

**INVESTIGATING THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF DESIGN
OBJECTS WITHIN A SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENT**

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Abstract

The research is located within the wider context of design and creative practice, specifically: interior design, exhibition design, and curatorial practice. The research addresses the experience of the viewer as they move through an exhibition of painting and objects originally associated with the Italian High Renaissance in the early sixteenth century.

The work proposes a way to use phenomenological perspectives, drawn from the work of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, to conceive the experience of the viewer relative to exhibited design objects. The work also proposes a way to curate this experience without instructing the viewer on the meaning of the objects and how they should be understood.

This curation aims to introduce the viewer to an experience of the objects that is distinctively their own. It is addressed specifically to design objects with the aim of informing curatorial practice in this field.

By presenting the objects within the context of an exhibition intended to provoke a phenomenological experience whereby symbolism, history or interpretation by the viewer are considered to be unnecessary, or indeed actively discouraged, the objects become liberated and able to present themselves to the viewer *as they are themselves* - unfettered by any requirement of understanding by the viewer.

The objects present to the viewer, rather than adopting the familiar exhibition protocol where the viewer interrogates the objects. In this revised condition, the relationship between artefact and viewer may become meaningful without that meaning having been constructed by the provision of any external information.

The painting bringing focus to both the research and the exhibition is *The Feast of the Gods* painted in 1514 by Giovanni Bellini with additions to the background in 1529 by Titian. A number of domestic objects are represented within the painting, three of which have been selected for consideration within the exhibition: a Ming dynasty porcelain bowl, a silver wine cup, and a Murano glass, wheel-cut beaker.

The painting and objects form the basis of the research exhibition designed to bring the viewer not only to a new experience of objects but to a phenomenological experience of objects, achieved by directing the viewer on their journey through the exhibition where the objects are disengaged from the context of the painting prior to being presented within a series of their own phenomenological 'worlds'. The phenomenological account of experience may then be used to develop new understanding relating to the presentation of design objects and the viewer's experience of them.

Copy link to view the accompanying virtual exhibition:

<https://galleries.vidflow.co/tt2xgnu6>

Password: ARPHD

Copyright

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research is located at the confluence of philosophy, curatorial practice and designed objects within the context of residential interior design (Fig. 1.1). The format of the research is comprised of the following two correlative elements:

a) A written thesis

This element investigates the experience of the viewer resulting from a curated collection of objects relative to interior design as presented within specific conceptual and physical locations. The investigation is informed by and interrogated through selected phenomenological propositions of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. From these propositions and relative to the definition, observation and curation of the world(s) of an artefact, particular attention is given to: Intentionality, the Phenomenological Reduction, the nature of The Things Themselves, and The World of the Thing.

b) An intentionally curated exhibition

The exhibition encourages the viewer to encounter a selection of art and objects presented within a pre-determined sequence of contexts arranged to initiate within the viewer a dynamic and significant experience. The intention of the specific sequence of contexts is to place the viewer within an experience expediting an analytical condition comparable to phenomenological interrogation. It is important to note that the intention is not to remove such an experience *from* the world but rather to reveal it as situated *in* a world, or indeed within the multiple worlds, inhabited by the objects (Fig. 1.2).

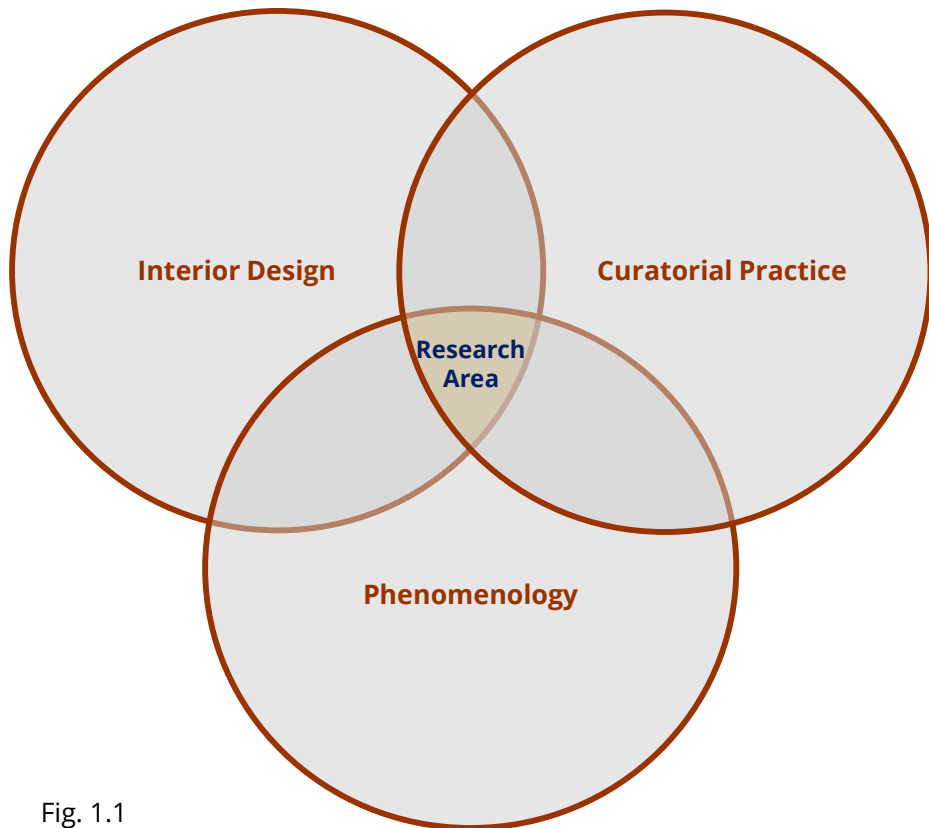


Fig. 1.1
Conceptual location of the research

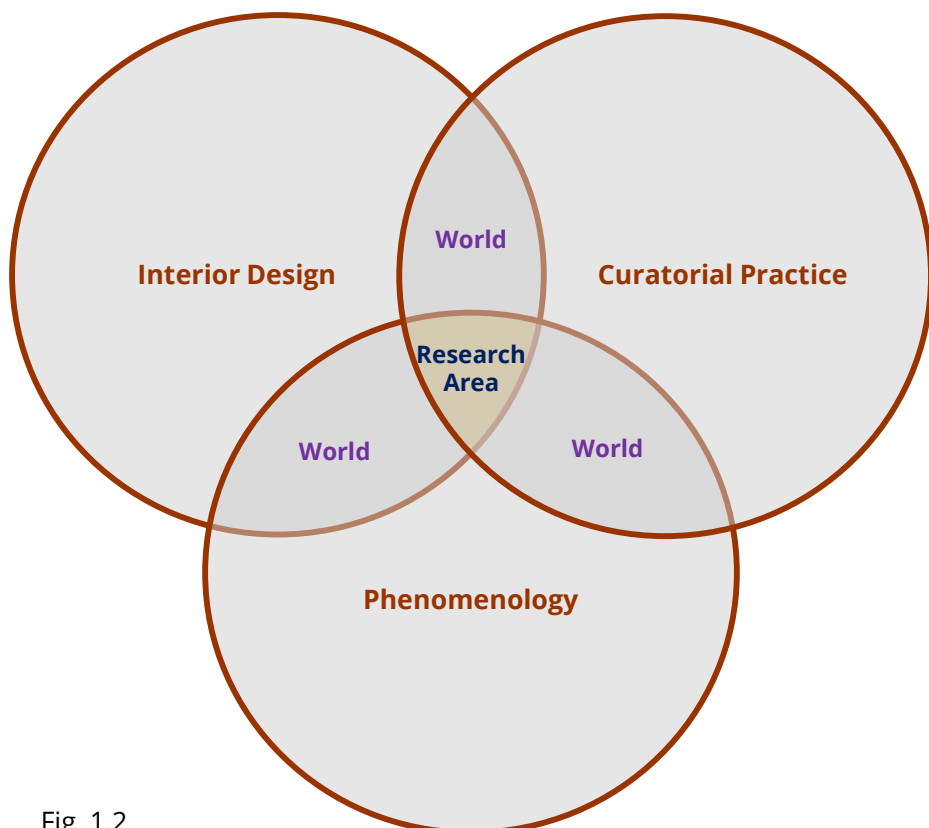


Fig. 1.2
Location of the worlds of Art and Equipment relative to the research

The original intention for the presentation of the research was a physical exhibition to accompany this thesis as an installation within a physical gallery space. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions made this approach unfeasible, an alternative form of presentation had to be effected.

A virtual exhibition was produced with technical help from a videographer. I provided the videographer with all plans, dimensions, texts, images, music selection and backgrounds. All narration is my voice. We worked remotely via regular telephone, zoom and screen sharing meetings. The concept, authorship, content and all design work is mine alone. This virtual exhibition provided a more successful representation of the exhibition intention than the original physical proposal, as details of scale and decoration within the 'architecture' could be determined according to the requirements of each room which, in turn, related back to a specific area of phenomenology (Fig. 1.3).

