

RECOVERING ORNAMENT IN HIGH ART: TOM PHILLIPS'S *A HUMUMENT: A TREATED
VICTORIAN NOVEL*

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Approved by:

JJ Bauer

Dorothy Verkerk

Eduardo Douglas

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ABSTRACT

Veronica D. McGurrin: Recovering Ornament in High Art: Tom Phillips's *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*
(Under the direction of JJ Bauer)

In 1966, British artist Tom Phillips began an artistic journey that spanned half a century; picking up a used book in a bookstore, Phillips meticulously altered each page of the work to create a new artist's book titled *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*. Despite the fact that many scholars consider *A Humument* to be a canonical example of an altered artist's book, there is a dearth in visual analysis scholarship on the work. In this thesis, I will be looking at Phillips's theories of ornament through his lecture "The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise" and demonstrate the ways in which he makes the case for a reinvigoration of ornament in high art throughout his artistic oeuvre, principally in *A Humument*.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the first page of the sixth and final edition of Tom Phillips's artist's book, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*, he returns the reader to the height of Classical poetry: "I sing a book of the art that was/ now read on/ of mind art/ though I have to hide to reveal."¹ The invocation of the opening lines of *The Aeneid* tells the readers that this work, too, is the start, as well as an end, of Phillips's own epic.² A reference to such a famous literary work demonstrates not only Phillips's fashioning of himself as a member of the intelligentsia but also of *A Humument* as its own type of artistic epic. His artistic journey did not begin months or even years before, as one might imagine, but rather over decades of continuous reworking of the same source material. Phillips 'hide[s] to reveal' throughout *A Humument*, offering readers just a glimpse of the complexities embedded in this mass-produced book. Much like the reader must follow Aeneas' winding journey from Troy to Carthage to Rome, we must first start where Phillips once began.

It was 1966. Tom Phillips had just completed his first one-man show the previous year in London.³ He had spent the past decade switching between the professions of teacher, musician,

¹ Tom Phillips, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*, 6th ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 1.

² The opening line to *The Aeneid* is "I sing of arms and of a man." Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Books, 2004), 1.

³ His first one-man exhibition was at the Artists International Association Gallery in London, England in 1965. To the best of my knowledge, it featured Phillips's paintings. As the Gallery was closed in 1971, there is no documentation that states what pieces were featured in the exhibition. Phillips's website only states "Exhibition at AIA gallery London, his first one-man show - a sellout." "Chronology" *Tom Phillips* <http://www.tomphillips.co.uk/about/chronology/60s>

composer, and art student when he made the decision to start a new artistic project.⁴ Previously, Phillips had read an interview with William S. Burroughs that inspired his desire to experiment with the ‘cut-up’ method of repurposing an old text in an individual manner.⁵ Walking into a used bookstore, Phillips resolved that he would buy the first book he saw for exactly ‘threepence’ and he would use the book as the source for his next artistic project. On that fateful day, Phillips found himself with a tattered copy of William H. Mallock’s Victorian novel *A Human Document* (Figure 1.1).⁶

Since its publication in 1892, Mallock’s novel has received little attention, scholarly or otherwise. The novel, as well as its author, would have most likely fallen into obscurity if it were

⁴ Phillips attended St Catherine’s Society at Oxford from 1958 to 1960 where he studied Anglo-Saxon literature. While at Oxford, Phillips spent a significant amount of his time working with the theater department where he acted as well as designed theater sets. It was at this time that he began significantly composing music, which he would continue to do throughout his lifetime. Upon graduating, Phillips moved back to London where he taught English, Music and Art at Aristotle Road Secondary School in Brixton. During this time, he took art classes with Frank Auerbach at Camberwell School of Art.

⁵ The interview to which Phillips refers is the 1965 fall edition of the *Paris Review* (Conrad Knickerbocker, “William S. Burroughs: The Art of Fiction No. 36.” *The Paris Review* (1965): 22-30). Although the “cut-up” technique can be traced back to the Dadaists, William S. Burroughs along with his partner Brion Gysin popularized the technique in the mid-twentieth century. The process consisted of cutting up pages of text and rearranging them to create new narratives as seen in Burroughs and Gysin’s novel *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking Press, 1977). For information about William S. Burroughs, see B. Miles, *Call Me Burroughs: A Life* (New York: Twelve, 2014) and M. S. Bolton, *Mosaic of Juxtaposition: William S. Burroughs’ Narrative Revolution* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).

⁶ The story of Phillips’s purchase of *A Human Document* has been repeated many times throughout the scholarship on *A Humument*. In *Tom Phillips: Works and Texts* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), Phillips himself reflects on the experience: “I made a rule; that the first (coherent) book I could find for threepence (i.e. 1¼ p) would serve. Austin’s repository stands on Peckham and Rye, where Blake saw his first angels along which Van Gogh had probably walked on his way to Lewisham. At this propitious place, on a routine Saturday morning shopping expedition, I found, for exactly threepence, a copy of *A Human Document* by W.H. Mallock, published in 1892 as a popular reprint of a successful three-decker. It was already in its seventh thousand copy at the time of the copy I acquired and cost originally three and sixpence. I had never heard of W.H. Mallock and it was fortunate for me that his stock had depreciated at the rate of a halfpenny a year to reach the requisite level. I have since amassed an almost agreeable person: withdrawn and humourless (as photographs of him seem to confirm) he emerges from his works as a snob and a racist (there are extremely distasteful anti-Semitic passages in *A Human Document* itself)” (255). Whether this account is truthful, especially in its account of Phillips’s lack of knowledge of the book or Mallock himself despite having both gone to Oxford (albeit a century apart), it is the story that Phillips has repeated again and again throughout exhibition catalogues, interviews, and his own writing.

not for Phillips, who breathed new life into the book by using it as the material for his artist's book. After purchasing the book, Phillips crumpled the title page of the Victorian novel to create a new title: *A Humument*. From there, Phillips went through the three-hundred-page novel non-sequentially and altered each page individually. Using collage, paintings, and scratch-out techniques, Phillips created an entirely new book: the altered artist's book.

The first page that Phillips completed consists of simple pen-and-ink drawings and leaves a minute portion of the text (Figure 1.2). Examining this first page, readers can see some of the themes that will remain throughout the work: on almost every page, a strict white border remains around the entirety of the page and Phillips (almost always) leaves the title, *A Human Document*, as well as the page number visible to the viewer. Phillips continued to alter every page individually, evolving from the simpler pen and ink illustrations to more colorful and elaborate imagery until every page was filled and a new narrative was completed (Figure 1.3). The first edition was published in 1973, seven years after Phillips picked up Mallock's novel in the London bookshop.

With this altered book, Phillips launched a new phase in his career. Starting with simply scratching out the words and decorating the pages, Phillips created a new story featuring Bill Toge, an homage to the original author's first name combined with a shortening of "altogether" (Figure 1.4). The first completed page of the work featured minimal illustrations and etched out the majority of the text, leaving a simple message: "he had/ when first/ two necromancers, love/ coloured it with colours and filled it with objects of ambition/ softly."⁷ From 1973 to 2016, he published six editions of *A Humument*, each with slight variations from edition to edition.⁸

⁷ Tom Phillips, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), 33.

⁸ There is no comprehensive bibliographic study of the ways in which each page of the different editions of *A Humument* evolved, but Phillips's does provide a comprehensive chronology of the different pages

Phillips published the work in slow increments with the help of Tetrad Press until Thames & Hudson finally published it in full in 1980 (Figure 1.5). Each of the six editions has 367 pages, the same amount as Mallock's original text, and all appear in the same hardcover format with the same simple font declaring Tom Phillips's *A Humument*. In contrast to many contemporary artists' books which are only published in very limited editions by small presses, Phillips's work was published widely and was thus more publicly accessible.⁹

In addition to the six editions, Phillips also created numerous art objects derived from *A Humument*. Two of the most similar items include a miniature artist's book called *Heart of the Humument* and a book entitled *A Painter's Alphabet* in which he paired decorated initial pages from *A Humument* with works from the Dulwich Picture Gallery (1.6-1.7). Phillips also created some sculptural pieces in the shape of skulls covered with text from *A Human Document*, demonstrating another way in which he utilized the original text to create something new (Figure 1.8).

In the decades since Phillips started the project, he achieved significant success for this distinctive artist book. His work has been exhibited internationally, and Phillips was appointed to the Royal Arts Academy in 1984; additionally, in 1989 he became the second artist in history to have a retrospective at the National Portrait Gallery in London. With these accolades, Phillips

on his website in which he shows Mallock's original page, his altered page from the first edition, and any differences made in subsequent editions. To see the chronology of each page, see "Humument Slideshow" Tom Phillips <http://www.tomphillips.co.uk/humument/slideshow/1-50/item/5847-page-1>

⁹ It is important to note that, although more publicly accessible and published in large editions making them cheaper to purchase, *A Humument* is not a democratic multiple. Tony White defines the term as such: "The concept of the democratic multiple more specifically relates to books produced in this manner as part of the idealistic, populist zeitgeist of the 1970s, promoted by artists and often in conjunction with the political and social transformations in the United States" in "From Democratic Multiple to Artist Publishing: The (R)evolutionary Artist's Book," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries of North America* 31 (2012): 47.

became a well-known artist within the burgeoning field of artists' books and *A Humument* was considered a canonical example of an altered artist's book.

Yet, despite the attention that Phillips has received in the art community, little scholarship has been written on him and his work. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a few articles were published in English and Literary Studies journals that discussed Phillips's work in relation to ideas of concrete poetry and new conceptions of intertextuality.¹⁰ While valid and interesting analyses of Phillips's work, they do not provide a visual analysis nor look at *A Humument* as an art object.

Much like the study of *A Humument* itself, the scholarship on artists' books within the field of Art History is underdeveloped as many view it as a new artistic medium.¹¹ There are only a

¹⁰ For information on a literary approach to an analysis of *A Humument*, see: Katherine N. Hayles, "The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext," *Narrative* 9, no. 1 (2001): 21-39; James L. Maynard "I Find / I Found Myself / and / Nothing / More than That": Textuality, Visuality, and the Production of Subjectivity in Tom Phillips's "A Humument." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 36, no. 1 (2003): 82-98; and Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, "A Portrait of the (postmodern) Artist: Intertextual Subjectivity in Tom Phillips's *A Humument*." *University of Michigan Library* 2, no. 1 (1999): 4-22.

¹¹ "Over the last twenty years visual artists, increasingly concerned with time-based media, have rediscovered the book, investigating and transforming every aspect of that venerable container of the written word. They have manipulated page, format, and content- sometimes subtly, sometimes turning the book into a reflexive discussion of its own tradition. They have illustrated real time in simple flip books or collaged real time with fictive time into complex layers. They have disguised artists' books as traditional books and made others that are scarcely recognizable. The best of the bookworks are multinational. Within them, words, images, colors, marks, and silences become plastic organisms that play across the page in variable linear sequence. Their importance lies in the formulation of a new perceptual literature whose content alters the concept of authorship and challenges the readers to a new discourse with the printed page. Artists' books began to proliferate in the sixties and early seventies in the prevailing climate of social and political activism. Inexpensive, disposable editions were one manifestation of the dematerialization of the art object and the new emphasis on art process. Ephemeral artworks, such as performances and installations, could be documented and, more importantly, artists were finding that the books could *be* artworks in and of themselves. It was at this time too that a number of artist-controlled alternatives began to develop to provide a forum and venue for many artists denied access to the traditional gallery and museum structure. Independent art publishing was one of these alternatives, and artists saw the book as a means for reaching a wider audience beyond the confines of the art world; others anticipated the appropriation of images and/or techniques of mass media for political or aesthetic reasons." Joan Lyons, ed., *Artist's Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (Rochester, N.Y.: The Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 7.

few monographs published on the topic, and the *Journal of Artist's Books* focuses more on artists' descriptions of their current practice rather than the publication of theoretical or analytic articles.¹² Moreover, scholars seem to resist providing an encompassing definition of the genre for fear of excluding potential works. Dick Higgins provides an ambiguous definition: "a book done for its own sake and not for the information it contains. That is: it doesn't contain a lot of works, like a book of poems. It *is* a work. Its design and format reflect its content- they intermerge, interpenetrate."¹³ Ten years later, Johanna Drucker provides an equally opaque definition: "an artist's book is a book created as an original work of art, rather than a reproduction of a preexisting work. And also, that it is a book which integrates the formal means of its realization and production with its thematic or aesthetic issues."¹⁴ Within these broad parameters, it is easy to place *A Humument* as an artist's book, and for the purposes of this thesis, I am using the term to illustrate her description, to highlight the fact that Phillips is aware (and self-reflective) of the fact that the codex is not a new medium but rather one that is imbued with historical significance.¹⁵ In fact, the only study that focuses on the illustrative component rather than the textual aspect of the work is by Drucker, who in addition to being viewed as the

¹² To read about scholarship on artists' books, see Tate Shaw, *Blurred Library: Essays on Artists' Books* (Victoria, Texas: Cuneiform Press, 2016); Joanna Drucker, *A Century of Artist's Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1995); Lyons, *Artists' Books*; and Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, *Esthétique du livre d'artiste (1960-1980)* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1997).

¹³ Dick Higgins, "A Preface", in Lyons, *Artists' Books*, 11.

¹⁴ Drucker, *A Century of Artist's Books*, 2.

¹⁵ In *A Century of Artist's Books*, Drucker presented the artist's book as a unique medium that emerged in the 20th-century art world. In doing so, she, and other early scholars on artists' books, established an orthodoxy of artists' books whose narrative paralleled the narrative of Western art. In doing this, Drucker would organize artists' books into distinct categories, such as the altered artist's book. Recently, there has been more of a resistance amongst artists' book scholars to this categorization, seen especially in Michael Hampton's *Unshelved: Reconceiving the Artist's Book* (Devon: Uniform Books, 2015).

foremost scholar in this subject is a book artist herself. As Drucker is one of, if not the, most notable figure in artist's book scholarship, it is essential to closely analyze her commentary on Phillips's work.

Drucker's *A Century of Artist Books* is the essential text regarding artists' books, yet its structure as a wide-ranging survey text only allows for a certain amount of analysis to occur. Drucker provides an overview of the various artists' books she considers canonical, reflecting that they are mostly Western books as there is limited scholarship on book artists from other areas of the world. Moreover, she divides the artists' books into assorted groups so that they can be analyzed with other art objects similar to one another. Drucker defines one of the categories, altered books, as an object "transformed from an appropriated or found original text through physical or conceptual means-- or parts of a work can be cut out and used to make a new work," emphasizing that the altered book acts as an "intervention."¹⁶ Drucker stresses the fact that artists working with altered texts are aware that the book as an art form is rife with cultural and historical values and therefore the artists are utilizing this medium to express an agenda in one way or another, with either a highly famous or obscure text. Drucker states that *A Humument* is the canonical example of an altered text, and her visual analysis of the work, though only spanning two pages, is the most in depth on the subject.

"Part of Phillips's skill," Drucker writes, "is his sensitivity to the existing structure of the page, as well as the complexities of the book form in its entirety."¹⁷ Drucker emphasizes that Phillips is more than aware of the origin from which he is working and that his visual motifs often include references to the history of the book; "the internal page motifs- books within

¹⁶ Drucker, *A Century of Artist Books*, 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 109

books, scripts which are invented, designs which mass or mask the underlying works, painted frames” illuminate Phillips’s reflexivity in regards to the making of the book and his own artist’s book. Despite her keen analysis, which places Phillips in a longer historical narrative of book production, Drucker’s scholarship does not engage with one of Phillips’s obvious interests seen throughout *A Humument*: his intentional invocation of ideas of ornament related to both the history of the book as well as to the broader history of art. Phillips continuously intersperses ornament throughout his artwork.

If one were to look at *A Humument* as a unique entity separate from the rest of his oeuvre, perhaps it is possible to ignore the instances of ornament interspersed throughout the work; the various decorated historiated initials, references to ornamentation in book production and architecture, and creations and use of text as graphic elements could just be seen as rare instances of decoration in a work that includes over three hundred pages of illustration. However, positioned in Phillips’s entire corpus, which includes four separate art objects that include the word ‘ornament’ in their title in addition to a publication on theories of ornament, it is impossible to describe these instances as anything but intentional invocations of and references to theories of ornament. In this thesis, I will re-examine Tom Phillips’s artist’s book *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* through the lens of theories of ornament in order to uncover the space Phillips carves out for ornament within the world of high art, illuminating Phillips’s attempts, throughout his career, to correct what he perceives as decades of misunderstanding of ornament’s role within art. In doing so, I will unpack Phillips’s conceptions of ornament, seen most clearly in his essay “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise.” Through his treatise, we see his work through the historiography of theories of ornament. Phillips conceptualizes ornament through a modernist lens, utilizing the same theories that once

discarded ornament as passé to instead reclaim it as a form of high art. After analyzing Phillips's own theories in his essay, I will then discuss two distinct ways in which Phillips utilizes ornament in his own work: in book production and in architecture. By providing a new visual analysis of Phillips's work in relation to ornament, I will situate *A Humument* within Phillips's larger artistic oeuvre.

With six editions of over three hundred pages each and a variety of accompanying projects, it would be impossible, and fruitless, to analyze every page of *A Humument*. As such, I have decided to focus on the sixth and final edition of the work with some inclusions from the first edition to use a point of contrast and to demonstrate the way in which the project evolved from the initial stages to its conclusion. I will also bring in other works from Phillips's oeuvre that explicitly reference ornament in their title to illustrate his focus on theories of ornament throughout his lifetime. In looking back towards Phillips's past, I intend to bring my analysis of *A Humument* into the future, not just as a canonical example of an altered artist's book, but as a work that deserves thorough and careful art historical analysis.

CHAPTER 2: THEORIES AND THEORISTS OF ORNAMENT

Introduction

Tom Phillips's preoccupation with ornament and its relation to high and low art is evident throughout his prolific career. Looking at his oeuvre, it is impossible to ignore the obvious influence that ornament has on his work; fluctuating from the explicit in his invocation of ornament in its title (Figure 1.1) to the more implicit references seen in the pages of *A Heart of a Humument* (Figure 1.2), Phillips infuses his work with forms and concepts related to ornament. It is clear that Phillips desires to employ his artwork and his life-long career as not only an established artist but also an intellectual who possesses the scholarly background to fight for ornament's place in the contemporary landscape of art history.

It is important to note that Phillips does not consider himself just an artist, but also a scholar. As stated in the introduction, the majority of the scholarship related to Phillips is written by him.¹⁸ As there is a dearth of scholarship related to artists' books in general Phillips has been

¹⁸ Almost all of the exhibition catalogues that feature essays are written by Phillips himself with only brief introduction essays or commentaries by the curator or collector of the work. This style of scholarly writing is demonstrated best by the only monographs on Phillips and his work: Tom Phillips, *Tom Phillips: Works, Texts to 1974* (London: H. Mayer, 1975) and Phillips, *Tom Phillips: Works and Texts*. In both of these works, there are brief introductory remarks by a collector of Phillips's work and then the rest of the text is by Phillips. In this way, Phillips is able to not only establish the dominant narrative of his work but also to establish himself independently as a scholar in a way that few other artists are able to achieve. This pattern of control extends to other established book artists, as well, including Barbara Tetenbaum, Angela Lorenz and Julie Chen; the main (or only) monographs about these artists are written by them with some supplemental materials from other authors or consist of a collection of essays, written by others, but collected and edited by the artist themselves.

able to dominate the interpretation of his work.¹⁹ While his work is extremely successful and has been exhibited internationally for decades, not many scholars have been able to engage in intensive scholarship on the topic of artist's books as they are still attempting to create basic survey texts about the subject. As such, Phillips has been able to establish himself as the voice of authority on his work whereas this would not necessarily happen with artists working within different mediums. Furthermore, Phillips has established himself in the art world beyond his role as an artist; he is an avid collector of Ghanaian sculptures, a collection which brought him much acclaim as he exhibited the works internationally as well as published scholarly work on the sculptures.²⁰ While these endeavors are removed from his work on *A Humument*, it is essential to understand Phillips's biography as it greatly impacts his own artistic production, especially in *A Humument*, which is a lifelong project. Phillips does not consider himself simply an artist but also an intellectual who actively engages with the scholarship that pertains to his field.²¹ It is

¹⁹ The other scholarship is outside the field of art history, as stated in the introduction, and instead of focusing on the work as an artist's book or its imagery, they analyze it through the lens of post-modern interpretations of concrete poetry.

