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Editorial

Genevieve Warwick

In a February 1977 newsletter for the recently-formed Association of Art Historians, its chair John White announced the foundation of a new journal for the discipline. Simply titled *Art History*, it was, the newsletter explained, the fruit of year-long deliberation and discussion by the AAH board, and intended to launch a forum for new forms of art-historical scholarship born of interdisciplinary methods and intellectual exchange.¹ First appearing in March 1978 under the inaugural editorship of John Onians, its opening editorials were concerned with establishing the intellectual breadth of this new journal's scope:

[...] to consider not just what [the history of art] is but what it might be, and here philology may help [...]. For if when we thought of 'art' we were also conscious of all the changing usages of the word over the last two thousand years our subject would certainly take on new dimensions; and if, when we used the word 'history', we also thought of all the different approaches that word and its cognates in other languages have covered since the Greeks, our methods and goals could only be enlarged. [...] it does

seem worthwhile to point to the disparity between the conventional modern notion of history as ‘the narration of past events’ and the original meaning of the Greek *historia* with its emphasis on ‘enquiry’ rather than ‘record’ and its inclusion of ‘present as well as past events’. [...] if we too thought of what we were doing as ‘enquiry’, as well as ‘record’, we would expect more of our intellects and imaginations [...]. An enquiry [...] raises all sorts of issues: into what, why, with what goal, using what assumptions, etc.? The role of an ‘enquirer into what is happening and what happened’ which we take on as ‘historians’ should demand more of us, whether we identify ourselves with Thucydides writing the history of the Peloponnesian war while it was going on, with Herodotus who called the enquiries he made on his travels *historiai*, or with the judges of the Homeric epics, the original *histores*. [...] it is not necessary to take the word ‘art’ very far back to find it covering not only the fine arts but also those products of technology and design whose inclusion [...] provokes so much argument.²

Art History was born of a particular moment in the history of the discipline. As Onians’ comments identify, the very definition of the discipline was under intense debate in these years. The terms that denote the subject – art, history - were themselves the

object of critical and ontological discussion, as well as their disciplinary coupling, which aesthetic and philosophical considerations often sought to sunder. This was a rapidly changing intellectual landscape in the history of art, characterized not only by new forms of enquiry, but new types of subjects and objects and their myriad histories that together sought to reconceptualize and redefine the field. Among journals, *Art History* immediately became a key voice for this expanded or 'wider definition' of the history of art, as Onians had envisioned it to be.³

2017 is the fortieth anniversary of *Art History*'s genesis, and thus a moment to reflect on the scholarship that it has published over those years as an instrument of the discipline. In step with academic fora more broadly, we have chosen to mark the event with a celebratory publication, *Art History 40: Image and Memory*. As such we participate in a much larger cultural enterprise, in which birthdays and centenaries have become occasions for intellectual reflection, discussion and debate. On the one hand, they signal the distance travelled between a point of origin and its subsequent historical recollection. On the other, they function to draw together the passage of time into a quilting point through which we are connected again with events, beliefs, and thoughts of times past. In the words of the historian Mona Ozouf, this is the *logique-du-même* at the heart of commemorative practice. Ritualized recollection, she argues,

fosters a collective sense of shared identity between then and now, them as us.⁴

It is in this spirit that we offer two volumes as special issues of *Art History* for 2017 linked by a chronology of commemoration and centenaries. The first, *Art and Religious Reform in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Bridget Heal and Joseph Leo Koerner, looks at cultures of iconoclasm and the complex interplay between word and image in the wake of Luther's call for church reform nailed to the doors of Wittenburg Castle Church in 1517. As we mark the fifth centenary since Luther's theses called into question the very status of the image within faith, this volume asks us to consider anew the power of images – contested, bifurcated, and problematic as that power continues to be.

Second, we celebrate our own collective – and often contested – history as a community of scholars, authors and readers in a commemorative volume of our own. Born of a conference generously hosted by the Association of Art Historians and the Courtauld Institute of Art Research Forum, it brings together its past editors, and its current editorial team, to reflect on relations between images and memory. It also marks the passage from one editor to the next, as Dorothy Price together with Jeanne Nuechterlein take up the editorship in July 2017. With sincere thanks to all the previous editors of the

journal for their manifold contributions, this is also the moment to reflect on my own period as editor.

Indelibly marked by the publication of the Finch Report in July 2012 in my first week in office, my editorial tenure saw the beginnings of the great transition to new freely-available electronic forms of publication in the name of Open Access. It was my great privilege to work with a highly-committed AAH team, the journal's editorial board, the ensuing chairs of AAH, Alison Yarrington and Christine Riding, and our publisher Wiley, in discussion with HEFCE, SFC and the British Academy, to secure a positive future within Open Access publishing for a discipline heavily dependent on third-party copyright material in the form of images. This policy work played its part in inspiring our further collective reflection on the status of the image in art-historical writing for our fortieth anniversary volume. In this light I was also delighted to enable the growing development of new forms of online access to *Art History*, through the creation of an app for viewing journal articles on tablets and mobiles, and a forthcoming dedicated web platform that will reflect and enhance the same top-level standards of visual design as our paper print run.

The other abiding memory I will retain of my time as editor was the opportunity to expand and develop the opening vision of the journal as representing the history of art 'according to a wider definition'. Publishing increasingly substantial

numbers of articles on World Art and all forms of visual culture, and particularly through our programme of special issues, *Art History* has played a vital part in progressing the discipline's growing adoption of these frameworks, increasingly at work also in university appointment boards and teaching curricula. As part of this commitment we developed a strand of essays in translation, publishing classic articles in foreign languages alongside new work interpreting the continuing legacy of these texts. In this regard we also touch on the debates ignited in the pages of early issues of the journal concerning the choice of title. As John Onians made clear, *Art History* is 'not a natural English expression as, for example, is the history of art... [but] a... translation of *kunstgeschichte*... [which] in a more broadly based form should become the dominant manifestation of the subject.'

In closing, I look back on the heady excitement of seeing each issue go to press, with the warmest of thanks to all the people who make it happen each time. My heartfelt appreciation particularly go to Natalie Adamson and Sam Bibby for their dedication and generously-shared knowledge at every stage, to two exceptional reviews editors, Gavin Parkinson and Margit Thøfner, and to our Wiley colleagues for their enthusiasm and commitment to the highest possible standards of publishing. I also extend my gratitude to the editorial board for their thoughtful and imaginative deliberations, and our international

advisory board members for their considered and always expert advice. Finally, I thank you, the worldwide community of readers, for your continuing interest in *Art History*.

Notes

¹ John White, “‘Art History’: Proposed Journal of the Association of Art Historians”, *Bulletin of the Association of Art Historians*, 4, February 1977, 9.

² John Onians, ‘Art History, *Kunstgeschichte* and *Historia*’, *Art History*, 1: 2, June 1978, 131-133.

³ John Onians, ‘Editorial’, *Art History*, 1: 1, March 1978, <page number>.

⁴ Mona Ozouf, ‘Peut-on commémorer la Révolution française?’, *Le Debat: Histoire, Politique, Société*, 26, 1983, 161-172.