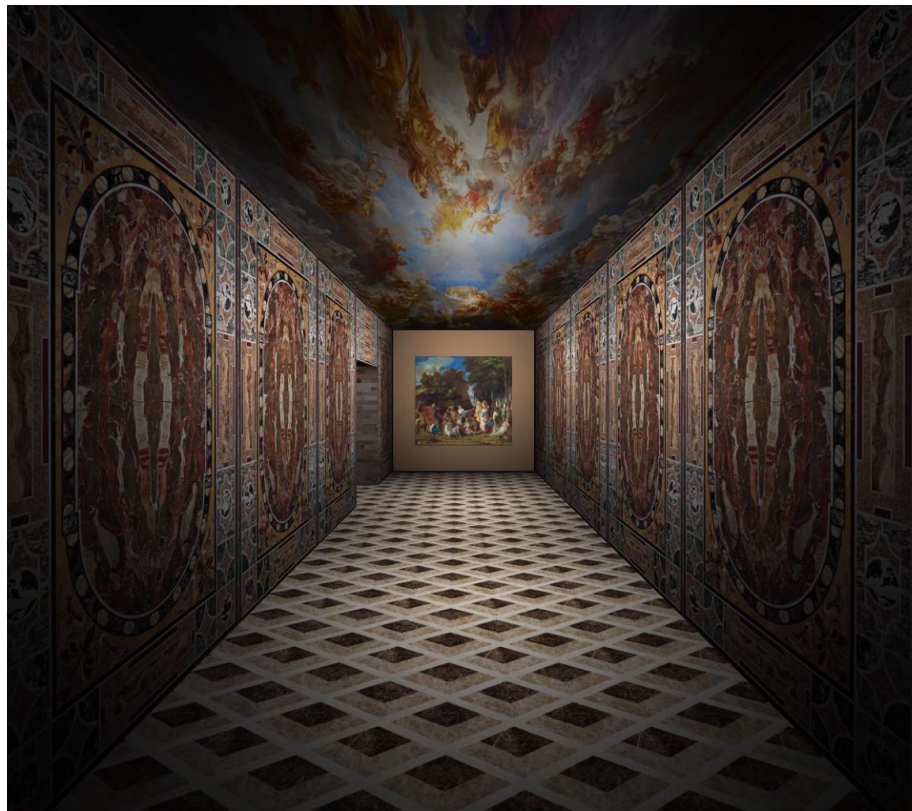


Fig. 1.3

Opening room of the virtual exhibition with Bellini's *The Feast of the Gods* at centre.

1.1: Adoption of phenomenology within this research

The principal underpinning element of this research is phenomenology, which provides both the philosophical and the methodological basis for the investigation.

My research is neither a theoretical contribution to phenomenology *per se* nor is it a straightforward analysis of a viewer's experience. Rather, I have adopted phenomenological ideas to develop a method by which worlds - in the Heideggerian sense - of objects relative to interior design may be revealed to a viewer through a combination of curatorial practice and the considered sequential presentation of contexts leading to an experiential intensity precipitated by the combination of phenomenology, object and context.

I am interested in curating the world of the object as informed by phenomenological investigation, rather than the development of a new phenomenological analysis or extension to the treatment of design objects in a theoretical way.

The research first established the parameters of interior design and curatorial practice with an approach either rooted in philosophy or approaching the periphery of phenomenology. The research was not intended to undertake a comprehensive investigation into either of these areas, but rather has developed phenomenology as a tool for thinking of new ways in which to introduce the viewer to a more meaningful experience with the objects with which they associate.

This, phenomenological, curatorial approach aims to extend the thinking of already successful practitioners by adding a layer of understanding *through experience* that may be otherwise elusive.

Selected objects from within the painting *The Feast of the Gods* form the basis of the research exhibition designed to bring the viewer not only to a new experience of objects but also to a phenomenological experience of objects. This is achieved by guiding the viewer on their journey through the exhibition within which the objects become disengaged from their original fine art context of the painting, prior to being re-presented in a series of their own phenomenological worlds.

By presenting the objects within the context of an exhibition intended to provoke a phenomenological experience, the objects become liberated and able to present themselves to the viewer *as they are themselves*, unfettered by any requirement of understanding by the viewer. This brings to the viewer not simply a new experience of objects, but a phenomenological experience of objects within their revised contextual location leading to disclosure of the worlds inhabited by the objects. Such a presentation, informed by the phenomenological writing of Heidegger and Husserl, introduces the possibility of curating objects according to the worlds that they inhabit. The adoption and exploration of phenomenology is discussed further in Chapter 6, Philosophy.

Each of the four rooms within the exhibition address a specific area of phenomenological experience:

- Room One* (Intentionality) presents the painting in its totality.
- Room Two* (The Reduction) provides an unstable context which is neither subjective or objective.
- Room Three* (The Things Themselves) is where the objects are allowed to reveal themselves to the viewer.
- Room Four* (World) concludes the exhibition by relocating the objects and their worlds.

As the objects move back and forth between their worlds, relationships between the object, the viewer's experience, and the context of this experience become increasingly unstable. The phenomenological commutation of viewer, artefact, experience and context is discussed further in Chapter 3: Background to the Virtual Exhibition.

1.2: Bellini's Feast of the Gods

The painting *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. 1.4) was chosen as a vehicle for the exploration of phenomenology as a method for curating the 'worlds' of objects, rather than the objects themselves, because it fulfilled specific criteria developed within the thesis. The painting had to provide a 'catalogue of possibilities' spanning art, design and philosophy in addition to demonstrating potential for the curation and presentation of objects *from within the painting itself*.



Fig. 1.4

Bellini, G. (1514) Later additions by Dossi, D. and Titian (1529)

The Feast of the Gods

[Oil on canvas].

National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Source: NGA Visual Services, reproduced with permission.

To achieve this, the painting had to:

- Contain a number of objects relative to a residential interior
- Foster investigation into fine art, interior design and phenomenology
- Foster investigation into the painting itself
- Inhabit a rich and accessible provenance of patronage, context and traceable ownership
- Allow exploration of the worlds of the objects contained within the painting - the worlds of fine art and equipment - and the movement of the objects between these worlds. The objects in the painting themselves originate from different worlds and are brought together in the painting – as in an exhibition.
- Invite phenomenological investigation relative to specific and selected writings of Husserl and Heidegger

Other paintings were looked at and subsequently discarded. Most notably those from what is recognised as the Dutch Golden Age of still-life painting between 1588-1672, as these were initially considered to contain a broad selection of domestic objects and therefore a 'good fit' for the research criteria. I met with Dr. An Van Camp, Curator of Northern European Art at the *Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford*, who, following very helpful discussion, suggested a painting from their collection which initially seemed to fulfil the necessary criteria. This was *Still Life of Fruit and Flowers* by Clara Peeters (Fig. 1.5).



Fig. 1.5
Peeters. C (1612-13)
Still Life of Fruit and Flowers
[Oil on Copper].
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

On attempting to research these items for provenance, context and traceable ownership, almost a complete absence of further information was available. Further, Clara Peeters herself is something of a mystery amongst the male-dominated culture of painting in the early seventeenth century. Very little is known about her and her painting other than speculative 'Some have suggested' or 'She may indeed have been' comments. She signed and dated thirty-one paintings but no record of patrons is available.

Following subsequent investigation into the secular paintings of the Italian Renaissance as a possible area for representations of domestic objects linked to available provenance and context, Peeters' *Still Life of Fruit and Flowers* was rejected for the purposes of this research in favour of the wealth of available material surrounding *The Feast of the Gods*, recognised as the final great masterpiece of Giovanni Bellini and, more modestly, entirely appropriate to this investigation.

The four core areas of phenomenology previously mentioned, each contributed to the development of a method by which domestic objects, bowls, cups, vessels and so on, depicted within the 1514 painting by Giovanni Bellini could be dis-located from the painting and allowed to 'show themselves as themselves' before being subsequently re-presented to the viewer within a range of contexts connected by their inclusion within the worlds of either art or equipment, thereby altering the perception of the viewer relative to themselves, the objects and their context.

Further discussion of the role of *The Feast of the Gods* within the context of this research may be found in Chapter 3: Background to the Virtual Exhibition.

1.3: Research Question

Within this research I am contributing to curatorial theory and practice, exploring a specific experience within the context of exhibitions and extending some of these considerations from fine art to interior design.

The investigation is intended to be of interest to those involved in creative practice, design - particularly interior design, experience design and retail design, academia, curatorial practice, and design-led manufacturing. The research also aims to be of interest to those involved in the areas of philosophy and cultural analysis.

This research is located at the point where philosophy, curatorial practice and interior design combine to interact and to inform the presentation of objects relative to the subsequent experience of the viewer. Each of these disciplines are complex and demanding subjects in their own right and yet, when the field of focus is narrowed to inform one specific frame of reference for enquiry, such as interior design, the combination becomes not only significant and dynamic, but also able to be addressed by the central research question guiding the interrogation of this investigation:

'The research aims to ascertain whether, within the context of an exhibition of multiple objects, it is possible to precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information encroaching on such an experience'.