²⁰ Phillips wrote and published a book on this collection as well as curated an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts and the Guggenheim Museum on the topic. For more information see Tom Phillips, *African Goldweights: Miniature Sculptures from Ghana 1400-1900* (London: Edition Hanjorg Mayer, 2010) and Tom Phillips, *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (New York: Prestel, 1966) and Tom Phillips, *Africa, The Art of a Continent: 100 Works of Power and Beauty* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1996). Although tangential to my project on ornament and *A Humument*, I think it is important to note that this exhibition as well as the subsequent publications were not received well by the public, especially in light of my discussion of the relationship between ornament and primitivism in the subsequent chapter. In a review of the exhibition, Christa Clarke discusses the merits of positioning the exhibition as the art of an entire continent, questioning whether this type of project would be done for Europe or North America. Further, she writes that the exhibition, which first opened in London, instigated many discussions of cultural patrimony of these objects. Christa Clarke, "Review: African Art" *Art Journal* 56, no. 1 (1997): 82-87.

²¹ Mary Ann Caws ("Tom Phillips: Treating and Translating," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 34, no. 3 (2001): 19) writes of how his biography as a scholar directly impacts his identity as an artist: "A Welsh polymath living in London, an Oxford-trained linguist and translator of Dante's *Inferno*, with a version for video and A TV Dante (the first eight cantos with Peter Greenaway, starring, among others, John Gielgud as Virgil), a translator of Anglo-Saxon poetry, a well-known portrait painter with his own exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery (1989), a member of the Royal Academy

through this lens that I will analyze this next text: not as merely the work of an artist sharing his views on a type of passé artistic production, but as an active scholar who has engaged in his field throughout his career and one who believes that he has an important voice and opinion on the subject matter.

Of all the ways in which Phillips inserts ornament into his work, perhaps the most enlightening piece that provides unparalleled insight into his own theories comes not from one of his artworks but rather a written text that comes decades after he began working on *A Humument*. It is with this text, “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise,” that readers of his work are finally able to grasp the ways in which ornament has so thoroughly impacted Phillips’s thinking and artistic practice over the past five decades of artistic production. As such, it is necessary to foreground any formal analysis or interpretation of his work with a comprehensive examination of this treatise. Before I am even able to begin to delve into the ways in which motifs and references to ornament manifest throughout *A Humument*, it is first necessary to analyze this treatise as it acts as the foundation for an analysis of any of Phillips’s work. But even within this overtly titled essay, Phillips does not write in clear, declarative sentences but instead creates coded references to the long history of ornament in the field of art history. As such, it is essential to thoroughly analyze the text in order to tease out the theories and theorists of ornament that Phillips agrees with, disagrees with, and wants to disregard

(which staged a major retrospective in 1992), a poet (his massive panels for his Curriculum Vitae, chiselled on great tablets, are in end-stopped verse, side-splitting and solemn at once. ‘You see,’ he says when questioned why there are twenty-two of them, ‘there are twenty-one and a supplement.’ And besides, the Royal Academy has a room that will exactly accommodate that number.) He is a sculptor, a conceptual artist, and also an historian of music, a singer (until 1962, he sang with London’s Philharmonia Chorus), and a composer. *Irma*, an opera, is based on the same originating text as *A Humument*, an example of how, in the modernist imagination, the chosen or self-imposed ‘constraint’ is able to inspire a multiple number of productions. ‘A person,’ says Phillips in one of his notebooks, ‘is limited in direct proportion to the number of possibilities of which he is ignorant; he is self-limited by the number of possibilities which he excludes.’ Phillips himself seems to have excluded far fewer than most.”

completely. In doing so, I will be able to utilize Phillips's own argument for the recuperation of ornament as a lens through which I can analyze his most important work: *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*.

The Treatise

“Ornament is high art hidden everywhere,” writes Tom Phillips in his foundational text “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise” which he initially presented at the Architecture Forum in the Reynolds Room of the Royal Academy of Arts in 2002.²² Although not an architect himself, it is important to note the setting in which he initially gave this speech subsequently published in the *Architectural Review*. Every choice that Phillips made in this ‘treatise’ is calculated from the word choice in the title to the place in which he decided to present and publish it. Presenting this treatise at the Royal Academy of Arts was not a leap for Phillips; he had been a member of the Royal Academy since the 1980s and had participated heavily in the

²² “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise” was first presented in the Architecture Forum in the Reynolds Room of the Royal Academy of Arts on 28 October 2002. For the published treatise, see: Tom Phillips, “Ornament on Trial (Text of ‘Summary Treatise on the Nature of Ornament’ with responses from five practicing architects,” *Architectural Review* 213 (2003): 79- 86.) It was republished in 2015 in the journal *New Bookbinder* in a special edition entitled “Of Space and Place: Ornament.” In the introduction to Phillips’s treatise, editors Joyce Lee and Annette Friedrich write “We start out in this issue with the author of the introductory quotation, Tom Phillips, and his essay *The Nature of Ornament, A Summary Treatise*. Tom is a London-based artist, whose work takes shape in many different formats. His essay here is a printed version of a talk he gave to the Architecture Forum at the Royal Academy of Arts in October, 2002. It is a focused, yet fragmented appraisal of ‘the’ ornament, covering a vast amount of material. Tom Phillips’s essay is the sweeping backbone to this year’s journal.” Joyce Lee and Annette Friedrich. “Editorial: Of Space and Place: Ornament in Action.” *The New Bookbinder* 35 (2015): 5. The editors note that Phillips’s essay is published as a “revised version,” but to my knowledge it is not altered from his initial speech and its subsequent publication a decade earlier. As such, I will be citing that version throughout the rest of this chapter. The importance of its republication in this journal dedicated to bookbinding and contemporary artists’ books hints toward the inherent connection between ornament and the history of book production, a topic which I will greatly expand upon in my fourth chapter. Additionally, please note that there is a slight change in the title, specifically the clauses are reversed. In my paper, I will refer to it as “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise.”

organization since his induction.²³ Rather, the choice to present at the Architectural Forum underscores one of the central components of his treatise: theories of ornament and architecture are intrinsically entwined. The treatise, which spans over ten parts and one hundred and fifty points, provides an in-depth analysis of what Phillips considers to be the inherent components of theories of ornament and clearly highlights the ways in which they stem from dominant architectural theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although he only names one architectural theorist by name, it is clear through his writing that he is drawing upon decades of architectural theories, especially those that have engaged with ideas of ornament, to support his argument. Moreover, despite the short time period between Phillips's presentation of the treatise to the Royal Academy and the publication of the essay, it is referred to as 'canonical,' reinforcing the idea that Phillips's position on this topic is greatly important.²⁴ In this section, I intend to argue that Phillips makes a modernist case to 'reinstate' ornament as a high art through his "The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise."²⁵ In order to understand Phillips's campaign for ornament, it is essential to analyze the manners in which Phillips invokes past theorists of ornament throughout his treatise. As stated earlier, the treatise is over one hundred and fifty points long and therefore it would not be productive to go over it line by line. As such, I

²³ Phillips was elected an Associate Royal Academician in 1984, a Royal Academician in 1989, and a Senior Royal Academician in 2012.

²⁴ The introduction to the article states "Ornament, reviled in avant-garde circles since Adolf Loos associated it with crime, remains an important force in artistic production in many cultures. The Academy Forum invited artist Tom Phillips to present his canonical *Summary Treatise on the Nature of Ornament*, which is printed in full here with responses from British Museum anthropologist John Mack and five practicing architects." Jeremy Melvin, ed., "Ornament on Trial," *Architectural Review* 213 (2003): 79. There is no explanation on why or how the essay became canonical, nor is there any evidence that the article was written or presented anywhere before the presentation at the Royal Academy.

²⁵ For background regarding the conceptualization of modernism in art history, see Francis Francina and Charles Harrison, eds., *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982) and Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968).

have pulled a variety of points that either embody an important distinction within his theory or invoke a specific architectural ornament theory that is key to the understanding of the text.

Throughout his treatise, Phillips relies on a variety of theorists ranging from Louis Sullivan to Robert Venturi. His clear familiarity of their theories, demonstrated by the way in which he in turn articulates his own philosophy of ornament, highlights the fact that Phillips has a very learned and complex understanding of his predecessors, especially those writing in the past two centuries. All but one of these theorists rest anonymously between the lines of his treatise; it is only Adolf Loos that Phillips directly references in the treatise. As such, it is necessary to explicate Loos's own ornamental theories as they are crucial to the understanding of not only future theorists who are referenced in the treatise but also for Phillips's own understanding and comprehension of ornament.²⁶ The other theorists that I have selected to discuss in relation to the treatise were chosen because of their undeniable impact on this history and scholarship regarding ornament. Phillips has carefully curated his persona and reputation as an intellectual, a person who would be well versed in all of the important voices on the topic. Moreover, as the treatise was written to be presented (and subsequently published) for an audience of architects, it is obvious that the theorists whom Phillips would reference in his treatise would be architects or architectural theorists who directly discussed the place of ornament in architectural practice. As such, I have pulled four theorists who would be widely known by the audience of this essay and whose work has intimately shaped, for better or worse, ornament's place in contemporary art.

²⁶ No. 65 is the only point in which Phillips directly references a specific person: "This can occasion a flight from ornament (Shaker carpentry, the severity of Loos), although what appears a denial merely reasserts that structures, of themselves, constitute, in their refined state, true ornament." Phillips, "Nature of Ornament," 24. Phillips is of course referring to Adolf Loos's early twentieth-century seminal lecture and subsequent essay "Ornament and Crime."

The Beginnings: John Ruskin

“Nature is plundered as the pattern book of ornament and in turn one authenticates the other.”²⁷

While Phillips references a variety of theorists and architects throughout his treatise, obvious references to John Ruskin appear with the greatest frequency. Ruskin was an essential writer and cultural critic of the nineteenth century who published extensively throughout his life.²⁸ While Ruskin was considered progressive for his time, especially because of his scholarly iterations of architectural theory, his work was disregarded by many modernists in subsequent decades. Yet, his clear articulation of the inherent relationship between nature and architecture quietly saturates the dogmas of essential modernist architects; Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright emphasize the importance of organic forms in architecture, which is one updated articulation of Ruskin’s own ideas.

Of his many publications, the essay *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* is especially enlightening concerning ideas of ornament and architecture.²⁹ Ruskin’s seven ‘lamps’- sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience- all tie architectural ideas to some form of nature, and it is the connection between nature and ornament (and architecture) that we see throughout Phillips’s treatise. This monograph-length essay was conceived in 1848, during an especially chaotic period in European history, and Ruskin imbues ideas of ethics into his analysis of architecture; thus, the seven moral principles are rendered inseparable from architectural

²⁷ Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 14.

²⁸ For a complete biography on Ruskin, see Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

²⁹ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849; reprinted, New York: Dover Books, 1989). Citations refer to the Dover Books edition.

design. Additionally, the publication of this declarative essay took place at the height of the Gothic Revival that began in the 1740s but grew in prominence during the first half of the nineteenth century in which Ruskin was actively engaged as a cultural critic and scholar of architecture.³⁰ In particular, Ruskin was an essential proponent of the Gothic architecture of Venice, encompassed in his publication *The Stones of Venice*.³¹ Understanding Ruskin's biography is essential to understand the way his ideas infiltrate "The Nature of Ornament"; Phillips writes,

Entire schemes of ornament have been derived from the search for abstract diversity in nature as in certain marble church interiors like that of Sta. Maria dei Miracoli in Venice where stone is framed by chosen stone, some veined or striped, others cloudy or turbulent. In such a scheme God is the featured artist in his own place of praise.³²

In this way, Phillips not only alludes to Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* through the reference to Sta. Maria dei Miracoli, but also in evoking God as artist, provides an update to Ruskin's Lamp of Sacrifice which focuses on dedicating man's artistry to God as a sign of obedience, fealty, and praise.

Phillips further develops Ruskin's theories within the treatise, especially elaborating on the way in which nature itself is ornamental. He writes, "Ornament mirrors the structures of cosmologies (or is even cognate with them in the sense that cosmologies may be born out of the

³⁰ For more information on the Gothic Revival, see Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (New Haven, CT: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1987). For a specific analysis of Ruskin's relationship to the Gothic Revival, see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969).

³¹ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London: Kelmscott Print, 1853; repr., London: Faber & Faber, 1981). Citations refer to the Faber & Faber edition.

³² Phillips, "Nature of Ornament," 97-98

repertoire of ornament). The rings, stratification, branchings etc. in nature inform ornamental and cosmological systems alike.”³³ Phillips surpasses the ideas of ornament as inherently tied to architectural structure; he conceives ornament as inherently dictated by the forms of nature, an idea specifically discussed in Ruskin’s writing. In his analysis of the Doric Temple in the sixth chapter, the Lamp of Beauty, Ruskin states “[t]he fluting of the column, which I doubt not was the Greek symbol of the bark of the tree, was imitative in its origin, and feebly resembled many caniculated organic structures. Beauty is instantly felt in it, but of a low order.”³⁴

In these ways, Phillips’s references to nature throughout the treatise act as an updated reading of Ruskin’s work, noting the importance of Ruskin’s understanding of architecture in the history of theories of ornament. Yet this repeated invocation in the treatise does not mean that Phillips agrees with all of Ruskin’s theories of architecture; one lamp in particular acts as a clear indication of the way in which Phillips’s own theories diverge from Ruskin’s. In the Lamp of Memory, Ruskin profusely emphasizes the importance of foregrounding the creation of architecture with a deep understanding of the historical past: “but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and Architecture and the latter in some sort includes the former, and is mightier in its reality.”³⁵ As stated, Ruskin codified his architectural theories at the height of the Gothic Revival, a time in which styles of architecture were largely dictated by the creators of the past. In “The Nature of Ornament,” Phillips refutes this idea by invoking not Ruskin’s architectural theories, but those of Louis Sullivan.

³³ Ibid., 5

³⁴ Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 101

³⁵ Ibid., 170

The Nineteenth Century: Louis Sullivan

“Ornament is the stylistic signature of time and place and peoples.”³⁶

The work of nineteenth-century architect and theorist Louis Sullivan inimitably shaped the landscape of architecture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Most notably, Sullivan was integral to the innovative development of the urban skyscraper; Chicago’s skyline is indebted to the genius of Sullivan. In addition to his extensive architectural oeuvre, Sullivan was a prolific writer and speaker of architectural theory.³⁷ The meaning behind each of his works was reinforced by the lectures and essays that he produced during his career. Sullivan’s portfolio clearly influenced Phillips’s treatise in two ways in particular: the belief that ornament is a reflection of the contemporary culture that produced it as well as the articulation of a clear distinction between decoration and ornament.³⁸

In contrast to Ruskin, Sullivan wholly believed that architecture must be “the voice of our times,” a concept that he discussed at length in his essay “Ornament in Architecture.”³⁹ Ruskin’s “Lamp of Memory” reinforces the idea that architecture should look to the past in order to shape

³⁶ Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 4

³⁷ For more information on the career of Louis Sullivan, in particular his writings, see Narciso G. Menocal, *Architecture as Nature: The Transcendentalist Idea of Louis Sullivan* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981) and David S. Andrew, *Louis Sullivan and the Polemics of Modern Architecture: The Present against the Past* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

³⁸ For more information on Louis Sullivan’s writings on ornament, see Wim de Wit, ed., *Louis Sullivan: The Function of Ornament* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1986).

³⁹ “If we assume that our contemplated building need not be a work of living art, or at least a striving for it, that our civilization does not yet demand such, my plea is useless. I can proceed only on the supposition that our culture has progressed to the stage wherein an imitative or reminiscient art does not wholly satisfy, and that there exists an actual desire for spontaneous expression. I assume, too, that we are to begin, not by shutting our eyes and ears to the unspeakable past, but rather by opening our hearts, in enlightened sympathy and filial regard, to the voice of our times.” Louis Sullivan, “Ornament in Architecture (1892),” in *Louis Sullivan: The Public Papers*, ed. Robert Twombly (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1988), 82.

contemporary society, but Sullivan clearly disagrees. He argues that architecture should reflect the time in which it is created as it reflects the society in which it is built. Phillips translates this concept clearly in his statement “ornament is the stylistic signature of time and place and peoples,” an updating of Sullivan’s idea and also another way in which Phillips clearly evokes such historical theorists in his text without directly referring to them by name.⁴⁰ As the intended audience of this essay was a group of architects, Phillips presumes a foregrounded shared knowledge of architectural history; he does not need to include Sullivan’s name because the idea is a clear reference to Sullivan’s work. Similar to his artistic production, Phillips leaves room for interpretation and expects his audience to be able to elucidate the ways in which architectural history is carefully woven throughout the treatise.

While many modernist architects were directly influenced by Sullivan’s utilitarian architecture, many interpreted his skyscrapers as expressing a complete disregard for any ornament in architecture. Phillips states “[o]rnamnt serves strength with strength. It is not an afterthought as is decoration. It is not merely applied but becomes one with the objects it helps to create.”⁴¹ This statement is essential to Phillips’s understanding of ornament; it is not something that is superfluous to the design but rather inherent to it, whether it is architectural or artistic. This idea is also intrinsic to Sullivan’s understanding of ornament; he does not think that utility and ornament are opposing features but rather intertwining components of the same idea. While his oft-quoted statement “form follows function” is often interpreted as a complete rejection of ornament, it in fact is an articulation of the ways in which ornament is, often times, inherently

⁴⁰ Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27

tied to the structure of the building whereas decoration can be viewed as a redundant additive.⁴²

When Sullivan realized that this statement was being misinterpreted as an utter renouncement of all ornament, he wrote another essay, “Ornament in Architecture,” to reword his argument and demonstrate that ornament isn’t superfluous to a building or its function; ornament emerges from the function and becomes one with its purpose.⁴³

Organically a building is a mass that is built upon the idea of its function, but this resonates to every last detail of the building. Sullivan’s theoretical discussion is perhaps best embodied by the Wainwright Building, one of the most prominent and influential works from his career (Figures 2.1-2.3). Considered the prototype for future urban skyscrapers, the Wainwright Building, admired for its lack of the neoclassical influences that had previously dominated the American architectural landscape, instead characterized a turning point toward the development of modernist architecture, an architecture of its time. Yet the Wainwright Building had many ornamental features in its design, seen especially in the organic and geometrical forms that framed its window. In the design, Sullivan includes an elaborate, vegetal frieze nestled below a cornice that is covered in repeated oval geometric patterns.

It is decoration that speaks superfluously to the structure of the material; Phillips brings forward the ideas from both “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered” as well as “Ornament in Architecture” in order to synthesize Sullivan’s theoretical approach to ornament. In the treatise, he elaborates on Sullivan’s work by further differentiating the concepts of decoration and ornament as inherently different categories; “[b]y decoration we mean what is added to things but is not germane to them by structure or significance and the use of motifs and

⁴² Louis Sullivan, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered (1896),” in Twombly, *Louis Sullivan*, 107.

⁴³ Sullivan, “Ornament in Architecture (1892).”

treatments that are not formally digested and lack transformation.”⁴⁴ It is with this point that Phillips first demonstrates the way in which he simultaneously reworks Sullivan’s theories and also rebukes negative ideas tied to ornament. In providing significant distance between ideas of decoration and ornament, Phillips is able to counter the negative ideas that have often been tied to ornament since Loos’s own highly influential writings, specifically femininity, decadence, and primitivism; instead he counters that those traits are inherent to decoration qualities.

The Disrupter: Adolf Loos

“This can occasion a flight from ornament (Shaker carpentry, the severity of Loos), although what appears a denial merely reasserts that structures, of themselves, constitute, in the refined state, true ornament.”⁴⁵

Born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the late-nineteenth century, Adolf Loos was an architect and theorist whose career began at the peak of one of ornament's most prolific epochs. Art Nouveau was a global architectural and design movement that began in 1894 in Belgium and France; during this time, artists emphasized the use of ornament inspired by nature and characterized by curvilinear, flattened forms.⁴⁶ At the height of this fervor, Loos published his seminal essay, “Ornament and Crime,” in 1913.⁴⁷ As suggested by the stark title, the essay

⁴⁴ Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 132.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁶ For more information on Art Nouveau, see Stephen Escritt, *Art Nouveau* (London: Phaidon, 2000). For its relationship and impact on architecture, see Frank Russell, ed., *Art Nouveau Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979).

