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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 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 baptistery of Padua, a building in which I spent many hours, also provides a response. The baptistery 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 Buzzacarini, the woman who paid for the baptistery'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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