The principal and underpinning element of the research is phenomenology, providing the philosophical as well as the methodological basis for the investigation. 'Phenomenological research employs a qualitative method that seeks to understand the lived meaning of events or phenomena which people experience in particular situations' (Moss and Keen 1989).

1.3.1: Research Objectives

At this point it is useful to set out the four research objectives by which the central research question will be addressed. They will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Objective 1

The development of a theoretical foundation leading to the deployment of ideas in Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, particularly those of intentionality, the phenomenological reduction, the things themselves, and world.

This concerns how phenomenology informed the design of the research exhibition as an example of how phenomenological ideas affect practice.

Objective 2

The identification and isolation of specific objects depicted within a painting and formulating their journey as they move between the worlds of fine art and equipment within the exhibition.

This included a reflection on my experience of visiting design exhibitions in Milan, where objects were often presented in challenging contexts such as a deconsecrated 15th century cathedral, an interrogation chamber from WWII, or an hotel suite once occupied by Byron. The objects themselves were reassuringly familiar in their domesticity even though they prompted new imaginings of such objects in unexpected or dis-locating worlds. The collision between object, world and context during these exhibitions suspended established perceptions and expectations associated with the object exhibited.

Objective 3

The design of an exhibition space to reflect and enhance both the intention of the presentation of the exhibits and the experience of the viewer as they move through the exhibition.

Thinking about ways to design and present a model of phenomenological concepts developed by Husserl and Heidegger helped clarify my thinking about the concepts themselves, which, in turn prompted reflection and modification of the presentation and so on. As Moran proposes, the visual presentation of phenomenology must describe things as they *appear* to consciousness, which means that 'the way problems, things, and events are approached must involve *taking their manner of appearance to consciousness into consideration*' (Moran 2000, p.6).

Objective 4

The presentation of the objects within alternative and unexpected contexts and within the worlds of art and equipment to elicit new experiences in the viewer.

The objects isolated from the painting within this research are presented in a range of contexts intended to modify the experience of the viewer by altering the world of the object. By liberating the objects from their sixteenth century original context, the objects are aligned to new referential totalities and regain previously lost or diminished immediacy through their reorientation to contemporary culture.

1.4: Background and Rationale

Central to my interest in the relationship between interior design, phenomenology and curatorial practice is the impact on the perception of a viewer following phenomenological engagement with carefully selected art and related objects presented in an intentional exhibition format. My interest in the combination of practice, presentation and philosophy began as a student at the Royal College of Art in 1987 engaging with the work of Charles Jencks, whose development of a Post Modern critique first introduced me to the work of Martin Heidegger.

1.4.1: Personal Rationale

My interest in the presentation of design practice informed by a theoretical position was reinforced over three decades by regular visits to design galleries in New York and Milan, an activity continuing throughout my career as a buyer, gallerist, educator and practitioner whose work is energised by theoretical and philosophical exploration.



Fig. 1.6

Anthony Rayworth (2019)

Modern History

[Installation]

Art&York, York Racecourse, York.

25 October 2019 – 27 October 2019

The *Modern History* installation (Fig. 1.6) was curated according to the connection of the objects with the tenets of Late Modernism and presented five decades of creative output from Italy, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Formalising my interests and experience, the thesis and associated exhibition of art and objects within this Ph.D. constitute an examination of the impact and meaning of intentionally curated objects upon the viewer as experienced through a curatorial approach informed by selected phenomenological tenets of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.

1.4.2: External Rationale

The exhibitions presented within this section of the Introduction emerge from a desire to bring together the disciplines of philosophy, curatorial practice and interior design. The selection of designers and manufacturers discussed within this section is based upon personal experience of attending the exhibitions of influential designers and design-led manufacturers at the *Salone del Mobile* in Milan over the past 30 years.

Expanding on personal experience of the exhibitions discussed within this section, the selection and presentation of objects within my Ph.D. exhibition is initially intended to encourage a sense of dislocation or disorientation from the 'self-limiting captivation' or presuppositions of the viewer. From this position of critical instability the occurrence of a new and purely phenomenological experience of interaction of artefact, art, context and viewer becomes possible. The viewer may thereby form, or retrieve, a relation to the artefact that was previously buried, concealed behind our assumptions, prejudices, suppositions and/or our relation to the artefact only as an historical artefact to be understood via certain facts or data.

The possibility that an intentional presentation of objects within a curated environment may combine to bring about such a perceptual and experiential transformation is a proposition explored by Robert Storr, Curator, Professor and Council member of the *International Foundation for Art Research*, within his essay *Show and Tell*, where he says that: 'A good exhibition is never the last word on its subject. Instead it should be an intelligently conceived and scrupulously realized interpretation of the works selected, one which acknowledges by its organization and installation that even the material on view - not to mention those things which might have been included but were not - may be seen from a variety of perspectives to the benefit of other possible understandings of the art in question' (Storr 2003, pp.14-15).

The 'variety of perspectives' referred to in Storr's essay are materialised and multiplied within exhibitions that present designed objects within complex, clearly focused and carefully curated environments. These environments present the objects in an ideal and yet often challenging 'world'. Conceptual approaches informing the design of such exhibitions are developed according to the curatorial parameters of three core types of artefact: unique, limited edition, and those objects applying elements of industrial production. Each of these product categories have their own audience and require specific approaches to their presentation. Examples of products inhabiting the three categories include:

Category A: Unique pieces, largely hand-made:

Bořek Šipek (Fig. 1.7) www.sipek.com

André Dubreuil (Fig. 1.8) <https://galeriemougin.com>

Gaetano Pesce (Fig. 1.9) www.gaetanopesce.com



Fig. 1.7
Bořek Šipek (1990)
Candleholder Marcel
[Sculpture]
Private collection.



Fig. 1.8
André Dubreuil (2017)
Clock
[Sculpture]
Sotheby's.



Fig. 1.9
Gaetano Pesce (2012)
Puddle Table
[Sculpture]
David Gill Gallery.

Category B: Editions produced by hand, machine, or in combination:

Cox London (Fig. 1.10) <https://coxlondon.com>

Tom Faulkner (Fig. 1.11) www.tomfaulkner.co.uk

Amanda Leveté (Fig. 1.12) www.establishedandsons.com



Fig. 1.10
Cox London (2019)
Olive Leaf Sconce
[Sculpture]
Cox Gallery.



Fig. 1.11
Tom Faulkner (2016)
Boulder Console
[Sculpture]
Tom Faulkner Collection.



Fig. 1.12
Amanda Leveté (2008)
Round the Corner
[Sculpture]
Established & Sons.

Category C: Commercially produced objects representing excellence of concept, innovation in manufacture or other noteworthy characteristics that may include both handmade and industrialised production methods:

Cassina (Fig. 1.13) www.cassina.com

Poliform (Fig. 1.14) www.poliform.it

Marc Newson (Fig. 1.15) <https://marc-newson.com>



Fig. 1.13
Jaime Hayon (2015)
Réaction Poétique
[Sculpture]
Collection Cassina.



Fig. 1.14
Poliform (2021)
Code Day System
[Sculpture]
Collection Poliform.



Fig.1.15
Marc Newson (2021)
Quobus Storage
[Sculpture]
Galerie Kreo.

These exhibitions are fundamentally commercial as the artists, designers and manufacturers rely on sales for their continued survival. The curatorial brief is therefore subject to a sophisticated marketing and sales agenda, engaging their audience(s) through a programme of culturally adept exhibitions and installations in a broad variety of locations, each location chosen for its unique resonance with the presentation itself, the message that it intends to communicate, and the specific audience that purchase or collect the objects being presented.

Exhibition spaces include:

- Purpose-built exhibition centres such as the *Maastricht Exhibition and Conference Centre*, Netherlands (MECC) - host venue for *The Annual European Antiques Fair* (TEFAF). (Figs. 1.16, 1.16a).
- Independent galleries such as David Gill in London. (Figs. 1.17, 1.17a).
- Pop-up installations forming part of a wider event, such as *Milan Design Week*, where exhibitions may be located within a disused abattoir, a deconsecrated cathedral or a privately owned fifteenth century palazzo. (Figs. 1.18, 1.18a).

The exhibitions, although primarily commercial, have a parallel and equally significant agenda that evidences to their client base, superior understanding of the cultural positioning and influence of the artefact and curator relative to that of competitors. This agenda is further underlined by the recognition of the context inhabited by the artefact as highlighted by the exhibition curator, whether the exhibitor is an artist, designer, private gallery, manufacturer or PR agency. The selection process and appointment of a specific curator *is itself* a significant evidencing of the cultural positioning of the client designer or manufacturer.

The emergence of what has become known as *Italian Radical Design*, effective from the mid-1960s until the mid-1980s, changed the way in which domestic and residential products were perceived and presented, highlighting a continuity of creativity between poetry, philosophy, Modernism and Post Modernism.



Fig. 1.16
Maastricht Exhibition and
Conference Centre (MECC)
Maastricht, Netherlands.



Fig. 1.16a
Axel Vervoordt Company: TEF AF (2021)
[Exhibition]
MECC, Maastricht, Netherlands.
16 March 2019-24 March 2019



Fig. 1.17
David Gill Gallery
London.