⁴⁷ Adolf Loos. “Ornament and Crime,” in *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*, trans. Michael Mitchell (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1998), 167-177. As “Ornament and Crime” began as a lecture and not a published essay, there are some disputes regarding when it was first presented. Some state that Loos gave the first lecture in 1908 while others say it was 1910. Regardless, we know that it was part of Loos’s lecture series for many years before being officially published in 1913 in *Les cahiers d’aujourd’hui* with a translation in French by Marcel Ray, reprinted again by Le Corbusier in the second issue of *L’Esprit nouveau* in 1920 and finally again in German in 1929 in *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Christopher Long (“Ornament, Crime, Myth, and Meaning,” in 85th ACSA Annual Meeting Proceedings, Architecture:

acts as a manifesto against any instance of ornament, associating it not only with crime but also with a feminized gendered interpretation of the style.⁴⁸ Over a century later, this essay is still widely considered one of the critical discourses that argued against ornament in artistic, and particularly architectural, expression.⁴⁹

Although it is Loos's most popular essay, it was certainly not his only written account of his theories. Throughout the early 20th century, Loos wrote and gave a variety of lectures relating to theories of art and architecture, yet none of them rose to such intense and international popularity as the polemic "Ornament and Crime." Despite being written in the early 20th century, the essay was not widely circulated until later, around the 1930s, at which time sleek and simple designs were being embraced throughout the European continent and the United States.⁵⁰ This essay solidified an already existing rise against ideas of ornament in artistic expression, especially within architectural practice.

The central component of "Ornament and Crime" is the idea that infatuation with ornament is an indicator of lower social development. In this way, Loos places ornament as a clear enemy to not only artistic progression but also cultural progression. To augment his thesis,

Material and Imagined, 1997) suggests that Loos reattributed the earlier date to the lecture as to "establish primacy in what was then an ongoing debate about ornament."

⁴⁸ "Ornament and Crime" is not the only time in which Loos invokes gender roles in order to further denigrate ornament; his essays "Men's Fashion" and "Ladies' Fashion" further his belief that men are able to move through the world without ornamenting themselves whereas women feel as if they must ornament themselves, with cosmetics. See Adolf Loos, "Men's Fashion," in Mitchell, *Ornament and Crime*, 29-44; and idem, "Ladies' Fashion," in Mitchell, *Ornament and Crime*, 106-111.

⁴⁹ Juan José Lahuerta, *On Loos, Ornament and Crime*, trans. Graham Thomson (Barcelona: Tenov Books, 2015).

⁵⁰ For context of the publication of Loos's "Ornament and Crime," see Christopher Long. "The Origins and Context of Adolf Loos's 'Ornament and Crime,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 68, no. 2 (2009): 200-223.

Loos provides insight into those who do like and utilize ornament, namely children, women, and non-white peoples.⁵¹ Loos's essay does not begin with a definition of ornament or a historical overview of its theories but instead opens with the ways in which a child (or a Papuan, a stand-in for Loos's understanding of a non-white person) is preoccupied with ornamentation until he (again, male not female) grows out of this desire; "[t]he urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the start of plastic art. It is the baby talk of painting."⁵² It is this statement that underscores the way in which ornament is tied to crime; only a criminal (if they are not Papuan) would feel the desire to ornament one's own face through tattoos and, though this is an extreme example, it is the argument that Loos uses throughout his essay.⁵³

After the publication of the essay, Loos's ideas spread like wildfire, largely due to their endorsement by a variety of highly influential figures, including Le Corbusier.⁵⁴ It quickly

⁵¹ The misogynistic and racist undercurrent of Loos's ideological framework is important to note as it is something that remains throughout a variety of theories and writings on ornament, including Phillips's own treatise, despite his attempts to thwart them. While I intend to make note of the ways in which Phillips's understanding of ornament is built on centuries of racist and misogynistic language, I am unable to delve deeply into these issues. As such, I will try to point out these issues and offer further readings.

⁵² Loos, "Ornament and Crime," 167.

⁵³ There is also an economic component to the essay; Loos deems it acceptable for those of the lower class to appreciate ornament and ornamented objects as it is the only pleasure that they are allowed to have in life. It is those of the upper class, who are able to hear Beethoven and go to the opera, whose embrace of ornament Loos finds so disdainful. This distinction is integral to the ways in which this essay was then used by future theorists, especially its influence on important artistic schools such as the Bauhaus. Additionally, this can be read as a further distinction between men and women as 'face painting' implies not only tattooing one's face, but also the use of makeup. While Loos is not suggesting that women are inherently criminal because they choose to wear makeup, he is certainly implying that women who choose to wear makeup must be doing it for an ulterior motive, such as seducing men under the false pretense that she is more attractive than she really is. Patrizia C. McBride ("In Praise of the Present': Adolf Loos on Style and Fashion," *Modernism/Modernity* 11, no. 4 (2004): 759) writes "An examination of women's clothing reveals how for Loos even the most intimate aspect of an individual's identity, namely, gender, is not rooted in some essential core of subjectivity, but is instead inscribed on the discursive surface provided by an individual's outer appearance."

⁵⁴ For specific information about the relationship between Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos, see Stanislaus von Moos, "Le Corbusier and Loos," trans. Stanislaus von Moos, *Assemblage*, no. 4 (1987): 24-37.

became a canonical interpretation of high modernist perceptions of ornament and affected contemporary artistic practice, beginning with architectural practice. Soon Loos's understanding of ornament was not a radical notion but accepted fact. Modernist architecture was stripped of anything resembling decorative elements and instead focused on functional and minimalist design for over a half-century. It is out of this environment of ornament's exile that Phillips began his own artistic practice and later published "The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise." As Loos was the only architect or theorist who was explicitly named in Phillips's text, it is clear that Loos's impact on the landscape of ornament was one of the reasons that Phillips felt compelled to write his own treatise reinstating ornament to the realm of high art.

The Post-Modernist: Robert Venturi

"Ornament is born of a primary and elemental urge. It tries to make sense of the world and make the world make sense."⁵⁵

The opening invocation of Phillips's treatise is one of the first references that he makes to other architects and their theories. The idea that architecture communicates is intrinsically tied to the work of Robert Venturi, seen especially in his seminal 1966 publication *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.⁵⁶ Considered a "gentle manifesto" against the stark minimalism that dominated the architectural landscape for the past fifty years, Venturi's book was integral to the formation of a post-modernist landscape of architecture that embraced the use of ornament as essential to architectural design, presenting a clear break from modernist architecture. He continued his theoretical impact on architecture in his later publication, *Learning from Las*

⁵⁵ Phillips, "The Nature of Ornament," 1.

⁵⁶ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), 2nd ed. (New York City: Museum of Modern Art, 1985).

Vegas, in which he furthers his doctrine against modernist interpretations of architecture.⁵⁷ While modernist architecture rejected traditional notions of architecture and started anew, Venturi wanted to reinvigorate the conversation about the complexity that is inherent in architectural designs.

While Venturi's influence on Phillips's treatise might appear to be minimal in comparison to Sullivan's, Ruskin's, or Loos's, it acts as the bridge across which Phillips moves from historical architectural theories to his own iterations of what ornament truly is. Venturi published *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* while Phillips was just beginning school; both of these moments signified the beginning of a long career in which each man, in his own way, argued for the reinstatement of ornament as a high art. Venturi called attention to the fact that post-modern architecture should not be stripped of its decoration, modernizing Sullivan's ideas of "Ornament and Architecture," and Phillips began a career of quietly imbuing his work, both artistic and scholarly, with references to ornament in the hope that it would one day assist in ornament's reclamation as a form of high art.

The Final Step: Tom Phillips

"The last of the riches to be pillaged by fine art from ornament was its greatest treasure, abstraction."⁵⁸

Phillips's treatise does not solely rely on past iterations of the importance of ornament in art history; the artist goes beyond his elucidations of past understandings of historical theories to develop contemporary arguments and enumerate the ways in which ornament applies in the contemporary landscape of art. One of the most integral ways in which he argues for ornament's

⁵⁷ Robert Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977).

⁵⁸ Phillips, "Nature of Ornament," 95.

place in the world of high art is that it is the essence of one of the most important movements in modern art: Abstract Expressionism. In “The Nature of Ornament,” Phillips boldly states that “The last of the riches to be pillaged by fine art from ornament was its greatest treasure, abstraction,” a statement intended to return ornament to the realm of fine art as it is inherently tied to one of the most popular modernist artistic movements, abstraction.⁵⁹ Yet this was not the first time that Phillips articulated this particular belief; in *Aspects of Art: A Painter’s Alphabet*, Phillips created historiated initials in a *Humument* style to correspond to a letter in the alphabet as well as a painting from the Dulwich Picture Gallery (Figure 2.4).⁶⁰ The letter O, unsurprisingly, corresponds to the word ornament. In the illustration for the letter “O,” the text that Phillips retains states “strange/orders/ornament/time. A/ real art of arts.”⁶¹ Phillips struggles with the way in which, in his view, artists and art historians place ornament as a relic of the past, while he believes it to be “where abstract art has had its hiding place for thousands of years.”⁶² In this short essay, he traces the history of ornament back to ancient civilization and states that “ornament lies at the heart of the matter in art and provides one of the two great threads (figuration and abstraction) that run throughout its history, coexisting, joining, overlapping and separating.”⁶³ The privileging of ornament as the heart of abstraction as well as figuration

⁵⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁰ One of the offshoots of *A Humument* was Phillips’s collaboration with the Dulwich Picture Gallery to create *Aspects of Art: A Painter’s Alphabet*, a published book that, as the title suggests, uses a re-decorated page from *A Humument* to represent each letter of the alphabet paired with a word of Phillips’s choosing that aligns with certain pieces from the Dulwich Picture Gallery. For more information, see Tom Phillips, *Aspects of Art: A Painter’s Alphabet* (London: Bellew Publishing, 1997).

⁶¹ Ibid., 40.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

demonstrates his desire to elevate it within the world of contemporary art. Phillips places the history of ornament within the historical evolution that leads to figuration and abstraction in art. Phillips does not view ornament and high art as opposing forms but rather a synchronous flow in this history of art. In *Aspects of Art* as well as “The Nature of Ornament” we see Phillips clearly positioning ornament as the source for many themes in contemporary art.

By affirming that ornament is abstraction, Phillips is able to connect his own treatise to the theories of Clement Greenberg, the most important theorist of Post-WWII Modern art.⁶⁴ In particular, Phillips’s statement about ornament and abstract art connects to Greenberg’s seminal 1948 essay, “The Crisis of the Easel Picture,” in which he wrote that “the dissolution of the pictorial into sheer texture, into apparently sheer sensation, into an accumulation of repetitions, seems to speak for and answer something profound in contemporary sensibility.”⁶⁵ Phillips would argue that by Greenberg’s definition, abstraction is, in its essence, ornament. This is the most significant argument that Phillips presents in his treatise as it is the clearest articulation of the belief that “Ornament is high art hidden everywhere” since Abstract Expressionism is undoubtedly high art.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Clement Greenberg was one of the most influential and controversial art critics of the twentieth century; his work focused primarily on contemporary abstract art, especially in relation to abstract expressionism and color-field painting. He was a large proponent of many modern artists, including Jackson Pollock and Hans Hoffman. For more information on Greenberg, see Clement Greenberg, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Florence Rubinfeld, *Clement Greenberg: A Life* (New York: Scribner, 1997); Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Czar: The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg: A Biography* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2006).

⁶⁵ Clement Greenberg, “The Crisis of the Easel Picture,” in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 156.

⁶⁶ Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 3.

Phillips did not create this treatise to only articulate the ways in which ideas of ornament have been tied to essential theorists of architecture in the past two centuries; he also wrote it as an indictment of those who have placed ornament in a world in which it is analyzed completely separate from abstraction. It is through this treatise that Phillips is able to articulate his belief that ornament *is* high art. Additionally, it is with his platform as a respected contemporary artist and scholar that Phillips writes this treatise; he reads it in an architectural forum not just to imply that architectural theories have been the greatest determinant in whether ornament is considered obsolete or not. It is also a call to action to remember the importance of architecture in the world of high art. If ornament was first lost in architectural practice, then it must be the first place in which it is reclaimed. Phillips presents this argument not just in “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise,” but also in his most popular artistic work: *A Humument*. While his treatise might be an overt partisan declaration of ornament’s rightful place in contemporary art, a more subtle articulation of architectural ornament is found throughout the pages of *A Humument*.

CHAPTER 3: ORNAMENT IN ARCHITECTURE

Introduction

“toge/ doing/ Italy/ the/ purple/ pilgrimage/ he found the Renaissance/
a/ great/ marble/ prayer/ the/ moving/ marble/ the/ cathedral/ emotions.”⁶⁷

With the protagonist toge in the form of the amorphous figures seen throughout *A Humument*, Phillips creates a clear ode to Italian Renaissance architecture (Figure 3.1). Ideas and motifs of architecture are prominent throughout the work; similar to the subtle references to particular architectural theorists in “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise,” Phillips imbues his artist’s book with understated references to global architecture. Yet this particular page is anything but restrained. Corner to corner, the entire page is saturated with some of the most prominent and recognizable aspects of Italian architecture. toge is framed by a clear Roman arch with two Ionic columns that support the arch. An aqueduct draws the eye from the columns on the right side of the page to an assemblage of buildings that include a variety of typical Italian architectural features: a pediment and arched windows form a clerestory. Although none of them is distinct enough to identify as a specific building, the homage to Italian Renaissance architecture, typically considered one of the highest points in global architectural history, is unmistakable.

As previously stated in my analysis of “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise,” Phillips is aware of the intrinsic relationship between architecture and ornament and this

⁶⁷ Phillips, *A Humument*, 361.

connection is not only articulated in the treatise, but also in Phillips's artwork. While the previous chapter analyzes Phillips's work as a scholar, as he fashions himself as an intellectual, Phillips is first and foremost an artist. As such, the clearest expression of his argument for the reclamation of ornament to the prestige of high art is not shown in his writing but rather in his artistic production, particularly in the images of *A Humument*. Phillips infuses his work with many instances of architectural motifs so that, when discussed with the analysis of the treatise, his intent to reposition ornament in contemporary art is made abundantly clear. In this chapter, I will highlight some consistently repeated architectural elements in *A Humument* as well as other examples in his oeuvre in light of Phillips's understanding of the inherent relationship between ornament and architecture. While most of these instances are intentionally subtle, some are transparently unconcealed; there are a few times in which Phillips boldly uses 'ornament' in the title of his work not simply to further his argument that ornament is high art, but also to connect his work to one particular figure in the history of ornament: Owen Jones.

Owen Jones: A Grammar of Ornament

Just as Phillips only named Adolf Loos in the one-hundred and fifty propositions in "The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise," he correspondingly directly references Owen Jones as the sole historical figure in his oeuvre. A prominent nineteenth-century architect and designer, Jones is perhaps best known for his theories of ornament and in particular the way they relate to architectural design. He was one of the principle designers of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, and his study of the Alhambra and other Moorish art and architecture were principle in the development of his distinctive theories of pattern, geometric design, and color.⁶⁸ In a career

⁶⁸ For a developed biography of Jones and his work, see Carol A. Hrvol Flores, *Owen Jones: Design, Ornament, Architecture, and Theory In An Age of Transition* (New York City: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 2006). For more information about his theories of ornament, specifically, see Isabelle J.

that spanned over four decades, his most prominent work is a comprehensive publication entitled *The Grammar of Ornament*.⁶⁹ This publication, in particular, has been a clear inspiration for Phillips's work.

When looking at the propositions in the beginning of *The Grammar of Ornament*, it is clear that Phillips used this text as inspiration for the structuring of "Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise."⁷⁰ Jones opens *The Grammar of Ornament* with the "General Principles in the Arrangement of Form and Colour, In Architecture and the Decorative Arts, Which Are Advocated Throughout the Work."⁷¹ In this section, Jones writes thirty-seven propositions of varying length and detail in regards to the relationship between architecture and the decorative arts.⁷²

Frank, "Owen Jones's Theory of Ornament" in *Ornament and European Modernism: From Art Practice to Art History*, ed. Loretta Vandi (New York: Routledge, 2018), 9-36.

⁶⁹ Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament: Illustrated by Examples From Various Styles of Ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856).

⁷⁰ Frank ("Owen Jones's Theory of Ornament," 10) writes: "At the time of its publication *The Grammar of Ornament* offered the most encyclopedic coverage not only of ornament but of art in general. As the title indicates, the volume wished to set forth the language of ornament in all of its cultural and historical instantiations; as Schafer points out in her essay, the analogy was a current one for the decorative arts, used by Jones as well as his contemporaries. Jones addressed the eclectic confusion of Victorian ornament by seeking out the most perfect designs of the past, analyzing their elements, and assembling these into overarching laws to guide future practice. The resulting volume combined a set of principles with an innovative history of ornament, and a full 2,500 illustrations printed with his new system of chromolithography. It was Jones's hope that the reader, inspired by the vocabulary and the guiding principles at his disposal, would fashion designs embodying the ideals of *The Grammar*. Over time, a new style would then arise, seamlessly applying the principles to the various materials, functions, and forms existing within the decorative arts."

⁷¹ Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, n.p.

⁷² Frank ("Owen Jones's Theory of Ornament," 12) writes: "Drawn from nature's own laws of design, the thirty-seven 'General Principles' lie at the heart of the project and are Jones's proud contribution to the debate. Jones presents them as a list in the initial section of *The Grammar* without any clarifications, perhaps to underscore their universality and self-explanatory nature. Of course, the subsequent twenty chapters and accompanying illustrations are intended to function like an extended textual and visual explication of the principles. Each historical chapter reviews the ornamental characteristics of a given style, connects them to illustrations, and identifies the universal principles displayed therein."

The first proposition of *The Grammar of Ornament* is crucial in its relation to Phillips's own beliefs: "The Decorative Arts arise from, and should properly be attendant upon, Architecture."⁷³ In Phillips's work, I have argued that he is very aware of this connection and also uses its history to his advantage, seen in his presentation of his treatise at the Architectural Forum of the Royal Academy of Arts and the way in which he incorporates a variety of architects and their theories of ornament into it. Yet, there is no plainly stated articulation of this idea in the treatise nor in his other descriptions of his work.⁷⁴ Instead, Phillips relies on his relationship with Jones to assert this statement; instead of overtly writing about the obvious connections between ornament and architecture, he quietly hints at this relationship by the choices he makes.

The rest of Owen's thirty-seven propositions include many ideas that Phillips incorporates in his treatise or echo certain theorists of ornament that he alludes to in his work, yet some propositions are more influential than others. For example, Jones states "Architecture is the material expression of the wants, the faculties, and the sentiments, of the age in which it is created," which Phillips articulates in his own treatise "ornament is the stylistic signature of time

⁷³ Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*, 4. It is interesting to note that Jones uses 'decorative arts' and 'ornament' synonymously whereas Phillips sharply distinguishes the two concepts, writing that while ornament is fundamental to form and function of an object, decoration and decorative arts are the aspect that can be viewed as unnecessary. It is important for Phillips to distinguish between 'decorative arts' and 'ornament' as this is one of the main aspects of Louis Sullivan's theories, which were published after Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*. For more information on the way in which Phillips separates ornament from decoration, see my analysis of his treatise in relation to the theories of Louis Sullivan in Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Throughout his career, Phillips is often the first or only author in exhibition catalogues or monographs that show his work. In fact, the two major monographs on his oeuvre are written by Phillips with only brief introduction essays by a curator or collector of his work. See Phillips, *Tom Phillips: Works and Texts* and idem, *Tom Phillips: Works, Texts to 1974*.

and place and peoples.”⁷⁵ Additionally, Phillips’s statement that “ornament serves strength with strength... It is not merely applied but becomes one with the objects it helps to create” echoes Proposition Five in which Jones states “construction should be decorated. Decoration should never be purposely constructed. That which is beautiful is true; that which is true is beautiful.”⁷⁶ Phillips’s treatise also includes reiterations of Jones’s assertions on the relationship between ornament and mathematics; Jones’s eighth proposition states “all ornament should be based upon a geometrical construction,” which is in turn translated by Phillips when he states “art and mathematics are also cognate in such abstraction. First, in the act of abstraction itself and second, in the system developed as counting or mnemonic devices. As mathematics can be stored in the form of ornament, so ornament is secreted in the potential of mathematics.”⁷⁷

While these propositions are helpful in their elucidation of some of the inspiration that Phillips utilizes in his own text, they are not the dominant feature of Jones’s text; rather, it is the plates that have had the lasting impact on the history of ornament. Divided into twenty sections, the plates in *The Grammar of Ornament* are the most influential aspect of the book because they provide an encyclopedic overview of the ways in which ornament is incorporated into a variety of different cultures and time periods.⁷⁸ The plates are incredibly dense and do not necessarily

⁷⁵ Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 4; and Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 4. This argument is also developed in Sullivan’s essay “The Tall Building Artistically Considered (1896),” 107. For a further discussion of Sullivan’s essay, see Chapter 2.

