that X becomes a meaningful part of our visual equipment. In this respect, I believe images are constantly teaching viewers to see.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

I am irredeemably a “painting person.” Even my gestures in speaking of art suggest flat surfaces, not volumes. Thus I am endlessly being booby-trapped into thinking of artifacts as visual planes. Even a virtual image is never *just* a visual plane. It has working parts, and one will never really understand how it works without them. So yes: I am recurrently grateful to be reminded that images are just abstractions. Neither I nor the Byzantine people I ponder ever encounter Byzantine artifacts that are just images. I am also very conscious of the fact that my way of relating pictures to the surfaces they occupy, and my way of relating the seen artifact to other things in the world, are both quite different from what I sense among the devotees of the icons I study. When I become absorbed in the picture I’m seeing, it essentially becomes a virtual image, innocent of size or weight or heft. I think when many medieval viewers became similarly abstracted into the picture’s image, it became a person, who could even be seen sometimes walking in other places. But without the thing it was pictured on, the person wouldn’t exist, any more than my abstractions would exist without the thing my eye bumped into. Here again, I am grateful whenever I am reminded of this. But I have not therefore constructed a discourse of meaning that is distinctive to materiality. Materials condition perception but they don’t talk.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Social life can be hard on images. Probably the single most useful way of approaching it is by turning away from the images altogether to find out what has been said about them, when and by whom. More concretely, though, we can pay attention less to the images as such than to the way people behave in their presence, especially (but not only) if they are in some way *in situ*. Modifications that have been made to images are valuable. Even more indicative are evidences of use. How keenly can the historian pick up on the flymarks of what have people done to make images and their artifacts work, or at least work better, for them? Valuable to me has been Margaret Conkey's idea of "styles of use," because uses have patterns and codes and can themselves open avenues of inquiry. Use, like appreciation, is a form of consumption – it eats away at things – so we're always trying to see it away. But it can be very informative, even if hard on the images.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

The mingled smell of beeswax and olive oil in a space sharply heightens my receptivity to icons, probably much as the sound of church music enhances many people's receptivity to religious art. I am sure the painters who adorned the churches I enter expected that lamps and candles would constitute a steady part of devotional and liturgical practice in those spaces, that their fragrance would come to permeate the atmosphere there, and that their paintings would thus be accompanied by that odour. Yet the icons were there always, even if regular devotions were not occurring and generating their smells, and they were still expected to function to hallow the space. Musically, too, even in cases in which paintings incorporate rhythmic or proportional elements drawn from music performed beneath them, the paintings are expected to be visible and functioning to move viewers, even if no music is being made. So I tend to regard such poly-sensory responses as accessory, an addition to my own equipment, rather than as an ingredient integral to the image and its functionality. I guess it's one of the cases in which I still believe that artifacts do exist outside of the way in which I perceive them.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that "iconicity" (or "visual efficacy") is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

This is interesting, and certainly it can deepen our understanding of how we invest our world with properties like significance and emotional inflections. But it serves as a comparison.

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

This is such a present and pressing question for me, as suggested already in Question 5). I launched decades ago into a study of a certain great icon over time. I did so in order to

show how it shifted over time. My mantra became “the afterlife of images” – that is, how they live on into new meanings. But now that project has become an albatross, because it really isn’t enough just to show what chameleons images are. That is essentially reception theory: it presumes that there is a “real,” stable image, and the curiosity lies in the fact that viewers – who are, after all, outside the image and experiencing it not in reality but inside their own hermetic world – always do seem to smudge the image in absorbing it. The icon is up to something else. Its image *does* change. It is not simply seen differently; it looks different at different time/places. I am reasonably sure that it is being altered to keep it looking the *same*. But so far, art history is proving more skilful at dissolving an image into multiple perceptions than at integrating it again to grasp what it is that holds all the variables together.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

As we surge out into “globalism,” we just really need to stop *talking* so much and start *listening* much harder. I am often gobsmacked listening to people from another tradition talk seriously about artifacts, as with *Faces of the Gods* in question 1. The kinds of qualities Thompson chose to talk about, and the language he used, were fresh, and they left me scrambling to see *what they were doing for him* – what questions they were answering; what structures he had set up for talking about his altars. The classes I took with Yasser Tabbaa were similarly compelling – partly of course because he really is a mathematician, but also because the science and philosophy he was drawing on were being used to answer questions I hadn’t even *thought* about asking when looking at the artifacts he was working on (what became *Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival*). Similarly, Pavel Florensky’s *Iconostasis* makes a strong impression on me each time I read it. These authors are fully within “art history” and using many of its basic strategies. But they are not the kind of outsider that I am, for instance, to Byzantine art, trying to impose my Anglophone mode of eye-tongue coordination on a different cultural system.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

A theme that emerged as I was answering these questions was the degree to which I believe that artifacts do exist outside my own perceptions of them. And I think this is something I crave as we sally forth under the banner of globalism to conquer the world and absorb it into [Anglophone] art history. We need honestly to believe that artifacts are out there independently of us, and learn to listen to the things their own environments are saying about them.

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1. *In the last thirty years, images have been a focus of scholarship from many different viewpoints, and they have been pivotal in the many scholarly movements, or “turns”, attempting to methodologically reframe the study of art history in general. Can you briefly explain which was your original focus of interest and in which directions your scholarly approach developed over the course of time?*

My research focuses on East Asian Buddhist art. For my PhD dissertation, I am primarily concerned with typological development of Japanese sculptures of the Asuka period and their religious and socio-political implications. My current project deals with early Chinese Buddhist art, with a particular focus on the notion of divine and the Buddha image as a living entity. I have also developed an interest in the phenomenological approach to images and artistic experience, but am exploring ways to systematically inquire along such a direction.