Fig. 1.17a
Sebastian Brajkovic (2019)
The Occidental Artisan
[Installation]
David Gill Gallery, London.
13 September 2019-2 November 2019



Fig. 1.18
Palazzo Durini - Caproni
Milan.



Fig. 1.18a
Jacopo Foggini (2021)
A'mare
[Installation]
Palazzo Durini - Caproni, Milan.
5 September 2021 - 10 September 2021

The movement has been recognised by exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London - Adamson and Pavitt (2011), Museum of Fine Arts, Houston - Strauss (2020), The Design Museum, London - Memphis Remembered (2001), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - Larsen (2017). These, conventionally created 'blockbuster' exhibitions provide an overview of the *products, people and ideas* behind the creative outpouring of Italy during this time but, with the exception of the 1989 *Alchimia* exhibition curated by Judith Findlay at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery, they tend not to be an accurate representation of the *zeitgeist* driving and informing the original, often loose, collective of designers, artists, architects, collectors writers and thinkers.

For this it is necessary to look at the smaller exhibitions held in and around Milan. These intimate, often bewildering, gatherings are held in basements, disused abattoirs, rooftop greenhouses, private apartments, showrooms housed within architecturally important buildings or, for two nights only, an historic hotel suite. Such carefully curated events, rooted in philosophical discourse and social commentary, were encouraged and given critical rigour by Alessandro Mendini's editorship, first at *Casabella* magazine from 1970 - 1976 (where he introduced the notion of Radical Design) *Modo* from 1977 - 1981 and *Domus* magazine (Fig. 1.19) from 1979 - 1985 before returning as Guest Editor for Issue 935, April 2010. 'The way of realising the magazines was very precise, because the design ideology was strong' Mendini (2015).



Fig. 1.19
Mendini, A. (Ed.)
(1982)
Domus Magazine
(No. 626, March).

1. 4. 3: Radical Design - Selected presentations influential to the scope of this thesis.

An overview of the Italian Radical Design movement is not required within this thesis, there are many sources of information about this exceptional period in Italian design. The field of interest here is the effect on the viewer of the presentations and design exhibitions that provided experiences that may be described as 'consequential' at a phenomenological level, deeply affecting the perception within visitors of what exactly the experience of an exhibition - particularly a 'commercial' exhibition - could be. These presentations and exhibitions have, three decades later, led directly to the virtual exhibition accompanying this thesis. As an illustration of the thinking behind such exhibitions, three designers have been selected for discussion: Paolo Pallucco (Fig. 1.20) Ingo Maurer (Fig. 1.25) and Alessandro Mendini (Fig. 1.30). These three designers redefined what a 'commercial' exhibition of design-led objects could be and had a profound effect on my interests as a gallery owner who represented these designers exclusively within the U.K. during the late 1980s and early 1990s. We worked closely together, attempting to create exhibitions of similar intensity at my gallery in London as I had experienced at their presentations in Milan, Cologne and New York. Working with such culturally fluent and philosophically aware designers has led directly to this Ph.D. and the investigation of the intersection of curatorial practice, philosophy and design.

Paolo Pallucco

This section begins with a 1989 exhibition (Figs. 1.21 – 1.24) of furniture designed by Paolo Pallucco in response to the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and presented in a derelict ex-slaughterhouse in the (then) run down Milanese district of Mattatoio. As background to the exhibition, a few hundred metres away from the exhibition site a band of gypsies had set up camp as they did at this place and time every year during September and October. In 1989, because of perceived political necessity driven by a forthcoming election, the gypsies were rounded up and put in prison for the duration of the International Furniture Fair.



Fig. 1.20

Paolo Pallucco

Pallucco was so incensed by this unprovoked and as he viewed it, unnecessarily authoritarian, act that he altered the design of the exhibition and negotiated with the authorities that the gypsies were allowed to come and help with the installation. He also vouched for them to be allowed to cook and sleep in the derelict ex-slaughterhouse. The design of the exhibition included covering the entire floor of the slaughterhouse with a thick layer of polystyrene covered with dark grey conference carpet. The floor of each room was then filled with 5000 precisely placed silk flowers (Fig. 1.21) colour specific to each room of the exhibit and in tribute to the largely autobiographical novel by Jean Genet: *Our Lady of the Flowers*.



Fig. 1.21

Pallucco - Mattatoio (1989)

Available at: <https://vimeo.com/141646154>

Accessed on: 12 May 2019

The precise placement of the flowers into the carpeted polystyrene was implemented according to a notched wooden template. The furniture collection was then placed amongst the flowers in small clearings (Figs. 1.22-1.24) accessed by a narrow winding path with theatre lighting designed by cinematographer Henri Alekan illuminating the furniture from above.

The furniture itself was highly technical and very complex to produce, often involving the development of new machinery in order to produce the collection. The fabric on the sofa was 50% glazed cotton chintz and 50% stainless steel (Fig. 1.23) the glass on *Heroes Muscles*, a low table, was 3mm thick, developed by NASA (Fig. 1.24) to be laminated and used for the windows of the Space Shuttle. All this technology was harnessed to express the meaning of poetry. For example, the shelving designed by Paolo Pallucco, *Necessary Angel Version Two* (Fig. 1.22) is a representation of the funeral of an angel, the 'ascending joy' described in Rilke's *Necessary Angel*, extracted from the poem *The Duino Elegies, The Tenth Elegy*. The poem itself being represented by Pallucco's *Necessary Angel Version One*.

And we, who think of ascending
joy, would feel the emotion,
That almost dismays us,
When a joyful thing falls.

Duino Elegy -10

To successfully place technologically advanced furniture within a flower-filled 'field' installed by temporarily released, incarcerated gypsies and contained within a disused Milanese abattoir whilst referencing both the literature of Jean Genet and the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, all within the overall context of a selling exhibition at an international trade event (the *Salone del Mobile, Milano* or Milan Furniture Fair - now known as *Milan Design Week*) is simultaneously sensorially intoxicating and experientially bewildering. As such it may be said to be situated directly within the area of phenomenological enquiry, requiring the 'setting aside' of our natural attitude, our normal and worldly frame of reference in order to allow the exhibition to speak directly to us and allow the exhibits to 'show themselves to us'.

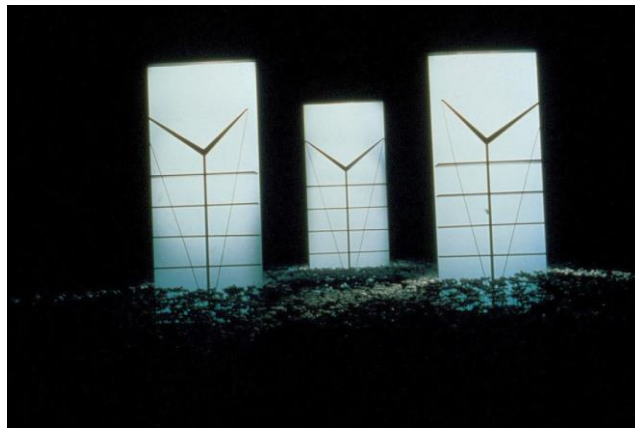


Fig. 1.22
Shelving 'Necessary Angel Version Two' wood and steel
Installation view, Mattatoio. 1989

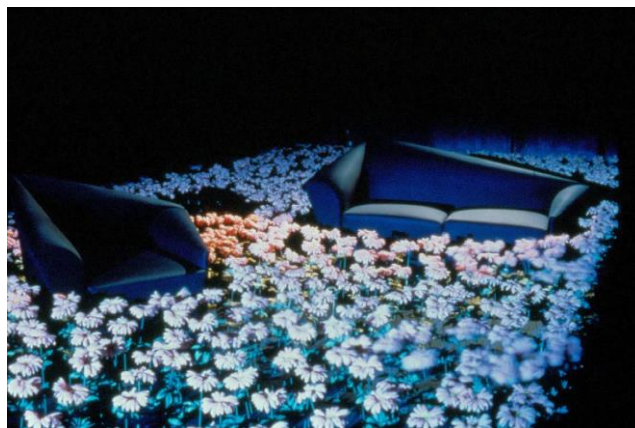


Fig. 1.23
Sofa in chintz and stainless steel
Installation view, Mattatoio. 1989



Fig. 1.24
Heroes Muscles low table, NASA glass top.
Installation view, Mattatoio. 1989

Ingo Maurer

The lighting designer Ingo Maurer 1932-1999 (Fig. 1.25) was known internationally as a 'poet of light' designing challenging pieces that extended the capabilities of technology. He presented his work through exhibitions that were extremely demanding in their conceptual complexity and physical scale. One of his finest exhibitions was in 2016 and located in the former church of San Paolo Converso during *Milan Design Week* - an unexpected context for the presentation of lighting design. The technical skills required to hide all electrical cables, convert some lamps to rechargeable battery power and produce larger or smaller versions of existing products in order to precisely fit the spaces for which they were intended confirm the dedication and attention to detail required to successfully carry out an installation of this type.



Fig. 1.25

Ingo Maurer with '*Lucellino NT*' one of his lamps created from: glass, brass, plastic, and hand-crafted goose-feather wings.