⁷⁶ Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 4; and Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, n.p.

⁷⁷ Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, n.p.; and Phillips, “Nature of Ornament,” 13

⁷⁸ It is important to note that, similar to Adolf Loos and other nineteenth- and twentieth-century theorists of ornament, Jones has a section entitled the “Ornament of Savage Tribes,” a reflection of the imperialist society of Britain during this time period. While I am not going to spend time in this paper to discuss this section of Jones’s work or the way in which it has permeated other ideas of ornament and the decorative arts, I believe it is essential to elucidate this point and not to overlook it while looking at the rest of his work. For a postcolonial reading of the relationship between ornament and the history of primitivism in art history, see Darren Jorgensen, “On Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Aboriginal Art,” *Journal of*

draw from specific pieces of art but rather act as representational samples of the work that these cultures produced. The juxtaposition of all of the cultures serves to flatten them out and make them all seem contiguous, rather than distinct to the time and place from which they originated; in doing so, Jones carefully articulates that ornament from all cultures and time periods, whether it is the ornament of the Renaissance or Egypt, are equal and emerge from the same human impulses to mimic nature.

In a series entitled *The Walk to the Studio*, Phillips created six large silkscreen prints as a meditative exploration of his daily walk “based on the belief that there are no dull walks, only dull walkers.”⁷⁹ His fourth screen-print of this series is titled *The Grammar of Ornament*, a rumination on Owen Jones’s own text of the same name (Figure 3.2). Reflecting on this work, Phillips writes

“[b]orrowing [Jones’s] format I have made an assemblage of the various pieces of ornamental paper that litter these streets in 1976 and have tried to create them with the care that would have been their automatic right were they the sweet-wrappers of Babylon or the fancy paper-bags of Troy. These various unconsidered trifles are presented in their natural sizes and surrounded by a decorative border which is the much enlarged back of a humdrum playing card: although one of the cheapest kinds of plasticated card, the deliberated intricacy is still delicate and well drawn on the side.”⁸⁰

By picking up pieces of garbage and repurposing them as an art piece, Phillips calls attention to our dismissal of objects that are highly decorated in our everyday life. Although they are simply candy wrappers or other litter items, he reframes them as artistic ornamental objects that would have had inherent value in another period. Each individual square has its own distinct pattern, yet they are all cut and arranged at the same size, juxtaposing the idea of their individuality with the

Intercultural Studies 29, no. 4 (2008): 413-426; and Yuan Hongqi. “Qing Palace Head Ornaments Worn by the Court Ladies,” *Arts of Asia* 36, no. 5 (2006): 89-97.

⁷⁹ Phillips, *Tom Phillips: Works and Texts*, 132

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

larger pattern to create a scheme with a clear order to it. When compared to the Pompeian Plate XXV from *The Grammar of Ornament*, it is clear that Phillips drew upon this organizational design in the creation of his own screen-print (Figure 3.3) In the Pompeian Plate, Jones is able to unite the multitude of different patterns into one system through the geometric arrangement and border that he creates, which Phillips mimics in his screen-print. Moreover, Phillips encapsulates these decorated treats within an ornamental border to further emphasize the importance of ornament in works of art, despite it being a ‘humdrum’ playing card.

By painting highly decorated candy wrappers and playing cards, considered mundane objects, Phillips highlights the way in which our collective taste and idea of ornamentation have changed since the days of Babylon and Troy, while also calling attention to the way in which ancient everyday artifacts are now revered in Art History because of their association with certain civilizations. Meanwhile, objects of similar purpose are blithely ignored in contemporary society. Phillips’s position as an acclaimed artist elevates the idea of ornament in the world of contemporary art.

Owen Jones & Moorish Art

For Phillips, naming one work after arguably the most important canonical text on the history of ornament was not enough to articulate his position on the status of ornament in art nor the importance of Jones’s contribution to this history. From 2002 to 2010, Phillips titled three of his paintings to further this connection; *Ornament I: From the Old Mosque*, *Ornament II: Arabesque*, and *Ornament III: Mosaic Pavement* all act as clear indicators of Phillips’s fixation on ornament in art history and can be read on three different levels (Figures 3.4-3.6). First is the obvious use of ornament in their titles, one of the more conspicuous articulations of Phillips’s position throughout his career. Secondly, even without the obvious titles, the paintings

themselves can be read as ornamental in a variety of ways. With bold colors and repetitive patterns, Phillips creates intricate designs in all of these large-scale canvases. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the titles of these works not only utilize the word ornament, but they also reference other forms of architecture, such as the Old Mosque, Arabesque, and Mosaic Pavement, to further demonstrate the way in which ornament in art has always existed and continues to exist. These paintings are quite architectural, as well, visually creating the link between ornament and architecture in Phillips's work. *Ornament I: From the Old Mosque* and *Ornament III: Mosaic Pavement* in particular illuminate this relationship because not only are they named after specific architectural features, but the paintings themselves seem to evoke the nature of architecture. The diamond patterning creates a clear floor pattern and the way in which the lines curve or seem smudged in some areas suggests the warping of marble flooring from the millions of people who walked across it. Moreover, these works show a clear connection to another important facet of Jones's work: while Jones created plates that represented ornament in cultures ranging from Renaissance to Egyptian, perhaps the most relevant section for Phillips is the section on 'Moresque Ornament from the Alhambra,' the result of a study on the Alhambra that Jones began before *The Grammar of Ornament*.

Two decades before *The Grammar of Ornament* was published, Jones produced *Plans, elevations, sections, and details of the Alhambra, from drawings taken on the spot in 1834 by Jules Goury and in 1834 by Owen Jones*.⁸¹ As lavishly decorated as *A Grammar of Ornament*, Jones's book provides an incredible amount of detail of the intricate design found in the

⁸¹ Owen Jones and Jules Goury, *Plans, elevations, sections, and details of the Alhambra, from drawings taken on the spot in 1834 by Jules Goury and in 1834 by Owen Jones* (London: O. Jones, 1842).

Alhambra.⁸² Even looking at the title page of the work, we can see an obvious connection between this publication and pages of *A Humument* (Figure 3.7 and 3.8). “La Alhambra Palais” is written in decadent gold lettering and is surrounded by a cartouche of an ornate arabesque pattern of gold vegetal vines, which contrast against a rich blue background, an image that is strikingly similar to Phillips’s decorative vegetal pattern that occurs in *A Humument*. The title is further encapsulated by several layers of intricate framing that contains vibrant vegetal patterns, a repeated geometric design, and is finally framed with a distinct border reminiscent of medieval manuscripts. In designing the cover page of the book with such intricate detail and elaborate imagery, Jones emphasizes the importance of these artistic motifs in Moorish art and architecture

Moreover, there are specific instances of architectonic imagery in *A Humument* that clearly draw upon Islamic architecture. One particular page draws upon an extremely important and distinguishable aspect of Islamic architecture: the ogee arch (Figure 3.9). When looking at the deep blue hues of this page that contrasts to the bright red and green colors that surround the arch, one can see a clear connection to Jones’s own work when creating his ‘Moresque’ (*sic*) plates (Figure 3.10). The repetition of the abstract, organic pattern that Jones places inside the arch tympana in this image corresponds to the continual, linear designs within and surrounding the arch in Phillips’s page. These repeated patterns resemble arabesques or more vegetal forms extending across the surface. Jones might also be trying to indicate some three-dimensionality in the painted plaster, as the Alhambra drips with muqarnas and plaster relief, which translates to semi-random flattened abstract patterning in Phillips’s version. Phillips takes this direct

⁸² Jones met with Goury, an associate of Gottfried Semper, in 1831 in Greece, and they traveled together to Spain in 1834. Flores (*Owen Jones*, 16) writes that Jones and Goury “produced hundreds of measured drawings, paper tracings, and plaster casts, recording in infinite detail the plans and patterns of the [Alhambra].” Unfortunately, Goury died of cholera after six months; as such, Jones completed and published the study on his own.

connection a step further in another page where he creates a collage of a variety of Islamic imagery, including decorated Arabic script and a small picture of the Hagia Sophia framed by a decorative sun disc, reminiscent of Islamic architecture which employs geometric patterns in floors and cupolas (Figure 3.11).⁸³ This particular pattern aesthetically connects to Jones's own drawings on the same Islamic motifs, further developing the connection between the two artist's work (Figure 3.12). Additionally, this particular page embodies a delicate juxtaposition found throughout the pages of *A Humument*. Phillips is able to masterfully provide direct and indirect allusions to the same concept within the same page not only to prove his point but also to allow the reader time to reflect on all of the other references embodied within the text; the image urges the reader to scour the pages to find other instances of these allusions, trying to discover the other clues that the artist has carefully tucked in each page in order to find the whole picture.

Architectural motifs in *A Humument*

While Phillips's connection to Owen Jones acts as an important aspect of his continuous argument regarding the status of ornament, it is not the only architectural component in his work. The pages of *A Humument* overflow with allusions, both subtle and obvious, to architectural structures and designs. As it would be difficult to go into detail about every single page that references these architectural themes, I have grouped the most prominent and numerous references to give an overview of Phillips's engagement with architectural design in the pages of *A Humument*.

Of the architectural motifs that occur in *A Humument*, Phillips's creation of mosaics is the most repeated and obvious to the reader. In one page, Phillips creates a pattern of small

⁸³ It is a Byzantine building originally, but here in the context of the image, the Islamic tile pattern and the minarets that are very clear and prominent date from the Islamic re-fashioning of the Hagia Sophia.

mosaic tiles that individually appear to be simple, rounded squares but when combined in its entirety, the mosaic undulates like waves to create a distinct figurative scene (Figure 3.13). In this particular page, the mosaics evoke a landscape, where, in the top right corner of the page, Phillips creates a subtle gradation of colors that resemble the final moments of a chromatic sunrise or sunset. The bright blue-sky changes in appearance with the subtle shift of each mosaic tile and finally draw the gaze down to a subtle wave pattern that mimics a cultivated greenery space. Phillips continues this particular motif in other pages in which he uses the simple shape of a mosaic tile to create different figural spaces (Figure 3.14-3.15). In these two pages, Phillips creates very similar figural designs using the mosaic tiles; in each of the pages, the small mosaic tiles are constructed in circular formations that radiate outwards.

Additionally, the number 70 appears in both pages, yet in distinctly different ways. In the first page, the number 70 dominates the page with small, radiating semi-circles jutting outwards. While the page contains a variety of colors, green dominates the color scheme, creating the allusion to a manicured landscape. In contrast, the second page appears with stark primary colors. The number 70 appears again, but in this page the mosaic patterns more distinctly appear as a tessellated tiled floor, a subject that appears throughout the history of art, from the tiled floors of Pompeii to the walls of the London Underground. Phillips artfully employs this architectural reference as it is something ubiquitous in our lives.

The small, mosaic tiles are not the only ways in which Phillips evokes a distinctive floor pattern; in contrast, he creates a very different style of mosaics that mimic surface inlays, which are more distinctively architectural in their appearance (Figures 3.16-3.17). Phillips creates faux marble, displayed in a geometric pattern that is only separated with contrasting 'stone.' Moreover, these architectural pages tie back to his screen-print *The Grammar of Ornament*; the

screen-print and each page have a distinct frame with a variety of textures within the border, a theme that Phillips sampled from Jones's original text.

In addition to the mosaic tiles and rich floorspaces, Phillips repeatedly creates dense, architectonic interior spaces that illustrate the way in which each page can become its own fictive space (Figure 3.18-3.23). In these pages, Phillips invites the reader into the spaces so that they can experience the room for themselves. He creates a variety of different interior spaces, ranging from domestic rooms to art galleries, yet he uses similar patterning in order to connect them. In all of the pages, regardless of the setting, there is always an intricate wallpaper component, and it is never just one painted color; often it is a repeated diamond pattern on the wall. In one page in particular, Phillips is able to create a distinct room by merely combining multiple planes of ornamented patterns, including two that look similar to the arabesque pattern found in Jones's work and the other page of *A Humument* that holds Islamic-inspired decoration (Figures 3.18 and 3.9). By using just five quadrilateral shapes filled with individual patterns, the reader is able to automatically see the patterns as a floor, walls, and a ceiling. The small open door on the right of the page confirms this space and creates an added layer of dimensionality: the reader is able to not only enter the space but also exit it. In another page, two amorphous human forms seem to be speaking to one another in a domestic space with a window and a painting in the background (Figure 3.19). These various interior spaces continue throughout *A Humument*, and while they all differ in specific subject matter, they all include extravagantly dense decorations. The walls are filled with illustrious wallpaper and carpets and each window contains an elaborate decoration of windowpanes. Regardless of the particular scene, Phillips fills every inch of space with different patterns. In doing so, Phillips not only invites the reader into these particular spaces, but also illustrates the way ornament lives within them.

Conclusion

Throughout countless pages and poignant images, Phillips successfully imbues his work with the idea that ornament is at the heart of any architectural design. He does this faintly, as in the case of the repeated interior spaces that fill the pages of *A Humument*, as well as vociferously, with pages brimming with distinct architectural structures. Yet just as toge's pilgrimage through Renaissance Italy did not end with his travels through the arches and tympana that dominate the landscape of classical architecture, neither did Phillips's journey in utilizing *A Humument* as a tool through which to further his argument that ornament rightfully belongs in the realm of high art. Despite the fact that Phillips's treatise was presented in an architectural forum and in many ways presents the historiography of theories of ornament through the eyes of prominent architects and theorists and that his work beyond *A Humument* includes numerous references to both ornament and Owen Jones, his most powerful statement on the relationship between ornament and high art is not furthered by architectural connections; ornament's place in high art does not rest at the foot of an ogee arch but instead in the gentle swoops of an elaborate historiated initial. The most important genre in which ornament is glorified as a high art is not architecture but the book. Each page of *A Humument* carries the weight of the profound significance of the codex in the history of art, and Phillips embraces this history. In Phillips's final articulation of his argument, he reminds the viewer that *A Humument* is no mere art object: it is an artist's book.

CHAPTER 4: ORNAMENT AND THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

Introduction

In a page that is covered in collages and Pop art illustrations, Phillips places the question “WHAT IS ART” boldly in the middle of this page of *A Humument* (Figure 4.1).⁸⁴ The words are tilted, not centered but not straightforward on the page, and are left without a question mark. Yet is not the evocative statement that makes this page particularly illuminating, it is the object on which the text is written that catches the eye. While not clearly marked, the bright blue rectangle with the white section in the middle, contrasting to the busy background, is clearly an illustrated rendition of the classic Penguin book cover (Figure 4.2). Paired with this object, Phillips’s unflinching wording takes on new meaning: it is now no longer a question but a statement. Through the medium of the book we are able to find the answer to what is art: through this page, Phillips demonstrates that the book is the ultimate artistic medium.

As stated in my introduction, the medium of artists’ books has grown in prominence in art-historical scholarship within the past two decades. Works by Johanna Drucker, Clive Philpott, and a few others have dominated the field of contemporary artists’ books. Yet many scholars distance these contemporary works from the long historical tradition of manuscript illumination and book making, the art form considered the preeminent technology of information transmission for hundreds of years in the Western world. Although it has evolved in use and form over the centuries, the codex remains an essential technological form in the contemporary

⁸⁴ Phillips, *A Humument*, 266.

age. Used for scholarship, religious devotion, music composition, historical notation, and many other practices, the book is recognized as a central component of identity making.⁸⁵ In light of this continued use and significance of the book, the histories of medieval manuscript making must be connected to the contemporary practice of creating artists' books because they evolved from the same historical lineage.

The relationship of medieval manuscripts to contemporary artists' books is of obvious importance to Tom Phillips's work. The example of the historiated initial is but one piece of the larger communication of manuscripts and the history of the book found throughout *A Humument* and its related projects. In the first page of a project related to *A Humument* titled *A Heart of a Humument*, Phillips writes "work/on/book/art/ could be/ pleasant," accompanied by an illustration of an open book with decorated text (Figure 4.3).⁸⁶ Turning the page of the miniature book, whose small size evokes the idea of a medieval book of hours, the reader finds another illustration of an open book, this time with a block at the top left of the open page to indicate the idea of a decorated initial (Figure 4.4). Time and time again, *A Humument* references book production and illustrated manuscripts. Phillips is not only aware of the long history of manuscript making but also wants to contextualize his work as a contemporary book artist within this history. Through his work with this project, as well as his work with the concept of ornament, Phillips connects the scholarship on medieval manuscripts and artists' books in order

⁸⁵ In *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), Catherine. E. Karkov writes that "[b]ooks were crucial to the economy of conversion, conflict and expansion within Anglo-Saxon England in a way that no other type of object was... King Alfred and his descendants were also quick to pick up on the power of the book in formation of cultural identity and the promotions of a specific political or religious agenda" (179).

⁸⁶ Tom Phillips, *A Heart of a Humument* (London: Talfourd Press, 1992), np.

to illuminate the way in which contemporary artists draw on this illustrious past in order to create.

In the case of the artist's book, and the illuminated manuscript, the audience of the work is not just a viewer but also a reader. Although we are able to view the illustrations and pages of the pieces through digitization processes, the works were intended to be a physical object which the viewer should have to hold and read. Artists' books and illuminated manuscripts hold a unique relationship in that they are one of the few mediums in art that are intended to be held and manipulated by their audience. Medieval manuscripts were intended to be displayed and to be handled by their viewers; they could turn the pages and read the illustrative cycles along with the texts and blessings. Illustrations were emphasized with gold leaf because the artists knew that this would cause additional light and movement for the viewer reading by candlelight.

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which Phillips utilizes concepts of ornament in book production in *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*, as well as the other works that developed from this project, to create a new narrative, thus reversing the traditional use of ornament in the history of the book to highlight, as well as reclaim, ornament as a high art. In particular, I will recontextualize *A Humument* and its related artistic projects, including *The Heart of A Humument* as well as *A Painter's Alphabet*, in relation to Phillip's study of Anglo-Saxon and English literature as well as his preoccupation with the history of manuscript making and illustration, seen throughout his illustrations in these various projects.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ It is important to note that there is a contemporary discussion within the field of Medieval Studies regarding the use of the term "Anglo-Saxon" due to its appropriation by extremist right-wing political groups. Recently, in 2019, the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists changed its name to the International Society for the Study of Early Medieval England. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be utilizing the term Anglo-Saxon as that is what was used when Phillips studied at Oxford University; I am not using this term to describe a specific group of people or a racial identity. For more information on this discussion, please see "Message from the Advisory Board (19 September 2019)," *International Society for the Study of Early Medieval England* <http://www.isasweb.net/AB091919.html>

A Humument and the Anglo-Saxon Manuscript

Due to Phillips's academic background in Anglo-Saxon history, I will compare Phillips's artistic project of *A Humument* with the Benedictional of Saint Aethelwold (London, British Library, Add MS 49598) in order to examine the relationship between the contemporary practice of artists' books and the long historical lineage of manuscript illustration and book production in Western history. I find this a compelling case study for two essential reasons. The first is Phillips's biography: he studied Anglo-Saxon history at Oxford University and therefore would presumably be aware of important Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, including the Benedictional of Saint Aethelwold.⁸⁸ Second, and perhaps most enlightening, is the fact that references to illuminated manuscripts and the history of the book in general are apparent throughout Phillips's work, which extends beyond his various projects associated with *A Humument*. In using the Benedictional of Saint Aethelwold as the main point of comparison to *A Humument*, I am extending my argument of the importance of Phillips's biography and self-fashioning as a scholar that I earlier developed. It is important to Phillips that he is understood not just as an artist but also a polymath in order for his work to be read on a multitude of levels. As it would be impossible to compare *A Humument* to all medieval manuscripts, I am using the benedictional as a stand-in for Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, especially since Phillips is particularly proud of his English heritage.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ To read more about Tom Phillips, especially in relation to his biography, see Phillips, *Tom Phillips: Works and Texts*.