2. *Please name up to three books that you consider to have played an important role in orienting your research.*

David Freeberg, *The Power of Images*; Francisco Varela, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*; Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*

3. *What is your assessment of traditional art history, with its emphasis on controversial notions and often rigid distinctions between “style” and “iconography”? What do you see as its hermeneutic limits and advantages? Do you think it should be thoroughly replaced with new approaches, or simply revised and integrated into the present-day art-historical discourse?*

Advantage: it provides a convenient framework of analysis.

Disadvantage: such rigid compartmentalizing scheme sometimes oversimplifies a more complex scenario. Style and iconography are not intrinsic properties but rely on a viewer's perceptive and cognitive apparatus. What is undertooood as a stylistic element by one group may be seen as an iconographic feature by another group. Such fluidity in cognition is not uncommon, especially in inter-regional cultural transmissions. I am not aware of an alternative approach that can do a better job, but when applying the old scheme of “style” and “iconography”, I see them not as distinct, immutable categories but as flexible understandings dependent on the viewer.

4. *Since the 1990s, our field has experienced many different “turns”, each laying emphasis on one of the multiple dynamics in which images are involved. To what extent did your research benefit from such scholarly debates?*

My research benefits significantly from the affect turn or the sensorial turn, which allows me to analyze images and visual forms beyond their stylistic and iconographic constitutions.

5. *In your opinion, which specific notions have become particularly relevant to our present-day understanding of images, and how have they affected your own approach?*

The notion of an embodied experience.

For a long time, western philosophy has been dominated by a rationalist approach and the presumed separation between mind and body. But to quote Antonio Damasio, Descartes is wrong and there is great potential to reconsider the theories of Spinoza (which has much in common with Yogacara Buddhism). My research is informed by this new direction in philosophical studies and I am interested in exploring how vision, together with our other sensorial organs, leads to an artistic experience that is more bodily than intellectual.

6. *What is your specific understanding of “meaning” in visual objects? How do images manage to convey messages, and what are the implications?*

I see two modes of communication of meaning. The first is consciously perceived and processed by our brain (e.g., we recognize an iconographic message in one painting). The second works more directly on our body while the perception process may be unconscious (e.g., a painting may convey a particular kind of feeling or affect).

7. *To what extent is “meaning” determined by factors not immediately associated with the specific visual appearance of images, such as mise-en-scène strategies, conditions of visibility, and more generally the experiential dimension of viewers?*

The phenomenological encounter with an image is not an act between the viewer and the image in a vacuum, but a situated experience dependent on all players in the specific circumstance and the circumstance as well.

8. *In your view, are we now better equipped to reconstruct and more deeply understand the complex relationship between the visual appearance of an image and the expectations of its viewers?*

Yes. We are better aware of the complexity of the relationship, but to further investigate the mechanism of interaction among different factors in the relationship is still very difficult.

9. *To what extent can images contribute to informing their viewers’ understandings of other images and other aspects of reality and experience?*

Our perception and cognition of the outside world depends on our perceptive capacity and cognitive apparatus, which is continuously evolving given new experience we acquire at every moment of life. Therefore, encounter with an image will certainly impact on our subsequent encounters with other images and other aspects of reality and experience.

10. *What is your assessment of the materiality of images?*

The physical aspects of images, but also with extending qualities associated with feelings to be invoked in an interacting person. For instance, marble tends to be associated with feelings of cold, sublime etc.

11. *In your view, how can we approach the “social life” of images? In what sense can we assume that images interrelate with their viewers and users?*

Images are a crucial element in the life of their viewers and users; they have an impact on their way of life, such as an icon dictating its owner to pray to it every day as a morning ritual etc. While a user determines the usage of an image, an image also claims a share of its user's time and prescribes a particular way of interaction between the image and the user.

12. *Does the experience of images exclusively imply the exercise of sight, or do other senses also play a role? If possible, please cite a relevant case from your research field.*

Many art historians have pointed out that tactile perception is involved, especially in perceiving illusional space as depicted in an image. However, other senses also play a role. Just like a red apple already activates the olfactory sense of its viewer without the need of projecting the scent itself, an image can also arouse other senses of its viewer.

In Buddhist rituals, olfactory and auditory aspects are important parts that, together with sight and tactile experiences, condition the body of a participant in a particular mode that is most suited for receiving or connecting with the divine.

13. *Recent studies have emphasized that “iconicity” (or “visual efficacy”) is not an exclusive property of artistic images but can also be regarded as an attribute of non-figurative objects, such as elements of landscape, natural materials, and living beings. To what extent can such objects be included in an art-historical narrative?*

I thought they are already assimilated into studies of visual culture/material culture?

14. *Many studies have focused on the dynamics by which images originally meant for a specific viewing context come to be transferred to, appropriated by, and transformed and reshaped in another. Which hermeneutic tools can be useful in our analysis of such phenomena?*

Models in transculturation studies etc.

15. *English is more and more the lingua franca of global art-historical scholarship. To what extent may we avoid applying to non-European contexts notions drawn from an essentially Western European understanding of images and their materiality and meaning?*

This is hard to avoid. Linguistic terms are loaded with meanings developed from its intellectual lineage. For instance, in Chinese texts, there is a stress on 灵验像 (images that are numinous and efficacious), yet to what extent “numinous and efficacious” is comparable with “divine” deserves discussion. We need to be more aware of such differences when using English to discuss non-European phenomena.

16. *Finally, what are we still lacking? In which direction should we pursue our studies in the following decades?*

In addition to the material aspect of the finished artwork, perhaps investigations of the material aspect of the creation process would also yield insightful results. I find James Elkins' *What Painting Is* also quite inspiring, though similar works are few in art historical research.

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