Against this backdrop (Figs. 1.27) Ingo Maurer used humble, recognisable elements such as a coat hanger, a stack of dishes, a household rubber glove (Fig. 1.26) or a simple feather and turned them into iconic lighting installations often presented against a dramatic background of fine art. For one of his lights, *1000 Karat Blau* (Fig.1.28) the gold leaf was hammered to within a few microns in thickness which allowed only the short-wave blue light to pass through the gold molecules, a technique beyond the understanding of the majority of viewers and adding to the mystery of his installations. The combination of poetry, astonishment, humour and technological ingenuity, produces a response within the viewer that requires them to set aside their natural expectation of what happens within a Renaissance Italian church, or domestic lighting, and simply allow the works to 'show themselves to us'.

Ingo Maurer always said that he was lucky to work 'with a thing that does not exist, light is not a thing but a spirit which catches you inside.' Paola Antonelli, Senior Design Curator at MOMA, said of him: 'I've never seen anyone experiment with such abandon' (Lasky 2019).



Fig. 1.26
Maurer, I. (2018)
Luzy Take Five
[Pendant luminaire].
Ingo Maurer GmbH, Munich.

During an interview, Maurer said that: 'There's a feeling and an emotion that comes when you're making something that is unique, how can you recreate that? It's like I write poetry, how could I write that same poem again, in the same feeling, with the same words without looking at it again? It would be so hard to recreate that moment of emotion, at least for me. because you stand and you work, and it's a hard work, and it's not just playing around. But as the thing grows in front of you, ideas come, and sensibility, and perception is very, very ... we are aware of. And that makes the joy of doing something like that' (Lasky 2019).



Fig. 1.27
Ingo Maurer (2016)
San Paolo Converso
[Exhibition].
Milan Design Week, Milan.
12 May – 17 May 2016



Fig. 1.28
Ingo Maurer (2016)
1000 Karat Blau
[Pendant luminaire].
San Paolo Converso, Milan.
12 May – 17 May 2016



Fig. 1.29

Ingo Maurer

Installation view of the Ingo Maurer Brazil showroom launch.

'... and you know, I have this very, very big project in Brazil (Fig. 1.29). It's a broken egg, which is going to be in a park, in *Inhotim*. It's called *Belo Horizonte*. And the egg is 25 meters long and 50 meters high, and you enter ... it has a crack. I think the idea's that the beauty of an egg is so perfect that once it has a crack you are more aware of the beauty' (Ingo Maurer: *Arkitektura Assembly*).

Alessandro Mendini

This extract (below) from the ceremony awarding Alessandro Mendini (Fig. 1.30) with the 2014 *European Prize for Architecture* provides an eloquent introduction to the work of this Milanese philosopher, designer and architect:

'The European Prize for Architecture's aim is to recognise those European architects who have changed and challenged the direction of contemporary architecture by privileging its more humane, cultured and intellectual aspects.'



Fig. 1.30
Alessandro Mendini.

As an architect, philosopher, architectural theorist, visionary and design practitioner, the influence of Alessandro Mendini spans close to half a century. His work ranges from the creation of: iconic objects, furnishings, interiors, paintings and installations, to architecture, urban planning and the creation and direction of extraordinary design magazines. He worked with and co-founded the legendary *Studio Alchimia* with Alessandro Guerriero as well as *Atelier Mendini* with his brother, Francesco, in 1989.



Fig. 1.31
Furniture for Men (2002)
[Exhibition].
Bisazza Foundation, Vicenza
and Groninger Museum,
Groningen.

His architecture and design projects are found all over the world. Mendini is one of the rare, truly radical thinkers in the history of art and architecture. In an era where architectural ideas are copied and duplicated worldwide faster than 'viral' - Mendini and his works remain singular, prophetic and original. His work with the Groninger Museum and the Bisazza Foundation (Figs. 1.31, 1.32) discuss consumerism, scale and the question of luxury.

'Mendini not only imagines utopia, but he also describes it and makes it.' says Claudia Donà, journalist and design critic: 'He is a magical manufacturer of dreams. For everyone who has worked with him on neomodern and radical avant-garde themes, it was a thrilling experience. These approaches revolutionized the meaning and ethics of design, and made Milan the world's epicentre of a new design language by means of a cultural tremor of change. Mendini's exhibitions, writings, drawings, magazines and epoch-making projects saw the most revolutionary minds in architecture and design gather around his innovative ideas.'



Fig. 1.32

Mendini, A. (2002)

Furniture for Men

[Exhibition].

Bisazza Foundation, Vicenza and Groninger Museum, Groningen.



Fig. 1.33

Mendini, A. (1978)

Proust Chair

[Exhibit].

Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara.

Before designing the *Proust* chair (Fig. 1.33) now in production by Cappellini S.p.A.) Mendini travelled to France to research the 19th century novelist and critic, Marcel Proust and the Pointillist movement in art. He then purchased a rococo revival chair and painted it in the style of Signac. There was an edition of 20 which immediately sold out. It is shown here as it was launched, surrounded by another Mendini project comprising 100 identical vases decorated by 100 different designers and architects.



Fig. 1.34

Mendini, A. (1990)

Olio Collection by Studio Alchimia.

[Exhibition].

Museo Alchimia, Milan.

6 - 16 April 1990

The OILO collection (Fig. 1.34) was one of Mendini's most provocative acts. He gathered together examples of all the elements of Classical architecture going right back to Vitruvius: columns, arches, spheres, cones, cubes and so on. He then homogenised them by making them all exactly the same scale and further, he translated this reduction of the elements of civilisation into surface decoration applied to plastic laminate or fabric made into waistcoats and ties, carpets and so on. In response to criticism of what was perceived in some quarters to be an almost sacrilegious critique of architectural history, his response was that he was simply 'democratising design'. He even prepared a stencil to aid the 'autoproduction of poetic design'. He continued and expanded this theme much later (Fig. 1.35) with his 2013 exhibition at Palazzo Moroni entitled *Derivative Design*.



Fig. 1.35
Mendini, A. (2013)
Derivative Design
[Exhibition].
Palazzo Moroni, Bergamo.
Spring, 2013



Fig. 1.36
Mendini, A. (2011)
The Wunderkammer
[Exhibition].
Neues Museum, Nuremberg.
22 July 2011 – 23 October 2011

'Alessandro Mendini has worked with companies such as Alessi, Cartier, Swatch and Bisazza. The *Wunderkammer* design (Fig. 1.36) exhibition brings together examples from Mendini's oeuvre of the last 40 years, all presented in an exhibition architecture he himself designed. It immerses us in a multi-faceted scenery of Mendini's microcosm, a world of astonishing and marvellously opulent colours and exoticism – a homage on the occasion of his 80th birthday' (Dr. Thomas Heyden. Curator of Art and Design, Neues Museum).

As a clarification and illustration of the fundamental importance of understanding the preceding three examples, the following is an extract from the Manifesto of the Italian furniture and interior accessories manufacturer, Cassina SpA:

'Our mission is to:

Provide complete and curated proposals for in and outdoors featuring timeless products that express the company's prerogative to foster unique design and manufacture excellence in a quest for uncompromising innovation.

Become the preferred partner for our customers through iconic projects, constant research, undisputed quality, unparalleled service and top-rated customer satisfaction.

Only Cassina can combine the history and future of design in every setting.

Consistent and immediately recognisable through a cultured language, Cassina approaches design with memory and research, craftsmanship and industry, rigor and passion, uniqueness and experimentation.

We create authentic, welcoming and personal atmospheres that establish emotional connections and foretell today what will become a classic tomorrow.

And, bulleted later in the Manifesto under the heading *Cultural Influence*:

- Generation of a contemporary design aesthetic nourished by innovative expression, cross fertilization, exceptional collaborations and cultural connections.
- Production of the milestones of contemporary design exhibited in the most important museums worldwide.

- Contribution to the diffusion of the works of the designers and architects of the Cassina collections by promoting cultural initiatives and exhibitions worldwide.
- Interpretation of and reflection on social change through ongoing research and experimentation to create a harmonious relationship between people and the spaces they inhabit, always looking towards future living scenarios.
- Foundation of a legacy, each Cassina product acquires value and is proudly passed from generation to generation' (Cassina 2021).

Clearly, such a Manifesto implies a motivation far beyond that of the commercial sales of a 'furniture manufacturer' and it is this secondary parallel agenda that drives the design ethos, curatorial integrity and quality of presentation evident in the exhibitions. The drive to discover what precisely contributed to this secondary agenda, also exemplified by work of the previously mentioned Pallucco, Maurer and Mendini, whose exhibitions and presentations led directly to this research, coupled with the ambition to achieve such an essential but less tangible secondary quality within a design exhibition, led me to become a practitioner, curator, academic and design gallery owner following my Post-Graduate study of furniture and interior design at the Royal College of Art, London.

During my time at the RCA, my interests became increasingly concerned with the theoretical background informing a design rather than the manufacturing pathway of the design. This provided a different, perspective on the development of the design process which, for me, was grounded in the bringing together of contextual elements from antiquity and the application of proportioning systems including the Fibonacci Series and the Golden Section. By presenting the contextual world informing the design of the objects as an integral part of an exhibition of design, the first example being my MDes. Degree exhibition at the RCA, the audience were able to access (demystify) the methodology leading to the materiality of the artefact being presented.