⁸⁹ Phillips has noted that he "he has lived and worked nearly all his life" in the same South London neighborhood and many of his art works (including his series *A Walk to the Studio*) focus on this geographic area of England. For more information, see "Biography" *Tom Phillips* <http://www.tomphillips.co.uk/about>.

The Benedictional of St. Aethelwold, created in the second half of the tenth century, is considered the most lavish example of Anglo-Saxon manuscript making.⁹⁰ The illustrious book was created in the Abbey of Winchester, a stronghold of monastic and political power in the Kingdom of Wessex. The Bishop of Winchester, Aethelwold, commissioned the book as a material example of Winchester's power and sanctity. Godeman took Aethelwold's instructions and wrote and illustrated the book, finishing the manuscript with a dedication to the bishop. Aethelwold was considered one of the foremost scholars of the time; he led the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform, translated Saint Swithun's hagiography, and established Winchester as an intellectual center of the area.⁹¹

The benedictional, a book that contains the prayers said by the bishop when pronouncing a blessing over his congregation at Mass, contains twenty-eight miniatures of Church festival days as well as saints, nineteen framed pages, and two decorated initial pages.⁹² This liturgical manuscript is one of the principle ways in which one can study the people who made it as it emphasizes the feast days that the community celebrated. A benedictional gives the freedom for both the commissioner and artist to represent the saints that hold particular importance within the church community. Despite this, it is rare that a benedictional was this widely decorated during this period, and Aethelwold's is, in fact, the first benedictional with a "comprehensive cycle of illustrations and initial pages" and is "among the most lavishly produced of all medieval

⁹⁰ For information regarding the Anglo-Saxon period as well as its art, see Leslie Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); and Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England*.

⁹¹ Robert Deshman is the foremost scholar in this field, particularly in his monograph *The Benedictional of Aethelwold* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁹² Deshman, *The Benedictional of Aethelwold*, 4.

liturgical manuscripts.”⁹³ Examining this Anglo-Saxon manuscript, one that Phillips would most likely have encountered in his study of Anglo-Saxon literature at Oxford, will be a way in which I can explore the direct relationships between illuminated manuscripts and contemporary artists’ books.

One of the most celebrated innovations of Anglo-Saxon manuscript making is that of the historiated initial.⁹⁴ Catherine E. Karkov writes that “[t]he Insular initials not only bring the letter to life through their visible shape-shifting, but in doing so negate the gap between text and ornament as the letter becomes simultaneously a part of a word to be read and a decorative image with an aesthetic appeal.”⁹⁵ It is important to note that this is a specifically British innovation in manuscript making, something of which Phillips would be aware. As he has continually focused much attention to his status as a resident of South London within his oeuvre, it cannot be overlooked that one of the motifs from the history of illuminated manuscripts is an innovation that is attributed to British works of art. The historiated initial is ubiquitous within medieval manuscripts of this period, as well as many centuries after, and can be seen as an identifier of manuscript illustration. In light of this relationship, it is generative to compare a historiated initial from the benedictional to Phillips’s work using this particular motif.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁴ Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 183.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 181

⁹⁶ For more information regarding the historiated initial within manuscript making, see J.J.G. Alexander. *The Decorated Letter* (New York: Braziller, 1978); and Laura Kendrick, *Animating the Letter: The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

When looking at the historiated initial found in the beginning of the benedictional as well as the “O” page from Tom Phillips’s *Aspects of Art: A Painter’s Alphabet*, there is an illustrative relationship (Figure 4.5 and 4.6).⁹⁷ An offshoot of *A Humument*, Phillips’s collaboration with the Dulwich Picture Gallery to create *Aspects of Art: A Painter’s Alphabet*, a book that, as the title suggests, uses a re-decorated page from *A Humument* to represent each letter of the alphabet paired with a word of Phillips’s choosing that aligns with certain pieces from the Dulwich Picture Gallery. Of course, it is essential to note that the “O” in this page is unsurprisingly for Ornament, embodying the ways in which Phillips presents obvious and subtle references; he calls attention to ornament not only by using the exact word but also in the illustrative components of the page. In providing a definitive frame within the page with a highly ornamented letter “O,” Phillips makes a direct relationship to the rich history of highly decorated initials in the history of book making. While there are obvious differences, notably the color palette as well as the type of ornamentation, the subtle similarities are intrinsic to the direct relationship between the two art pieces. The materiality of both of the pages is an eye-catching feature; in Phillips’s work, words that he erases from *A Human Document* are always apparent, just under the surface of his illustration, just as the words from the verso of the historiated initial peer through in the benedictional. The concept of the book is never lost within each page; whether it is the emphasis on the typographic illustration in the historiated initial or the materiality of the work making its presence known within the page, the reader is forced to experience the work as a book.

⁹⁷ For more information, see Phillips, *Aspects of Art*.

The Heart of a Humument

Roughly the size of my hand, *The Heart of a Humument* evokes an image of a Medieval Book of Hours. It is less than six inches in width and diameter, and its miniature size immediately creates an intimate relationship between the object and the reader. While it looks extremely similar to the design of all of the other editions of *A Humument*, this new narrative created from the concrete poetic text as well as the illustrations of each page is an explicit reflection upon ornament and book production. The first illustrated page in the work states “work/ on/ book/ art/ could be/ pleasant” (Figure 4.2).⁹⁸ While the opening line is self-referential as well as slightly humorous since this particular publication was created a decade after Phillips had already garnered much praise for his initial publications of *A Humument*, it demonstrates the fact that Phillips is explicitly thinking about the book as his medium. This is further reinforced by the illustration on the page; the center of the page is an open book, with a decorative pattern in the middle where the text would traditionally be, surrounded by a thick white margin, a feature that is found in all editions of *A Humument*, followed by a red border indicating the cover of the book followed by a hatching pattern. When you flip to the second page of the introduction, you find yet another illustration of a book, this time very much mimicking the traditional illuminated manuscript with a highly ornamented initial of the first letter of the text followed by more ornamented but here illegible text (Figure 4.2). The negative space of the border with the highly decorated centered text and image is the inverse of the usual relationship between a highly decorated border with a plain text.

Although *The Heart of a Humument* is an abbreviated version of the larger work, it also embodies a concentrated version of the motifs that Phillips utilizes throughout the project. In

⁹⁸ Phillips, *The Heart of a Humument*, n.p.

fact, despite being much shorter than the other editions, it has over ten pages that clearly reference the history of the book (Figures 4.7-4.15). In these pages, Phillips either creates images framed in ornamented patterns or clear illustrations of books, in particular their covers. These ideas are further reinforced by the texts within each page which all reference pages, books, or book binding. He even concludes the text with a closed book and states “toge/ shall lie/ in the sap of the/ waiting/ book/ to/ live in these pages,” reinforcing the connection between ornament and the history of the book as ornament in this medium is considered the pinnacle of artistic practice.

Typography in *A Humument*

Another instance of the history of the book that appears throughout *A Humument* is not references to medieval manuscripts nor illustrations of books but a repeated use of decorative forms emulating typography. While I am not analyzing Phillips’s work through the lens of concrete poetry as a literary form, I think it is essential to examine the ways in which Phillips employs typography as a visual art form. In fact, the use of typography as an illustrative technique is perhaps the most repeated motif throughout *A Humument* (Figures 4.18-4.32). In these pages, Phillips employs typography in different ways; in some, the lettering is the dominant illustrative component (Figures 4.16 and 4.17) whereas in others it is used as supplementary patterning and is not the primary focus of the page (Figures 4.18- 4.21). In other pages, the typography seems to melt into the background, becoming another ornamental pattern that Phillips employs to fill the page.

As is every other choice that Phillips make, the use of typography as a visual element is exceedingly deliberate. On each and every page of *A Humument*, there is text left unaltered from Mallock’s first novel, reminding the reader that despite the elaborate illustrations of each page,

this is a form of an altered artist's book. As such, by repeatedly including lettering beyond Mallock's own words, Phillips reinforces the idea that concrete poetry and typography are visually representational and ornamental itself. In addition to the ways in which artists throughout history have used texts to communicate meaning, they have also used them as a decorative tool. The historiated initial is not necessary to communicate the idea of a text but is rather used to add an ornamental element to the page. While Phillips specifically alludes to the use of historiated initials, he furthers his claim by utilizing typography in such an illustrative purpose in one page in particular (Figure 4.34). In this page, the only imagery found on the page, other than Mallock's words, are these interlocking letters, colored in a way to suggest the gilded script of medieval manuscripts. While the amalgamation of letters at first seems completely abstracted, upon closer analysis one is able to see that the letters are actually Mallock's words left on the page; while they are overlapping and mostly indecipherable, Phillips chooses to repeat the same words in order to illustrate that books communicate not just in the actual text but also in the way in which the text is represented. Phillips is deliberate in his word choice; 'picture' and 'word' are the most distinct and repeated terms in this image which acts as an equalizer in the tension so often found in artist's books.

Moreover, the typographic patterning echoes the architectural patterning found in other pages of *A Humument*; many pages filled with this typographic motif also contain geometric patterning, including circles filled with arabesques or instances of mosaics. Many of these pages also have distinct borders and frames, evoking the same schematic of the patterned floors, ultimately connecting both of these different illustrations to carpet pages found in sumptuous Insular medieval manuscripts. To compare to another Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the carpet pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.IV) have clearly

influenced Phillips in his creation of pages of a similar style in *A Humument* (Figures 4.35-4.28).⁹⁹ All of these pages have strikingly similar qualities, including that each pattern within the page can be broken down into ordered arrangements of its own geometric shapes and are all encrusted with additional patterned surfaces; they are all framed by the thick white border of the original page, reminding the reader that, while this is a heavily illustrated image, it is also part of a larger work. Additionally, the artists employ several layers of border to juxtapose the whiteness of the page left behind. While most of the pages from *A Humument* lack the predominant cross found in the Lindisfarne Gospel (although Figure 4.38 resembles some sort of Christ figure and Figure 3.16 has a geometric cross with a typographic element that spells out “St. Erne,” further solidifying the relationship between medieval manuscript carpet pages and *A Humument*), the hypnotic patterning inspires the same sense of contemplative mesmerism that the medieval manuscript holds.

Conclusion

“ornamented/ dust/ in the middle of/ a book” reads one of the pages from Phillips’s miniature artist’s book (Figure 4.10). *The Heart of a Humument* is aptly named; it acts as the beating organ central to the theme that has permeated Phillips’s entire career: reclaiming ornament for the realm of high art. While he articulates this belief through the relationship between architecture and ornament in his treatise and the architectonic allusions within the pages of *A Humument*, Phillips’s artistic journey logically concludes with the idea of the book. It must. *The Heart of a Humument* almost entirely focuses on the concept of the book because *A Humument* is an artist’s book first and always. In reflecting on the long history of ornament

⁹⁹ For more information about the Lindisfarne Gospels, please see Janet Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981); Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality, and the Scribe* (London: British Library, 2003); and George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: The Insular Gospel-Books, 650-800* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

within the history of illuminated manuscripts, Phillips shines light on the double standard in scholarship that glorifies ornament in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts yet does not value the instances of ornament in contemporary art. Ornament is not just found in the sumptuous illustrations of a historiated initial, but also in the abstracted patterns on pages of contemporary artists' books.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

“I sing a book of the art that was/ now read on/ of mind art/ though I have to hide to reveal.”¹⁰⁰ I bring us back to the first page of the sixth and final edition of Tom Phillips’s *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* as a reminder of what Phillips “[hid] to reveal.” His journey with *A Humument* is but one avenue through which he has soundlessly and meticulously weaved a narrative of ornament throughout his work in order to return it to the place where he believes it should remain: the realm of high art.

In this thesis, I have demonstrated that Phillips has dedicated much of his artistic oeuvre to the belief that ornament needed to be recovered from the depths to which it sank with the rise of modernism. Through the lens of “The Nature of Ornament: A Summary Treatise,” I was able to map the historiography of theories of ornament and demonstrate the ways in which architects and architectural theories have impacted the narrative of ornament over the past two centuries. In doing so, I was also able to illuminate how Phillips utilizes architectural ornament in *A Humument* and other projects to demonstrate that there still remains a relationship between architecture and ornament. I concluded with a discussion of ornament’s place in the history of book production because, first and foremost, *A Humument* is an artist’s book. In placing it in the long lineage of book production, Phillips is able to demonstrate that ornament in illuminated manuscripts is high art and so is ornament in contemporary artists’ books.

¹⁰⁰ Phillips, *A Humument*, 1.

“knowledge,/ knowledge/ knowledge allow us/ the echo of man’s soul” sits in the middle of the twenty-fifth page of the last edition of Tom Phillip’s *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (Figure 5.1). On this page we see a unification of the main themes of ornament that Phillips imbues into the pages of his canonical artist’s book. In the foreground is a distinguishing architectural structure; each part of the arch, including the intrados and extrados, is clearly delineated by a distinctive pattern. The interior of the arch includes a repeated arabesque pattern while the outer part is decorated with the use of typography. The rest of the page is filled with bright yellow figurations of stars which are starkly juxtaposed to the deep blue paint of the background. Art and decoration are fundamental to knowledge, and through the knowledge from this book, we can hear the continuing ‘echo of man’s soul.’ While this page encapsulates the many themes related to ornament that I have articulated throughout this thesis, it also acts as an embodiment of all the work that can still be done on this artist’s book. Additionally, it opens up a connection to another motif of ornament related to Phillips’s career: music. Perhaps most revealing, the double arch interior is a bandshell or concert hall proscenium and includes the words to the famous English Christian song, *Jerusalem*, based on the poem by William Blake.¹⁰¹

While this project has spanned many topics and pages of *A Humument*, by no means is it comprehensive; there is so much more work to be done. One particular theme that I was unable to dive into is the intersection between book production, ornament, and music. Despite his acclaim for his various visual arts projects, Phillips’s oeuvre reaches beyond his work with *A Humument*. In addition to his career as an artist and a scholar, Phillips has also had a successful career as a composer, as he has an extensive background in classical music training.

¹⁰¹ For more information on the song *Jerusalem*, see Jason Whittaker, “Blake and the New Jerusalem: Art and English Nationalism into the Twenty-First Century,” *Visual Culture in Britain* 19, no. 3 (2018): 380-392.

Furthermore, music and its visual representation have remained an important thematic component to his practice, and musical notations, especially the musical staff, are seen throughout his work.¹⁰² In fact, the conflation of the imagery of *The Humument* and his work as a composer are clearly seen in the composition of his musical score for the opera *Irma* as well as *Six of Hearts: Songs for Mary Wiegold* (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The concrete poetry found in each image immediately calls to mind *A Humument*, but the illustrative components of the score further reinforce the thematic connection between the works. At the center of the *Six of Hearts: Songs for Mary Wiegold* score is an open book with highly decorated, though illegible, text surrounded by the musical staff on all four sides. In a musical composition, Phillips inverses the importance within the piece. He privileges the ornamental illustration of the book and positions the musical notation as the ‘decoration’ of the piece. The same can be said of *Irma* where the viewer can quite easily see and read the text at the decorated center of the work, whereas the musical notes serve as a border and one would have to physically turn the page in a variety of directions in order to read the musical score.

I bring in the concept of music in my conclusion to demonstrate that there is so much more critical work that needs to be done not only on *A Humument* but also on the medium of artists’ books. While there is clearly a wide acceptance of the medium of artists’ books in the field of art history, there is still a dearth in scholarship that engages with the material in a critical manner, in particular the relationship between word and text as well as visual analysis.¹⁰³

¹⁰² For Phillips’s interest in the intersection of music and art, see Tom Phillips, *Music in Art: Through the Ages* (London: Prestel, 1997).

¹⁰³ For information about artists’ books in art libraries, please see Andrea Chemero, Caroline Seigel, and Terrie Wilson, “How Libraries Collect and Handle Artists’ Books,” *Art Documentation* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 22-25, Eva Athanasiu, “Belonging: Artists’ Books and Readers in the Library,” *Art Documentation* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 330-338, and Louise Kulp, “Artists’ Books in Libraries: A Review of the Literature,” *Art Documentation* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 5–10.

“he had
when first
two necromancers, love
coloured it with colours, and filled it with objects of ambition
softly.”¹⁰⁴

Softly. That is the word emphasized most prominently on the first page that Tom Phillips ever worked on for his lifelong project *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (Figure 5.1). “Filled it with objects of ambition, *softly*” [italicization for emphasis mine]. This page is not filled with collage or intricate illustrations, but simple and straight pen and ink lines. A delicate red line boxes out the first four lines left unobstructed on the page; and softly is recurrently circled with soft black ink, the repetitious circles making the color appear darker and more prominent. From these two sections, Phillips creates rays of lines moving out and away from the words, simultaneously calling attention to the words that now lie obscured by Phillips’s pen in contrast to the words left unobstructed, which are on the page as if to call aloud to call the reader’s attention Softly.

In a way, the entirety of the artistic project of *A Humument* is embodied by the first page on which Phillips worked. “he had/ when first/ two necromancers, love/ coloured it with colours, and filled it with objects of ambition/ softly.” When Phillips picked up the dusty edition of W.H. Mallock’s *A Human Document*, he committed an act of necromancy: he plucked the book from a life of obscurity and transformed it into an internationally renowned work of art. In this way, Mallock, and his work were resurrected through Phillips’s act, an idea solidified through Phillips’s decision to end the final page of the final edition of *A Humument* with an image of Mallock’s tombstone: this page not only signifies the end of *A Humument* but also of Phillips’s own journey that began with Mallock (Figure 5.2) These two pages that represent the beginning

¹⁰⁴ Tom Phillips, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*, 1st ed., 33.

and ending of the journey of *A Humument* also reinforce a fact that cannot be overlooked: *A Humument* is, first and foremost, an artist's book.

This exploration of the relationship between Phillips's *A Humument* and his scholarly interest in ornament began with a reflection on the state of artist's book scholarship. There is a tension in the academic landscape on *A Humument*. It is considered a canonical example of an artist's book, especially an altered artist's book, yet the dearth in substantial scholarship reflects an issue within the field of artists' books in general: art historians are not the ones performing the analysis of the work, and, thus, the visual component, which I would argue is the most important aspect of *A Humument*, is overlooked. By looking at *A Humument* and Phillips's other works from an art-historical perspective, I have been able to engage with the historiography of ornament and apply it to a visual analysis of Phillips's work. Instead of focusing on the words left behind by Mallock, I turned my attention to the imagery that Phillips brought to the work.

APPENDIX: FIGURES

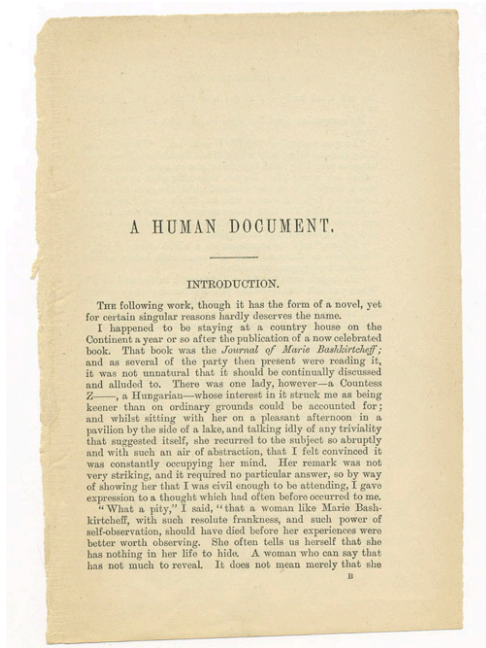


Figure 1.1 Introductory page of W.H Mallock's *A Human Document*, unaltered by Phillips.