This explication of the theoretical world extending the experience of the viewer is something that has remained with me throughout my career. The proposition that the context or *world* of an artefact adds intensity of experience to that artefact is a line of enquiry leading directly to the work of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger and, ultimately, the production of this thesis and its accompanying virtual exhibition.

Perhaps more importantly, it provides a philosophical basis upon which to situate many factors regularly encountered within design disciplines such as immediate experience in response to environmental designs, understanding creative processes, aesthetics and the sacred dimensions of space and place.' Additionally, Collins (2010, p.40) states that phenomenology, within the context of research for the creative industries '... is a critical paradigm and calls into question what we take for granted in order to construct new understandings.' This reveals that phenomenology has a contribution to make to curatorial practice. There remains however, a question over how it is used especially with regard to the curation of experiences of the kind seen in the previously discussed three examples of Radical Design.

Within his essay *The Phenomenological Contribution to Interior-Design Research: Place, Environmental Embodiment, and Architectural Sustenance* Seamon (2015, pp. 417-431) points out that 'The phenomenologist works to describe the phenomenon in its own terms as it is encountered and known through real-world experiences. The aim is not the idiosyncratic explication of unique experiences, but the identification and interpretation of underlying, lived patterns and relationships shared by many lived instances of the phenomenon.' Seamon's observations are primarily concerned with the phenomenology of place and focused on the architectural.

Mads Folkmann of the University of Denmark discussed the concept of *Design Phenomenology* in a paper delivered to the 11th European Academy

of Design at the Paris Descartes University in which he says that 'Design phenomenology may designate an approach to design with the focus on how design, in its many types of appearance and its creation of the tactile and visual surfaces of the modern world, affects and structures experience' (Folkmann 2015, p.2). Within the same paper, Folkmann discusses design phenomenology as an indicator to a new emerging discourse on how design objects relate to experience.

The interesting point here is that the 'emerging discourse' is not rooted in architecture or spatial consideration but on the role of objects and their contribution to the experience of an interior from a phenomenological perspective. This is a view that I share and the view from which this research is undertaken.

1.4.4: Benefits

The investigation is intended to be of interest to those involved in: creative practice, design, particularly interior design, academia, curatorial practice, retail design, design-led manufacturing, and experience design. The research also aims to be of interest to those involved in the areas of philosophy and cultural analysis.

The research is significant as it addresses new ways of informing curatorial practice and the understanding of objects within the context of contemporary interior design, where a client brief may now request the inclusion of historical objects as part of a quest for ambience, harmony and beauty rather than for the display of affluence. An interior designer's reputation may now be built upon the incorporation of such intangible elements as *nuance*, *scholarship* or *restraint* within their work (Fig. 1.37).



Fig. 1.37

This collection of furniture and objects in an Antwerp apartment *within which everything is for sale* has been curated according to the integrity of the pieces rather than date, author or style. The collection includes: a 17th century Korean Moon Jar, two Pierre Jeanneret early 20th century prototype chairs and the torso of a man from the Egyptian Ptolemaic period (*circa* 367 – 283 B.C.). Within my research this approach to curating interiors is extended by the investigation into curating the unseen ‘worlds’ of the objects as revealed by phenomenological interrogation. Unnecessary decoration is absent here, expressing a restrained approach that allows the pieces to speak for themselves.

The development of understanding in connection with the use of such intangibles as ‘worlds that inform the existence of an object’ being incorporated into the design process may, for example, translate directly into a design practice, practitioner or scholar securing direct commercial or academic advantage. Reflecting on these intangible elements present in interior design, the renowned international art dealer and interior designer, Axel Vervoordt, states in *The Meeting of Worlds* that ‘Our practice is dependent upon the responsibility we feel to create environments that express purity and serenity. In a much too noisy world, this silence is essential’ (Vervoordt 2019).

1.5: Thesis Outline

The Thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1

Presents an introduction to the thesis subject, the phenomenological, curatorial and interior design context of the research, the research question, aims and objectives, and the background and rationale informing the research area.

Chapter 2

Presents a literature review of phenomenology relative to curatorial practice, architecture and interior design.

Chapter 3

Provides an introduction and background to the virtual exhibition, the practice element of the research. This includes a discussion about the painting providing focus for analysis within the research as well as the relationship between phenomenology and the virtual exhibition.

Chapter 4

Presents the methodology exploring the development of a curatorial practice which focuses on the world of the object informed by phenomenological investigation, rather than the object itself.

Chapter 5

Examines the three contexts framing the research - Design, Curatorial Practice and Phenomenology - and how they combine to interact, inform and reveal the propositions affecting the presentation of objects within residential interior design.

Chapter 6

Explains the significance and appropriateness of adopting a phenomenological approach to the examination of the experiential interaction with the selected group of objects as they move through their 'worlds'. Also discussed are selected areas of the research pertaining specifically to the experience of the perception of objects, each of which corresponds to an element in phenomenology and phenomenological method.

Chapter 7

Presents the visualisation of the research through the design and production of a virtual exhibition, a virtual presentation visualising the thought processes occurring at the convergence and interaction between phenomenology, interior design, artefact and viewer.

Chapter 8

Presents the conclusion to the research with a summary of the thesis re-addressing the research question. This section also provides a critical reflection of the research journey as well as discussion concerning the contribution to knowledge and dissemination of the research.

2.0: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature relative to my research which is concerned with three main areas: phenomenology, curatorial practice, and the presentation of designed objects within the context of interior design. Bringing together the worlds of fine art, design and phenomenology in this way induces connections and advancements between design and philosophy, connections acknowledged as 'rare' by Anne-Marie Willis, Professor of Design Theory at the German University in Cairo, when she states that 'If philosophy is taken as enquiry into existence and if the conditions of existence are increasingly designed, then *'design'* should be a major topic of philosophical investigation. In fact *design*, named as such, is rarely engaged by philosophers' (Willis 2019, p. 1).

Similarly, Cameron Tonkinwise in his review essay *Philosophy Gets Real about Design: A Review of Albert Borgmann's 'Real American Ethics'* observes that 'Philosophers who use the word design, with reference to the human act of making things (happen) as opposed to divine schemes (such talk is perhaps no longer philosophical) are few' (Tonkinwise 2015, pp. 21-28). Willis also notes that 'Design philosophy is a meeting of design and philosophy, it could be written as Design/Philosophy to indicate a non-hierarchical relation, a condition of give and take, wherein one moment of a dialogue philosophy is dominant, in another moment design is dominant' (Willis 2019, p. 6).

This tension of dominance and retreat is mirrored within the relationship between art and philosophy as put forward by Heidegger (1971, p. 33) when he begins his description of the *World* of the pair of shoes worn by a peasant woman in Van Gogh's painting: 'A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet –.'

The Literature Review addresses the following three broad areas - as each of these areas are closely interconnected, they are not presented as distinct sections.

- 1: Architecture, design and phenomenology
- 2: Phenomenologists discussing design
- 3 Curators and artists applying phenomenology within their creative practice.

Whilst there is a rich literature within architecture and interior design from a spatial perspective, literature is less evident when interior design is approached from the position and consideration of the experience of the presentation of objects within an interior - the conceptual location of this research.

2.2: The Review

To begin this section by looking at the discussions around phenomenology and spatial architectural concepts, Dr Elie Haddad, Professor of Architecture at the Lebanese American University recognises that the importance of the experience of architecture or 'critical spirituality', Haddad (2009, p. 506) as critiqued by Thomas Schumacher (1979, pp. 30-31) in his comparison between Siegfried Giedion and Charles Jencks is a rather new addition to the architectural theoretical framework. Hadid references that Jencks posited 'what appears to be an original thought, the overcoming of the historical dichotomies of body/mind and matter/spirit to result in a new conception that brings together these opposites into a comprehensive unity' (Schumacher 1979, pp. 30-31). While significant in its field, this work does not bear directly on the questions addressed in this research.

The discussion and design of experiential architecture through the application of phenomenology, leading to an understanding of the cause of experience, has been disseminated by phenomenologists, architects and architectural theorists through lectures and writings mainly in the 20th century.

Professor Christopher Tweed in his paper discussing architectural experience was emphatic about this connection with phenomenology: 'Some of the most detailed descriptions of our experiences in and around buildings are found in the writings of 20th century phenomenologists. The most celebrated of these are Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and Heidegger's essays *Building Dwelling Thinking*, *Poetically Man Dwells* and *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Otto Friedrich Bollnow has also addressed experience of the built environment, but his appropriation by the architectural community in English-speaking countries has been hampered by the fact that there is no English translation of his major work, *Mensch und Raum*. Architectural theorists have drawn heavily on these - and to a lesser extent on Husserl and Merleau-Ponty - to develop theories with closer links between buildings and their experiencing subjects' (Tweed 2000, p. 4).

In *The Poetics of Space* and specifically in the chapter *Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes* the reader is invited to 'resume contact with the unfathomable store of daydreams and intimacy' (Bachelard 1994, p. 78). This theme is extended further on the same page where the experience of the (phenomenological) contact by the reader with, in this instance a wardrobe, is described as follows, 'Indeed, without these 'objects' and a few others in equally high favour, our intimate life would lack a model of intimacy. They are hybrid objects, subject objects. Like us, through us and for us, they have a quality of intimacy. Does there exist a single dreamer of words who does not respond to the word wardrobe?'

This single example of many in this chapter of *The Poetics of Space* (the discussion of other objects includes: the beauty of complex locks, chests, drawers, and the relationship between clean sheets and the scent of lavender) acknowledges that objects within an interior do not only exist *in themselves* in the Husserlian sense but also exist *in relation to the user* in the Heideggerian sense of equipment and the experience developed through extended use of, and interaction with, the objects.

Although the objects discussed by Bachelard are furniture and not decorative objects or objects, their appearance is relevant to this research insofar as:

- a) They are an early departure from the predominantly spatially oriented critique on interiors prevalent at the time of the book's publication in 1958.
- b) The objects are presented from the perspective of experience and implicit, rather than hidden, meaning.

Moving closer to the area of my research concerned with the experience of the world of an object, in his essay *In Praise of Shadows* Jun'ichirō Tanizaki develops the importance of experience being enhanced by an object (in his example, gold-flecked black-lacquered tableware viewed by candlelight) writing that: 'The sheen of the lacquer, set out in the night, reflects the wavering candlelight, announcing the draughts that find their way from time to time into the quiet room, luring one into a state of reverie. If the lacquer is taken away, much of the spell disappears from the dream world built by that strange light of candle and lamp, that wavering light beating the pulse of the night. Indeed, the thin, impalpable, faltering light, picked up as though little rivers were running through the room, collecting little pools here and there, lacquers a pattern on the surface of the night itself' (Tanizaki 1977, p. 14). This description of the impact on the viewer and the potential altering of (phenomenological) experience caused by taking away or relocating the lacquer, demonstrates a focus on the object that is more in line with the meticulous attention to objects and their presentation in the setting of a design gallery. A focus echoed within my research by the alteration of experience of those objects isolated from *The Feast of the Gods* as precipitated by their presentation within unexpected worlds and evidenced within Room Four of the exhibition accompanying this thesis.

In the context of spatial organisation and phenomenology, architecture provides several examples which lean towards my specific research area and from which some useful findings may be drawn. For example, in a paper discussing the phenomenology of place, Mervat El Shafie (El Shafie 2011, p. 65) states that the 'Built environment, I believe, manifests the interrelationship of people and nature through layers of meaning, which operate in space/place. These layers of meaning - inhabit space as an invisible side of the visible built environment.' While mainly concerned with the *interrelationship of people and nature through layers of meaning*, El Shafie's also discusses the work of Louis Kahn (1901-1974) who refers to invisibility as 'silence'. El Shafie says that 'He (Khan) suggests that architecture exists at a threshold 'between silence and light'. He calls that which does not exist 'silence' and that which exists 'light'" (El Shafie 2011, p. 65). Kahn writes that silence is 'the unmeasurable, the desire to be, the desire to express, the source of new need' and that light is 'the measurable, the giver of all presence, by will, by law, the measure of things already made' (Lobell 1985, p. 20). Maurice Merleau-Ponty also acknowledges silence as a pre-creative condition when, speaking of philosophy in *The Visible and the Invisible* he states that, 'It is the things themselves, from the depths of their silence, that it wishes to bring to expression' (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 4).

Although El Shafie's essay primarily discusses phenomenology relative to site and architectural experience, the reference to the significance of silence in the work of Louis Kahn and subsequently Merleau-Ponty raised for me an interesting point and usefully framed it in the language of phenomenology: 'that experience can be powerful when explicit meaning is not forthcoming'. In my project, this resonates in part with the silence within Room Three of this research exhibition. It is a silence which allows the objects to show themselves to us, a condition where we are no longer looking at the objects but the objects, now liberated from the painting, are 'expressing their existence' by moving, as Kahn says, from the silence into the light 'the measurable, the giver of all presence, by will, by law, the measure of things already made'.

Genius Loci: Towards a phenomenology of architecture, by contrast, looks at the implications for, 'spaces where life occurs are *places*, in the true sense of the word. 'A place is a space which has a distinct character' (Norberg-Schulz 1980, p. 5). The book comprises an informed and detailed account of the nature of place from both a phenomenological and architectural perspective. Ultimately though, the topography of architecture remains resolutely focused on the purely formal and spatial language of building types and the description of architecture's relationship with landscape and urbanisation. As such it remains an informative work but one which is largely outside the scope of this research.

In the collection of essays *Advancements in the Philosophy of Design* (Vermaas *et al.* 2018) the discussion in the chapter *Phenomenology in Spatial Design Disciplines: Could it Offer a Bridge to Sustainability?* proposes that phenomenology is highly applicable to, if not necessary for, a deeper and more integrated approach to spatial design disciplines in a world that aspires to be sustainable. Whilst a first response could be to discount this essay as also outside the scope of this research or, at best, peripheral, the chapter 'develops upon the frameworks established by Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, and the works since which have attempted integration of such ideas in architecture and design, such as those by Aalto, Norberg-Schulz, Pallasmaa, Frampton, and Zumthor, evaluating key historical and more recent phenomenological concepts for their importance in contemporary spatial design' (Petrović, E.K. *et al.* 2018). The essay cites the long tradition that has co-existed between architecture and phenomenology. As Adam Sharr points out in *Heidegger for Architects*, 'Heidegger's work as been influential on architects and architectural theorists as diverse as Peter Zumthor, Stephen Holl, Hans Sharoun and Colin St, John Wilson' (Sharr, 2007).

Developing understanding of the overlapping of interest and collaboration between the writings of phenomenologists and the practice of architecture, the signpost to *Thinking Architecture* by architect, Peter Zumthor, includes the changes in perception occasioned by the placement of objects (in Zumthor's example, furniture) within architectural space. In the chapter *From a Passion for Things to the Things Themselves*, Zumthor (2006, pp. 39-51) describes from memory an initial visit to a dining hall in an hotel very positively but, upon revisiting the hall, was disappointed by inconsistencies between the memory and the reality. Zumthor explains that the key to re-experiencing a room together with the objects in it, is to focus on '... absorbing moods, moving in spatial situations and I am satisfied when I am able to retain a feeling, a strong general impression from which I can later extract details as if from a painting' Zumthor (2006, p. 51). Such intense spatial impressions are important to the sequence of rooms within this research exhibition, each room fulfilling a specific role leading to a specific end, the altered experience of the viewer resulting from an encounter with the worlds of objects from a painting.

In Chapter Two of the essay *Phenomenology in Spatial Design Disciplines* (Petrović, E.K. *et al.* 2018) phenomenological experience is discussed in relation to landscape architecture, but the principles may be equally applied to the landscape of an interior. Indeed, the late interior designer, David Hicks, refined and focused the idea of the interior landscape to create his signature tablescapes, 'carefully composed arrangements of accessories set on a table, each piece specially chosen until the whole is greater than the sum of its parts' (Wiener 2011). Within the essay discussed here, Petrović, *et al.* discuss the design of experience as follows, 'Designing a memorable experience is a unique task for a designer. This is acknowledged by phenomenology as sensory design, which can be translated into a manipulation of space, material, light and shadow to create memorable encounters between a subject and an object through the human senses' (Petrović *et al.* 2018, p. 14).

The notion that an experience may depend on multiple worlds at once breaks with Heidegger's account of world, at least as it is represented in *Being and Time*, and is a valuable resource for theorising the experience of visitors to the exhibitions in my outline of Radical Design. It informed my use of *The Feast of the Gods* which itself brings together objects originating within different worlds.

This creates an experience that is not only tangible, but also abstract, observed and perceived, 'an experience that relies on a sensorial approach embedded in an ontological view' (Petrović, E.K. *et al.* 2018, Ch. 2). The idea of an 'experience that relies on a sensorial approach embedded in an ontological view' is reflected by my own decision to draw on Heidegger's phenomenology informing the conceptual design of the exhibition integral to the phenomenological investigation of the research where, 'It is important to note that the intention is not to remove (such an) experience *from* the world but rather to reveal it as situated *in* a world, or indeed, within the multiple worlds inhabited by the objects' (Petrović, E.K. *et al.* 2018, Ch. 2).

Memory and experience are also presented by Akkelies van Nes in her review of lectures given by the Norwegian architect, author, educator and architectural theorist. In *The Heaven, the Earth and the Optic Array: Place Phenomenology and its Degree of Operationability*, van Nes asks the critical question: 'How is it possible to build a theory on how places are experienced, how places guarantee a harmonic life for inhabitants, and in what ways new objects will guarantee a continuation of a place's sphere, when it involves human intentions, identification criteria, individual feelings and perceptions about places, and insights in various cultural backgrounds? Can it be made at all' (Van Nes 2008, p. 113). My research proposes that objects be experienced in a phenomenological way, suggesting ways that objects containing memories unconnected with the viewer may, in turn, through the presentation of the worlds connected to the objects, enable objects to 'guarantee a continuation of a place's sphere'.