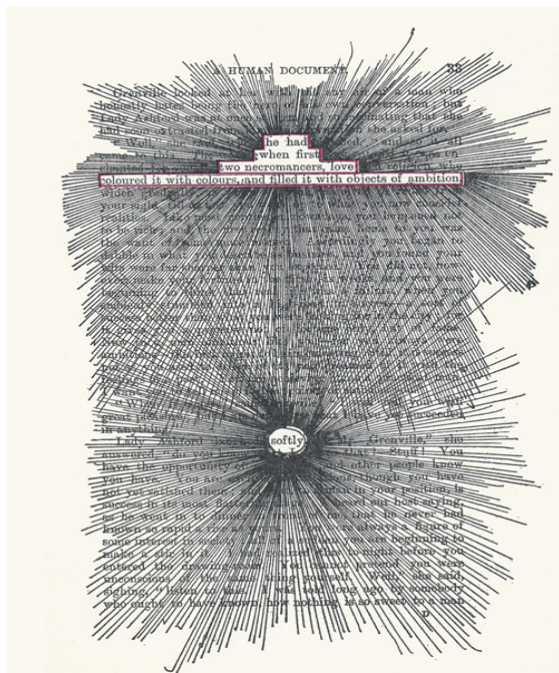


Figure 1.2 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [First edition, 1980, p. 33]

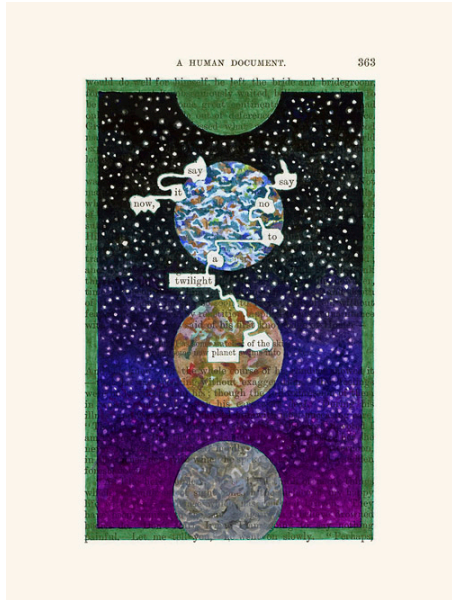


Figure 1.3 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 363]

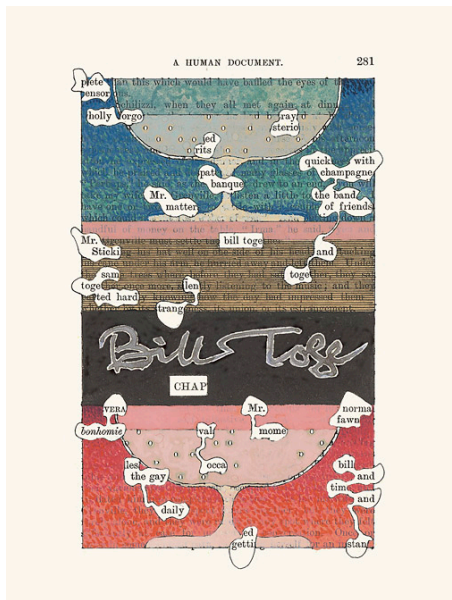


Figure 1.4 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 281]



Figure 1.5 Image of all the Humument novels, Tom Phillips Website.

<http://www.tomphillips.co.uk/humument>

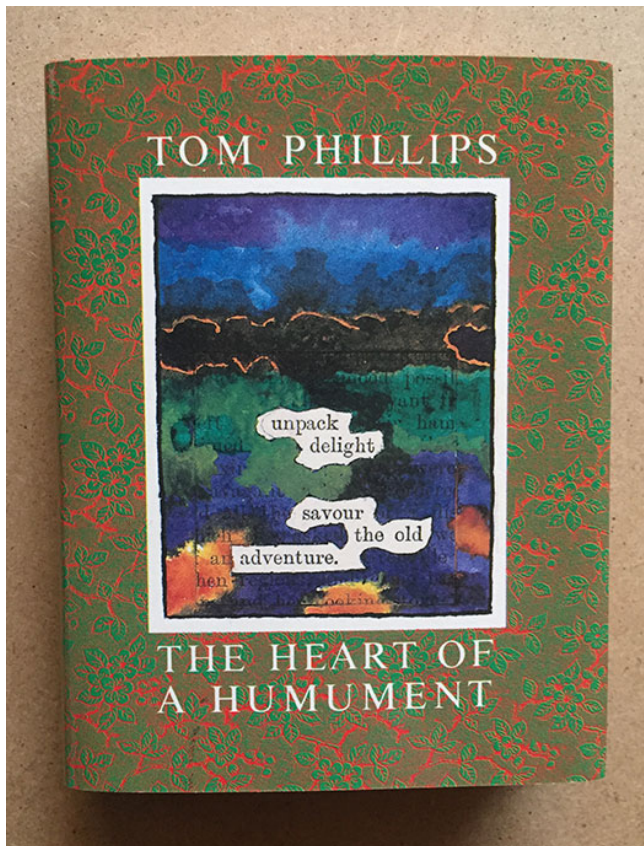


Figure 1.6 Tom Phillips, *The Heart of A Humument*, (Talfourd Press, London, 1992).

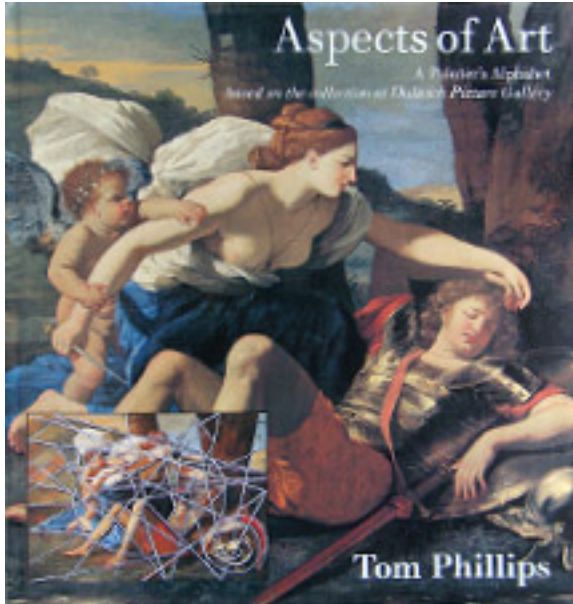


Figure 1.7 Tom Phillips, *Aspects of Art: A Painter's Alphabet*. London: Bellew Pub., 1997.



Figure 1.8 Tom Phillips, *Humument Skull*, 1986



Figure 2.1 Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, Wainwright Building, Saint Louis, Missouri,
1891



Figure 2.2 Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, Wainwright Building, Saint Louis, Missouri,
1891



Figure 2.3 Detail, Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, Wainwright Building, Saint Louis, Missouri, 1891

O is for Ornament



Although they can seem playfully abstract, ornamental devices often obey stricter natural laws than many kinds of representation: they have their starting point in the principles of plant growth (the unfurling of ferns etc.) or in fish scales, or the hidden mathematics of the play of wind on sand or sea. They are usually based on the keenest observation.

Even in the glumest portrait there are usually moments of ornamental relief; a fancy collar or a patterned shawl. Although the arts have sometimes become separated despite their unified beginnings at the dawn of prehistory, they frequently link up through quotation in this way.

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¹ Necklaces were found in Southern Africa, among forty thousand year old deposits, made of ostrich eggshell beads, bitten first into rough discs and then refined into perfect circles by grinding on stone, a technique continuously in use from then till now.
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Figure 2.4 "O is for Ornament." Tom Phillips *Aspects of Art: A Painter's Alphabet*

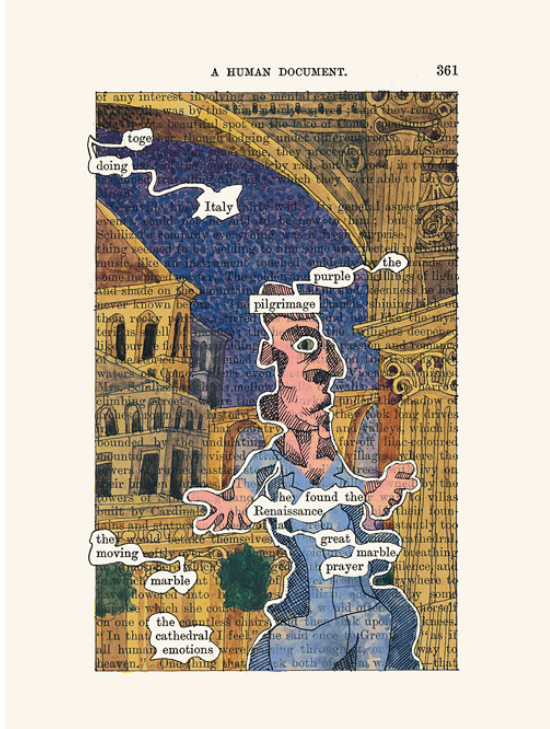


Figure 3.1. Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 361]



Figure 3.2. Tom Phillips. *A Grammar of Ornament*. 1976-1977. Screenprint on paper. Tate.



Figure 3.3 Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*, Plate XXV, Pompeian.



Figure 3.4 Tom Phillips. *Ornament I: From the Old Mosque*. oil on canvas. 2010



Figure 3.5 Tom Phillips. *Ornament II: Arabesque*. oil on panel. 2002



Figure 3.6 Tom Phillips. *Ornament III: Mosaic Pavement*. oil on canvas. 2004

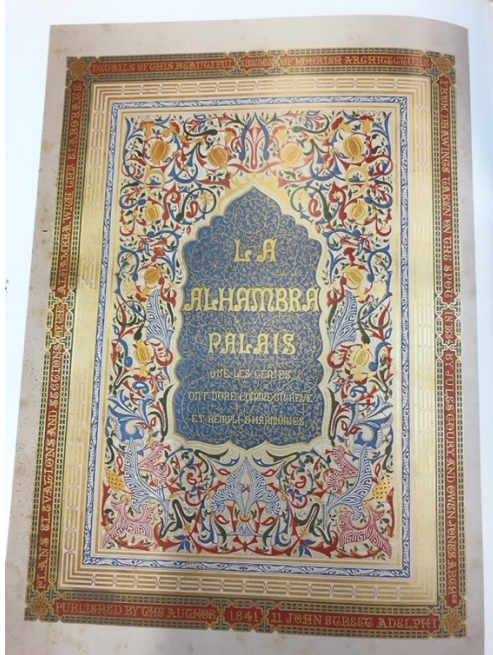


Figure 3.7 Title page from *Plans, elevations, sections, and details of the Alhambra*, from drawings taken on the spot in 1834 by Jules Gourey and in 1834 by Owen Jones vol. I, 1841

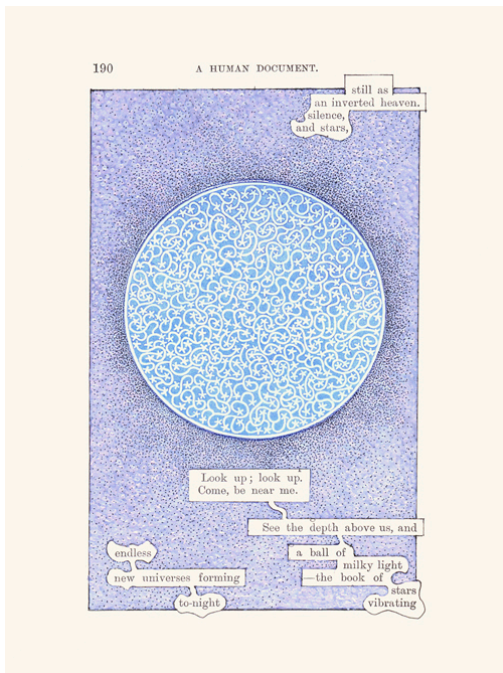


Figure 3.8 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 190]

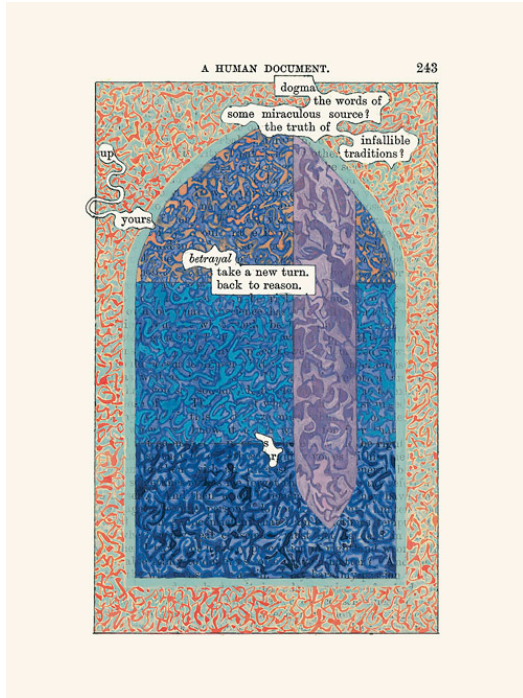


Figure 3.9 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 190]

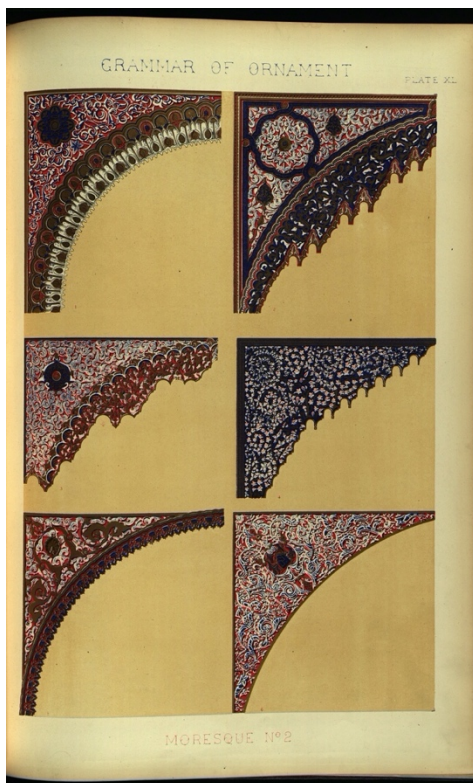


Figure 3.10 Owen Jones. *A Grammar of Ornament*. Moorsque plate no. 2



Figure 3.11 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 271]



Figure 3.12 Owen Jones. *A Grammar of Ornament*. Moorsque plate no. 14

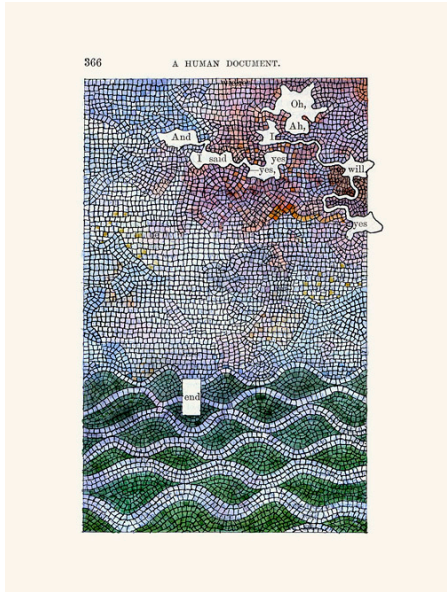


Figure 3.13 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 366]

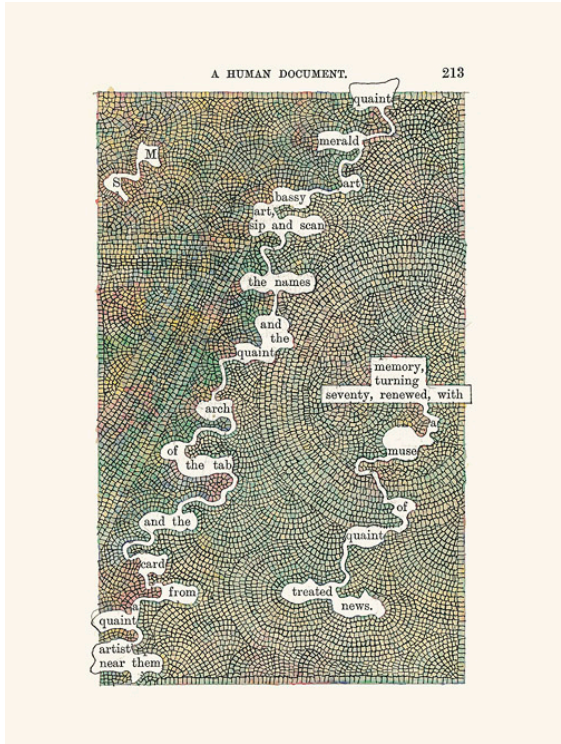


Figure 3.14 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 213]

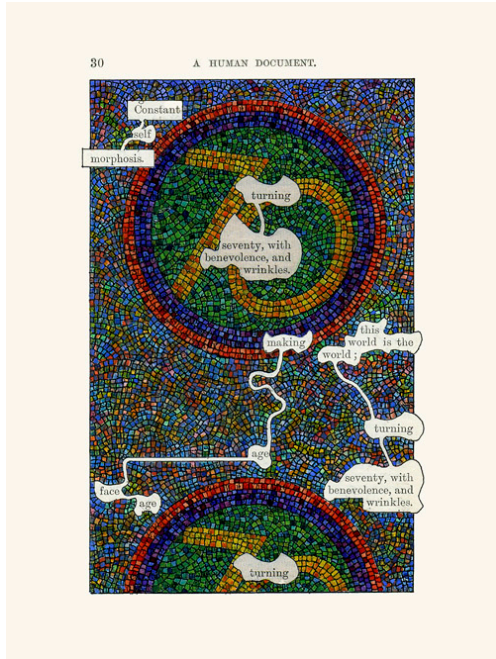


Figure 3.15 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 30]

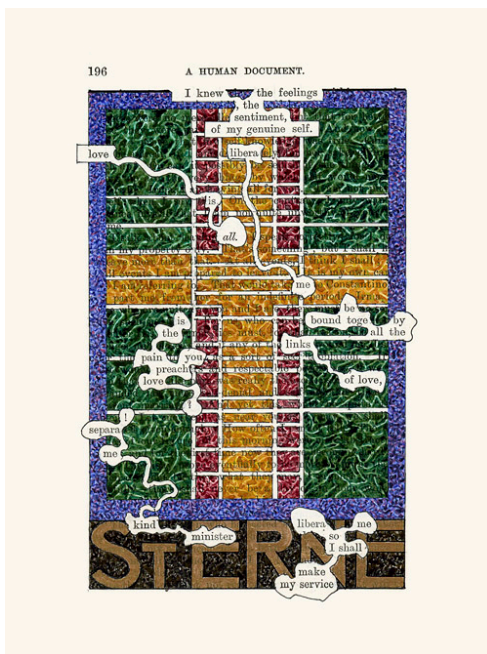


Figure 3.16 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 196]



Figure 3.17 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 49]

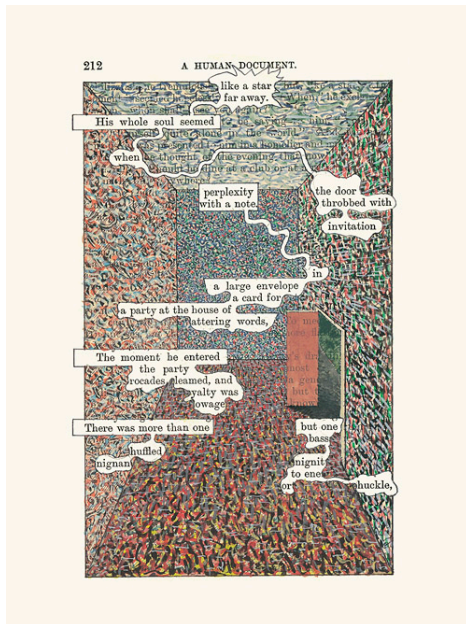


Figure 3.18 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 212]

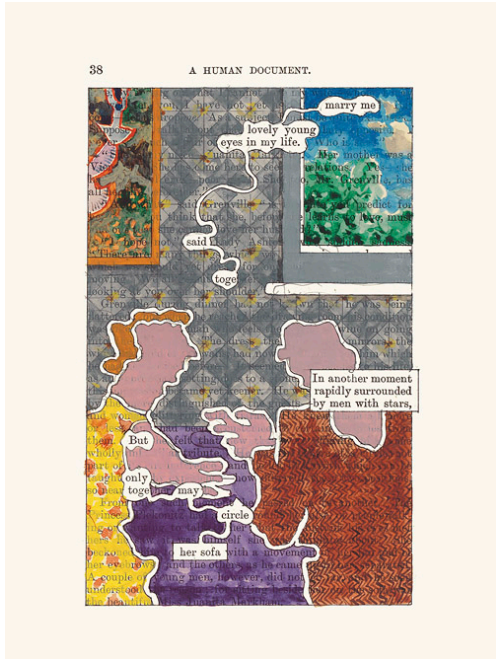


Figure 3.19 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 38]



Figure 3.20 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 45]

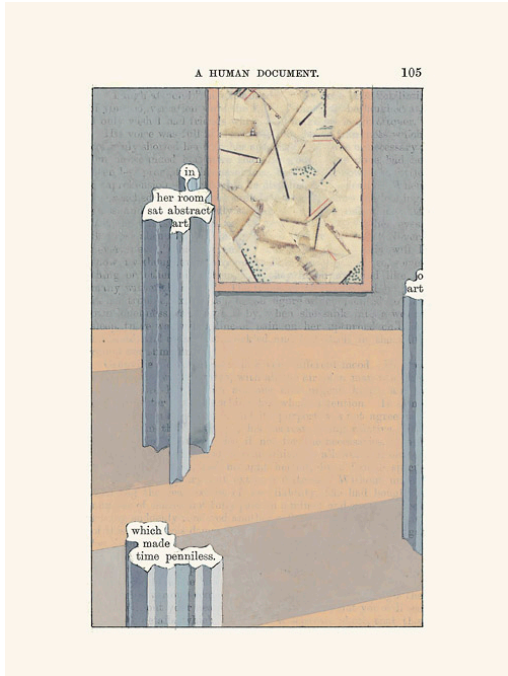


Figure 3.23 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 105]



Figure 4.1 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 266]

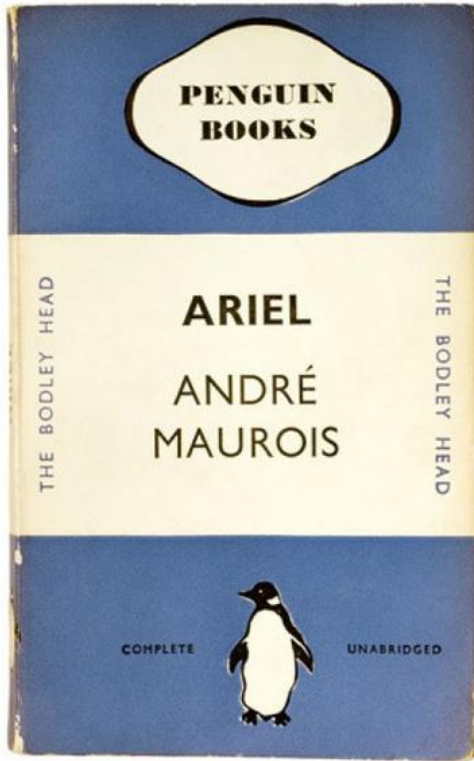


Figure 4.2 André Maurois *Ariel* (London: Penguin Books, 1936).

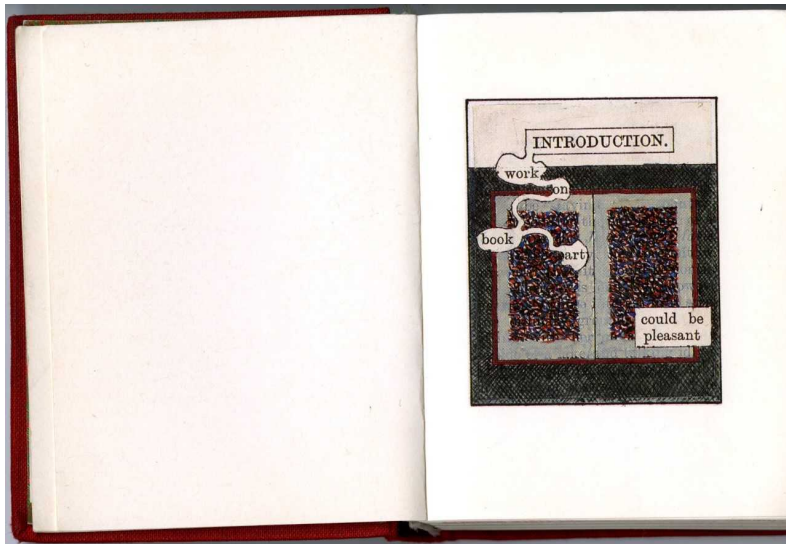


Figure 4.3 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

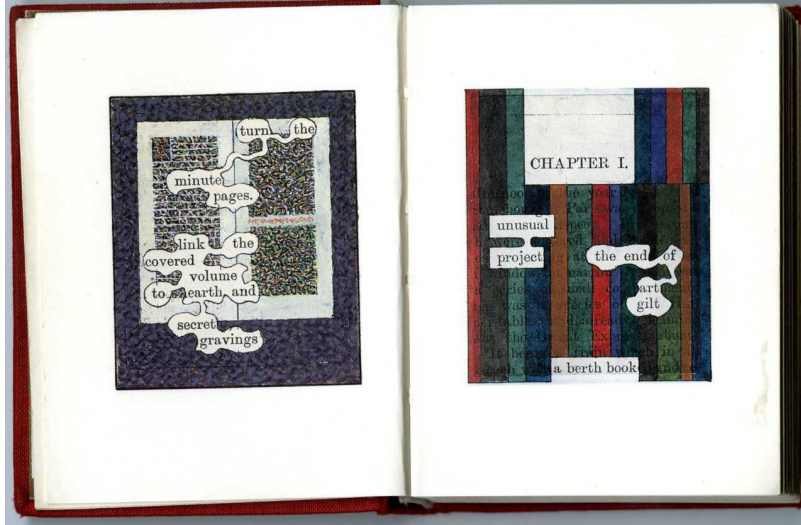


Figure 4.4 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

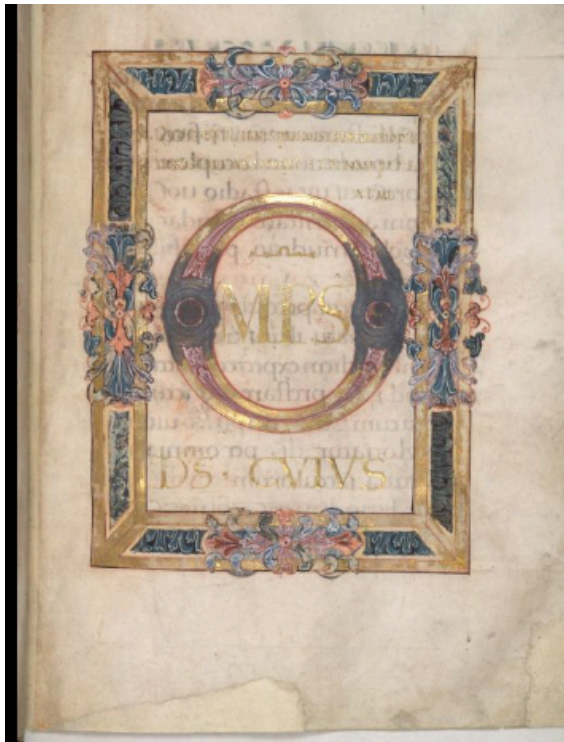
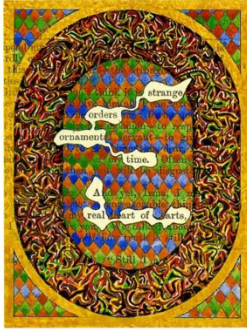


Figure 4.5 *The Benedictional of Saint Aethelwold*, "Add MS 49598." Folio 6r.

O is for Ornament



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Figure 4.6 Tom Phillips, *Aspects of Art: A Painter's Alphabet*. (London: Bellew Publishing, 1997): 40.

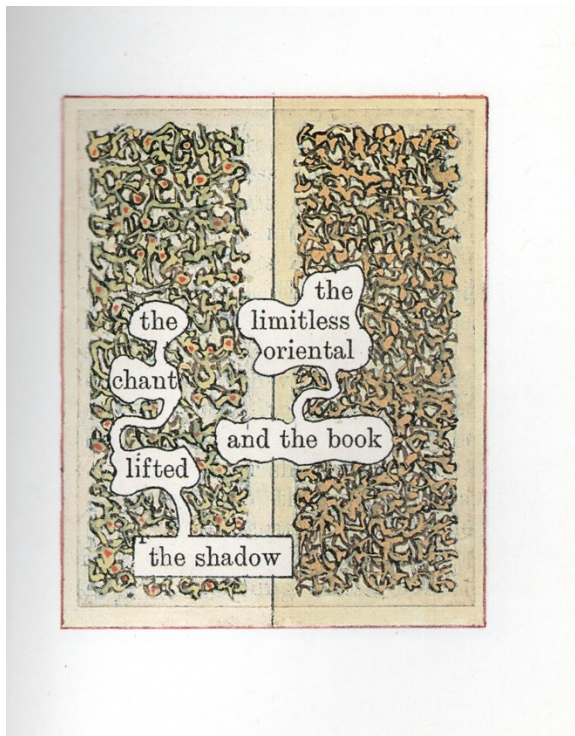


Figure 4.7 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

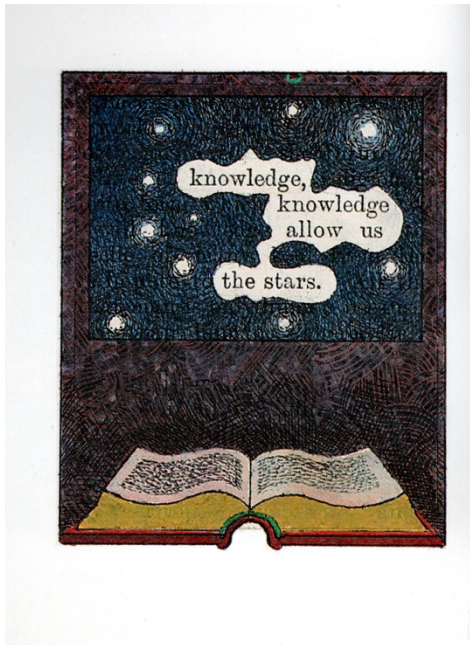


Figure 4.8 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.



Figure 4.9 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

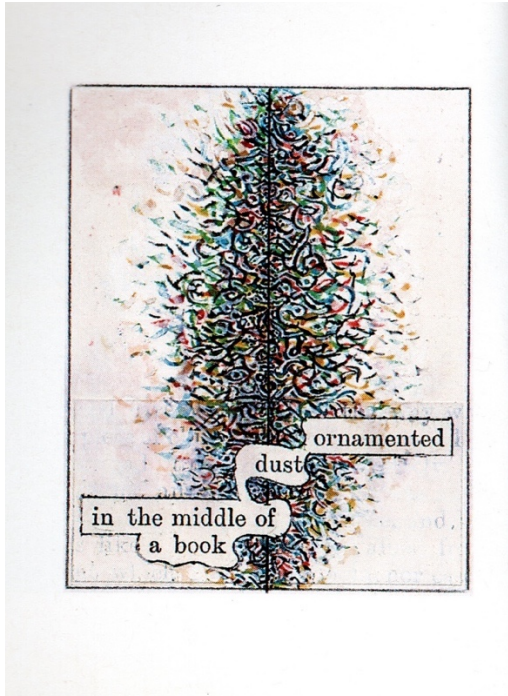


Figure 4.10 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

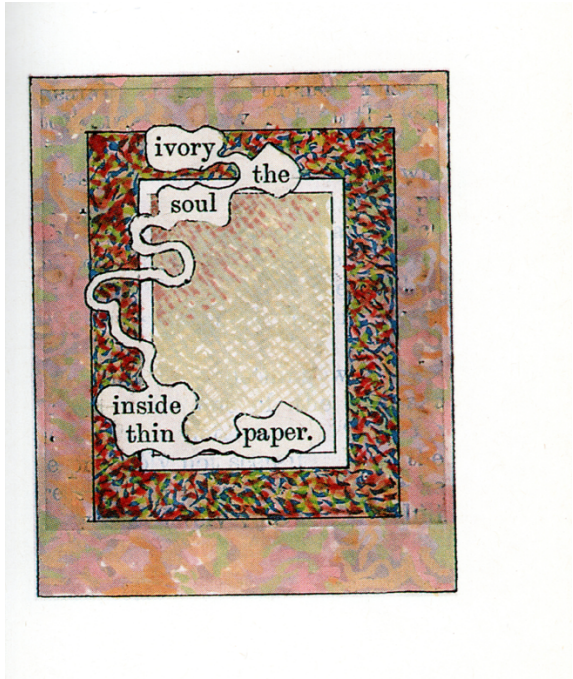


Figure 4.11 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

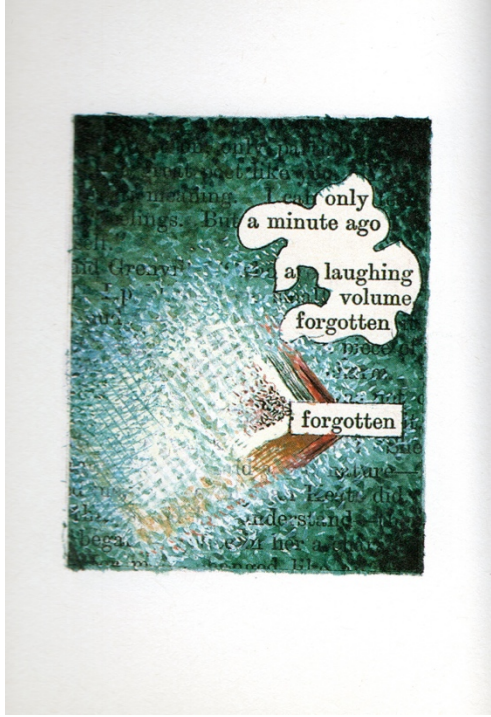


Figure 4.12 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

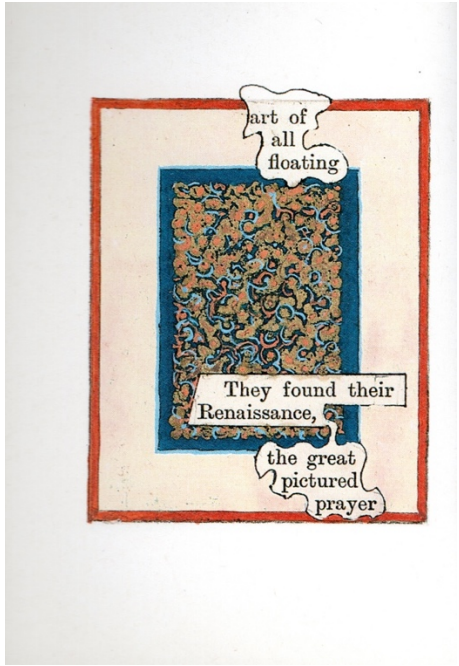


Figure 4.13 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.



Figure 4.14 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

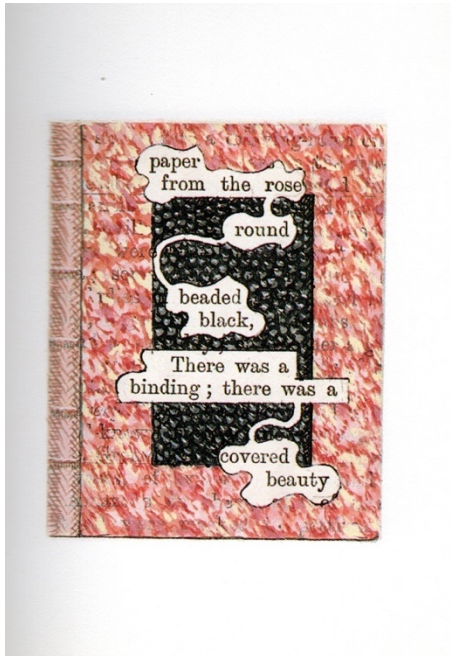


Figure 4.15 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.

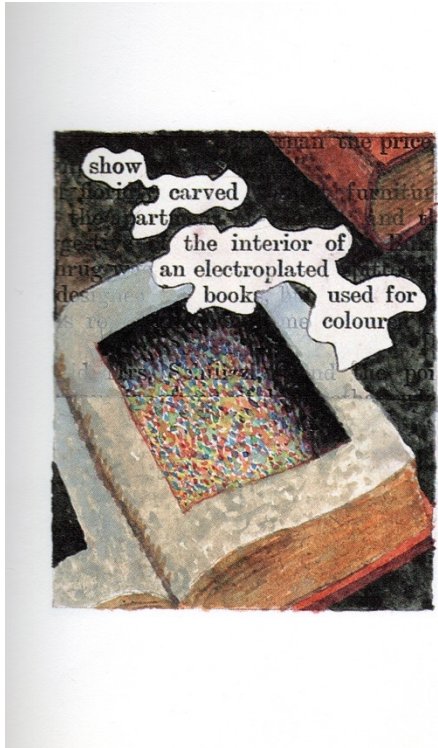


Figure 4.16 Tom Phillips. *Heart of a Humument*. (Talfourd Press, London, 1992): n.p.



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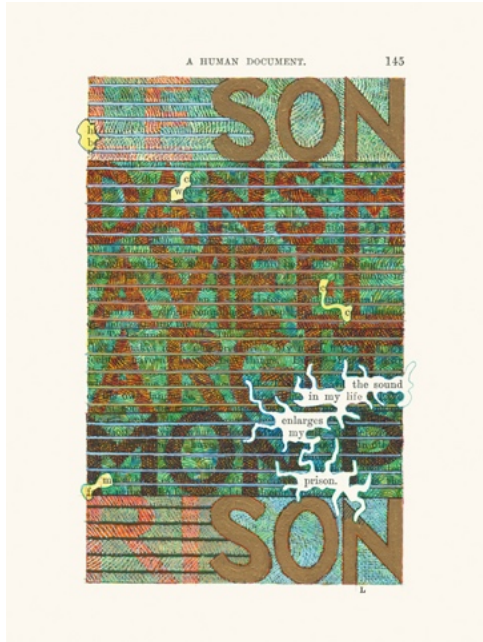


Figure 4.18 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 145]

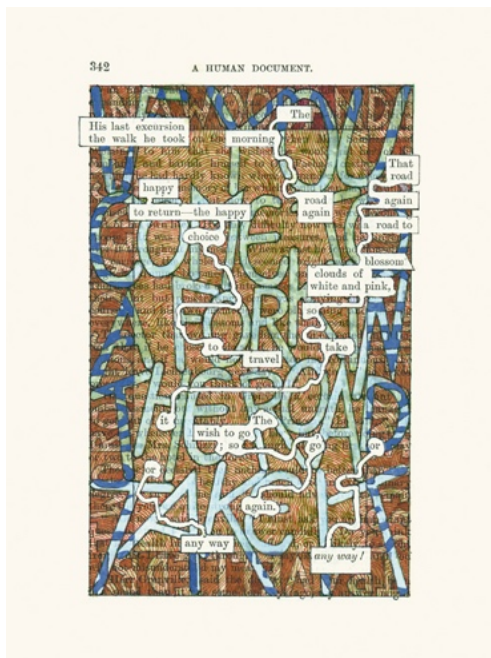


Figure 4.19 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 342]

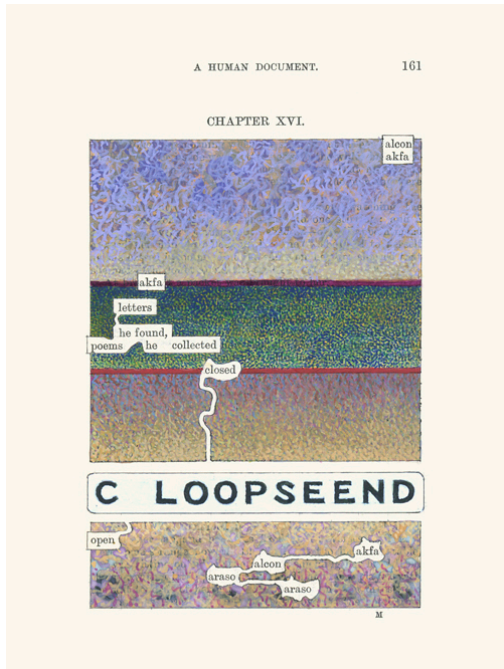


Figure 4.20 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 161]

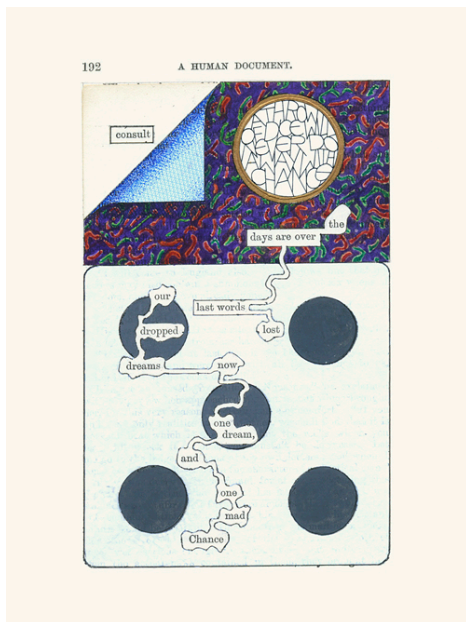


Figure 4.21 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 192]

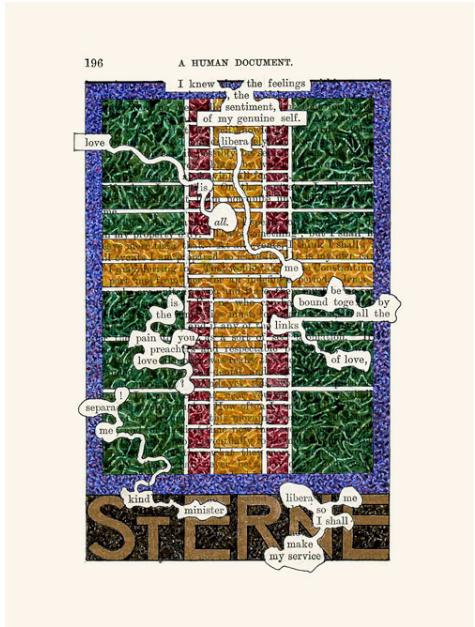


Figure 4.22 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 196]



Figure 4.23 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 222]

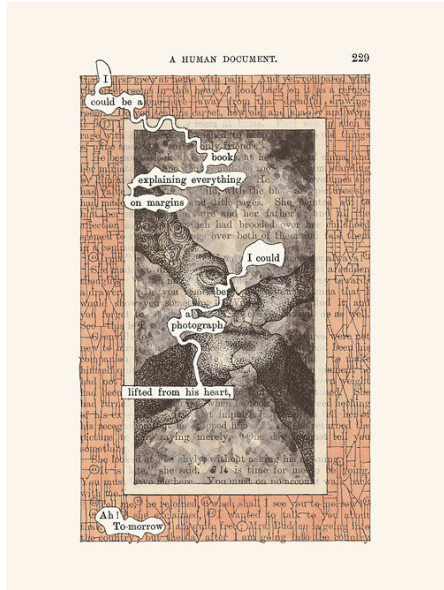


Figure 4.24 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 229]

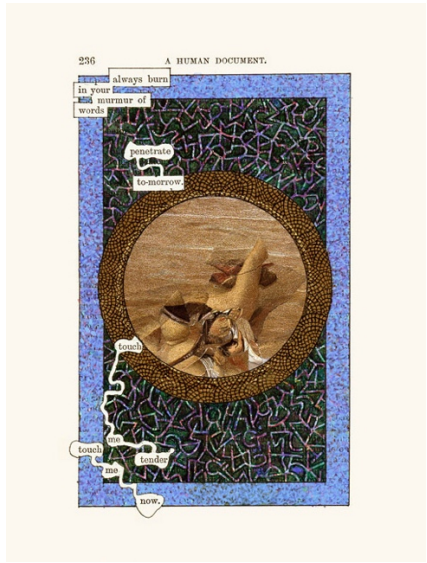


Figure 4.25 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 236]

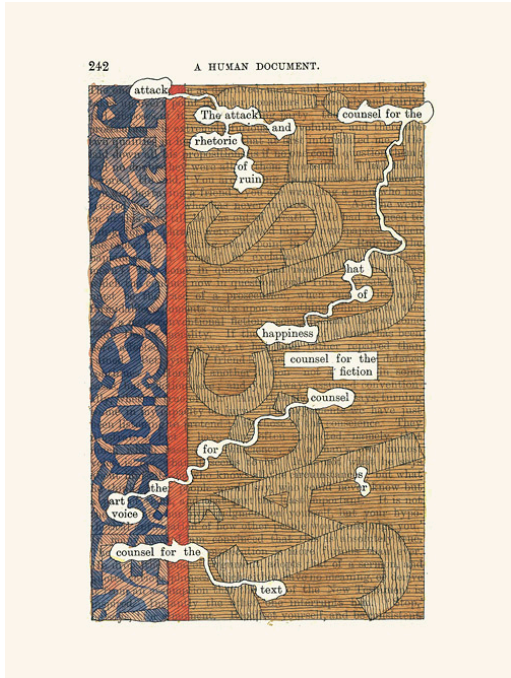


Figure 4.26 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 242]

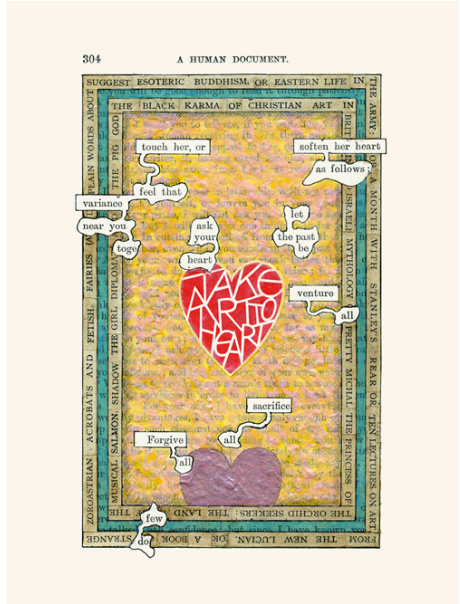


Figure 4.27 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 304]

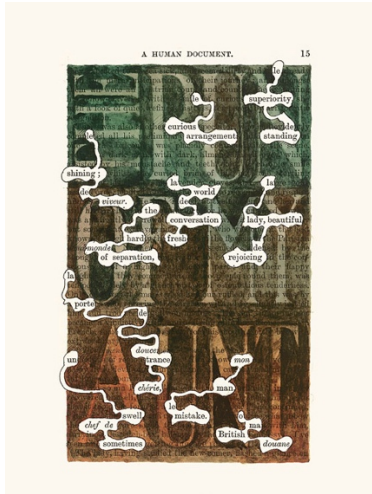


Figure 4.28 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 15]

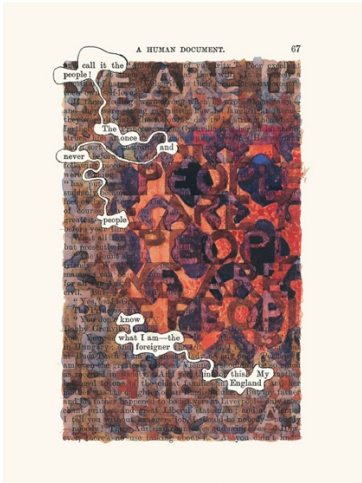


Figure 4.29 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 67]



Figure 4.30 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 74]

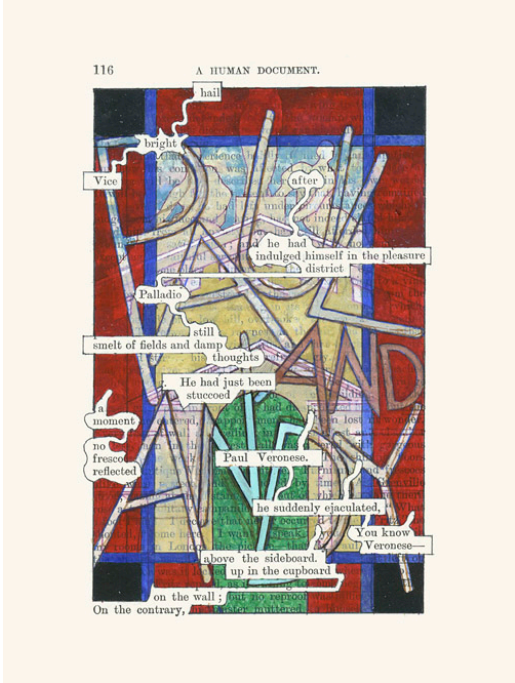


Figure 4.31 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 116]

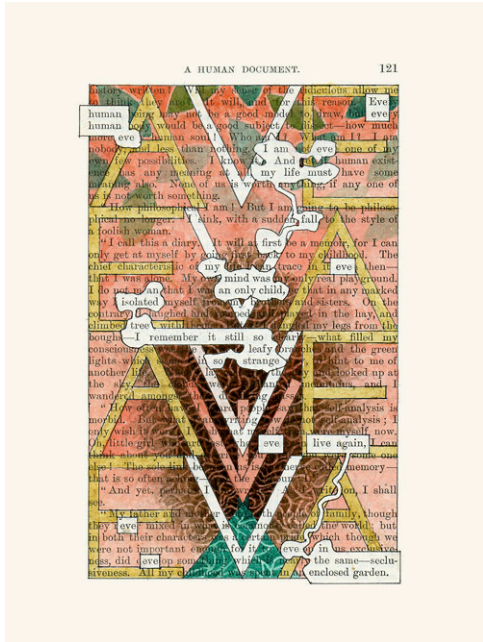


Figure 4.32 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 121]



Figure 4.33 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 135]

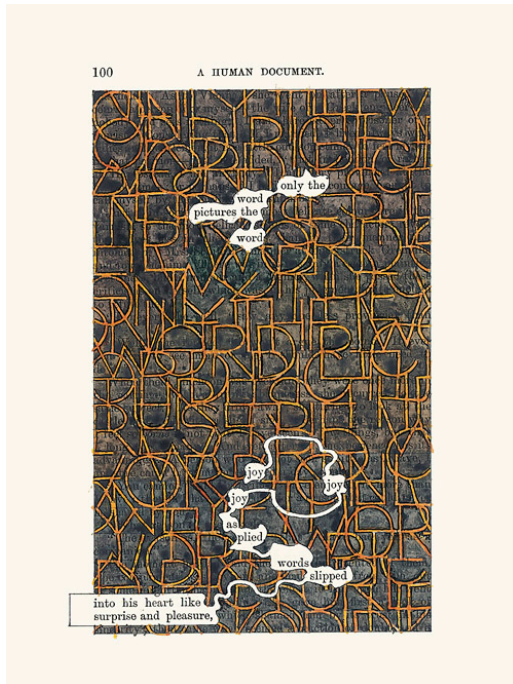


Figure 4.34 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 100]



Figure 4.35 *Lindisfarne Gospel* (London, British Library Cotton MS Nero D.IV) Matthew cross-carpet page f 26v



Figure 4.36 *Lindisfarne Gospel* (London, British Library Cotton MS Nero D.IV) Mark cross-carpet page f 94v

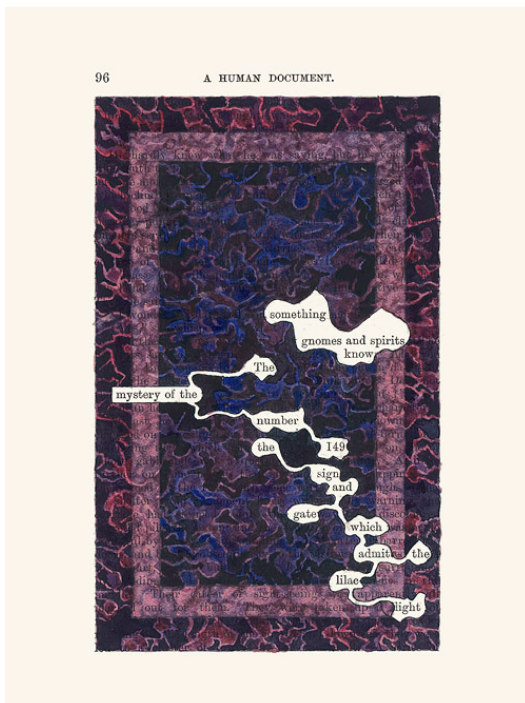


Figure 4.37 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 96]

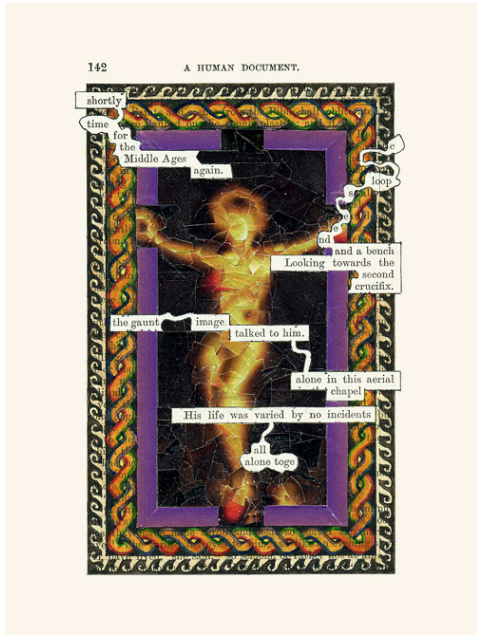


Figure 4.38 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 142]

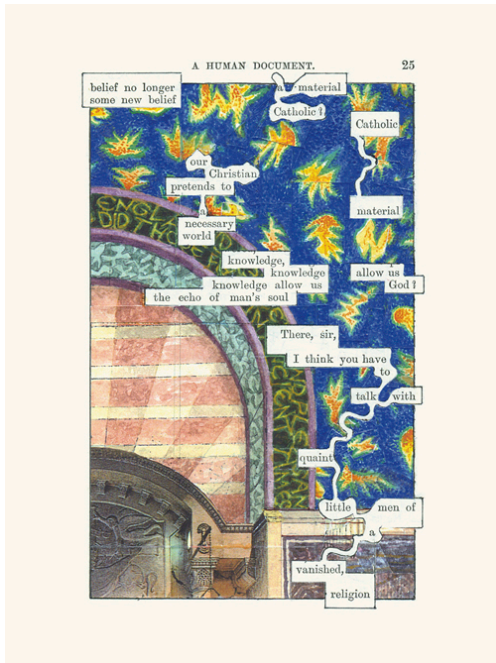


Figure 5.1 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition 2016, p. 25]

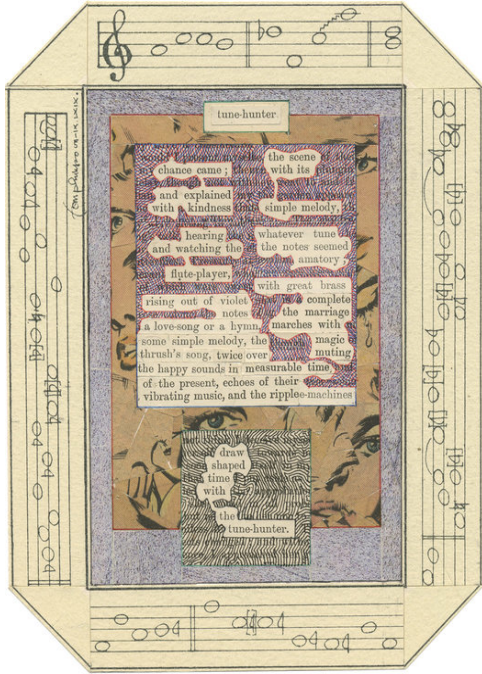


Figure 5.2 Tom Phillips. *Irma: An opera, opus XIIB*. London: Talfourd Press, 1969. Page 21

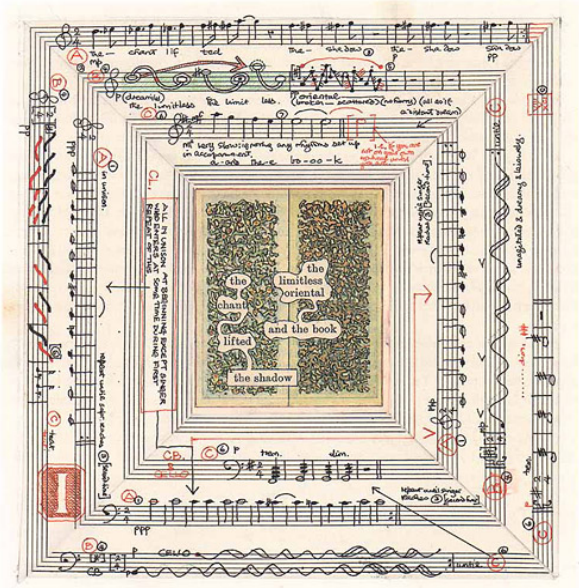


Figure 5.3 Tom Phillips. *Opus 16. No 1. The Chant Lifted The Shadow*. 1991. Collage and ink.

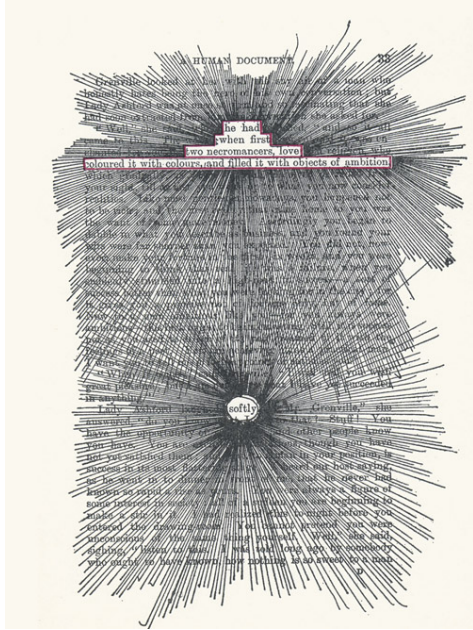


Figure 5.4 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [First edition, 1980, p. 33]

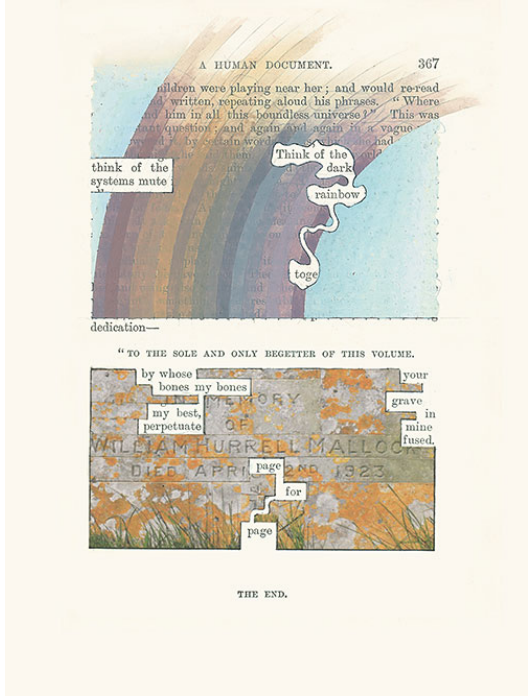


Figure 5.5 Tom Phillips. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* [Sixth and final edition, 2016, p. 367]

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