Rowan Wilkin's paper *The Critical Reception of Christian Norberg - Schulz's Writings on Heidegger and Place* (Wilken 2013) discusses the reaction to much of Norberg - Schulz's critical output but is primarily concerned with a larger critique of Modernism and dogma within architecture and architectural theory. He also presents, very successfully, an overview of key issues surrounding Heidegger's writings on 'dwelling' relative to the death of Modernism and whether phenomenology is able to provide a direction towards resolving '... the messy and complicated contemporary lived existence of urban dwellers' (Wilken 2013, p. 13). The discussion and its accompanying, sometimes hostile, critique remains external to the investigations of this research, addressing architectural and urban planning theory rather than the object-focused concerns of this research.

Addressing the inclusion of phenomenology in the thinking informing interior design possibilities, David Seamon notes that 'I emphasize that a major value of phenomenological research for interior design is revealing aspects of environmental and place experience that are typically unnoticed so that they might be pondered and made better use of in the design process' (Seamon 2015, pp. 417-31). This is an interesting point in that it seems to refer to the revelation or presentation of unseen elements such as the world(s) of an object as informative to the design process of an exhibition layout or a collection of objects acquired by the owner within the interior of their residence. Or, as Wertz (2005, p. 175) succinctly confirms: 'Phenomenology is a low-hovering, in-dwelling, meditative philosophy that glories in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminacy and ambiguity, primacy over the known.' That when a thing is presented something of its world is presented with it is to some extent a familiar idea, but its confirmation in relation to phenomenology and design is valuable. However, what Wertz does not explore is the potentially disorienting effect of the presentation of multiple worlds occurring when different objects are placed together.

American psychologist Amedeo Giorgi clarifies a possible methodology for the exploration of these 'unseen' or 'unnoticed' elements within the design process by positing that, whatever the intended application, '... four core characteristics remain intact throughout phenomenological research: The research is rigorously descriptive, uses the phenomenological reductions, explores the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and discloses the essences, or structures, of meaning immanent in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation' (Giorgi 1989, pp. 39-61). Findlay (2009, p. 9) while acknowledging that the work of Giorgi is helpful, adds a fifth core characteristic to the definition when she says that, 'Any research which does not have at its core the description of 'the things in their appearing' focusing on experience as lived, cannot be considered phenomenological.'

Endnote 2, included within Findlay's paper is this list by Peter Ashworth (Ashworth 2003 - 2006) offered as 'fractions' to be employed heuristically in phenomenological lifeworld analysis. Certain points, identified by (my) italics, resonate directly with my research:

1. Selfhood (meanings of identity, agency, presence, voice), relationships with other people and what others mean to the person (sociality)
2. Embodiment (meanings related to one's own sense of one's body)
3. *Temporality (meanings about past, present and future)*
4. *Spatiality (sense of place, space and bodily scope and possibilities)*
5. *Project (the central concern for the person which reveals itself in the situation)*
6. *Discourse (socially available ways of talking or acting that the person is drawing upon)*
7. *Mood-as-atmosphere (i.e., The feeling tone of the situation).*

These points, drawn from Heidegger, are all implicated in the phenomenological experience of a thing through its disclosure in the setting of its world.

The Norwegian journal *Phenomenology and Practice* 'works to regain a fuller grasp of the nature and significance of our lived experiences' (Saevi *et al.* 2022). The journal was founded by Max van Manen in May 2007 and is '... a human science journal dedicated to the study of the lived experience of a broad range of human practices. These include (but are not limited to) the professional practices of pedagogy, design, counseling, psychology, social work, and health science' Of particular interest is the inclusion of work commenting on phenomenology relative to both design and practice.

Rachel McCann's essay *On the Hither Side of Depth: An Architectural Pedagogy of Engagement* (McCann 2005) discusses architectural space from a rigorous but sensorial standpoint, closer to the phenomenological relationships between the viewer and the objects in my own research, as illustrated by the emphasis on the experience and memory of the 'world' of the space revealed in this short extract: 'Space is the empty container of experience, it invites and enables experience. When we leave a place, we remember not the place itself but our experience of it. Echoes, smells, sudden changes in temperature when we pass from light to shadow, heat radiating from a sunlit wall, enframed or hidden views, a feeling of mystery, all contribute to our experience of architecture, and they all stem from the depths of our embodiment.' Again, the emphasis on world is relevant to this research but again, my focus is on the curated presentation of design objects, rather than architecture.

The experience of exhibitions within art galleries and museums is the focus of a paper by Simon Høffding, Mette Rung and Tone Roald of the University of Copenhagen who: '... present a sketch of a class of aesthetic experiences that ought to be taken into consideration in curatorial practices. In other words, we develop a picture of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience and argue that the existence of such experiences should inform the question of the purpose of the art museum in the same way as the participatory agenda' (Høffding *et al.* 2020). This work is inspired by the phenomenologist, Mikel Dufrenne who argued that 'imagination' and 'reflection' (Dufrenne 1973, pp. 361-393) 'are to be held at

bay as aesthetic perception must concern perceiving the work of art as it is, it is about perceiving the art object as art, that is, as a grasped or felt meaning. Although imagination fulfils an important function, it needs to be restrained for aesthetic experience to develop. 'If it is possible to set aside the limitation of such an experience to the solely 'aesthetic' and open the experience more fully, this 'holding at bay' of imagination and reflection clearly resonates with my own research, particularly when Dufrenne goes on to say that 'To understand a work is to be assured that it cannot be otherwise than it is. This is no tautology, since this assurance can come to us only when we are infused with the work to such an extent that we allow it to develop and to affirm itself within us, discovering in this intimacy with the work the will to seek out its meaning within it. For, to repeat, existential necessity cannot be recognized from the outside or be experienced except in myself, insofar as I am capable of opening myself up to this necessity. Such is the necessity of the aesthetic object, which I must at the same time recognize in myself' (Dufrenne 1973, p. 396). This is very close to a description of the Phenomenological Reduction, alluding to the objects being allowed to reveal themselves to us, presented within Rooms Two and Three of my research exhibition - although my own focus is less on securing meaning than initiating a more open, possibly disorientating, experience.

'Phenomenological research methods have been demonstrated as effective for investigating the private, inner world of the individual' (Smith et al 2009). The purpose of the phenomenologist is to, 'reveal the structure of experience through descriptive techniques' (Valle and Halling 1989, p. 13). This was explored further by Kapur in her essay *Curating: in the public sphere* (Kapur 2007, p. 1) where she posits that '... curatorial innovations occur with reference to structures, models, ideologies devised for specific tendencies. Minimalism, for example, suggested that the spectatorial body has an axial privilege, that it provides a phenomenological understanding of the artwork.' This was an interesting proposition but not directly relevant to my research and therefore not pursued further.

The value of phenomenology as the foundation for a research strategy more closely aligned to my own is indicated by Hilary Collins when she says that phenomenology calls for us to 'arrive at new, more immediate meanings by allowing for a direct experience of the objects of our perception' and later 'It is a critical paradigm and calls into question what we take for granted in order to construct new understandings (Collins 2010, p. 41). This is particularly appropriate when applied to curatorial practice as defined by Sir Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate Gallery, London, between 1988 – 2017 when he says that 'Curating is less about orthodoxy and more of a place for invention' (George 2020, p. 37).

David Bull and Joyce Plesters' collaborative monograph *The Feast of the Gods: Conservation, Examination, and Interpretation* provided an informative and scholarly account of the background to, and cleaning of, Bellini's masterpiece (Bull *et al.* 1990).

In relation to the phenomenology relevant to this research, the relationship between art, craft, making and phenomenology should be mentioned, as the objects 'pulled' out of the painting are now recognised as art objects although of course, they would have been recognised as artisan or even utility objects in the Italy of the sixteenth century. For clarification on this attitude, it is useful to refer to the (now questionable) distinction between art and craft made by R. G. Collingwood in 1958 (Collingwood, pp. 14-16) and referred to by Fethe in his paper *Craft and art: A phenomenological distinction* (Fethe 1977, p. 129). Such a distinction is manifested within this research as two worlds, that of art – the object within the painting, and that of equipment - the object removed from, or originating prior to, the painting. An incidental but engaging discussion of the object in twentieth century art is published within the *Dossiers Pédagogiques* series by the Centre Pompidou, Paris (Leoni-Figini, 2007). Fethe (1977 p. 135) also cites this interesting and phenomenologically-redolent definition of art by Ernst Cassirer, 'When absorbed in the intuition of a great work of art we do not feel a separation between the subjective

and the objective worlds. We do not live in our plain commonplace reality of physical things, nor do we live wholly within an individual sphere. Beyond these two spheres we detect a new realm, the realm of plastic, musical, poetic forms and these forms have a real universality' (Cassirer 1944, p. 252). In the conclusion Fethe (Fethe 1977 p. 136) points out that, 'By studying the features which give unity to the [Husserlian] life-world we can understand how horizons of reality are drawn, how they constitute a dimension of experience broad enough to be considered a type of reality and then, with this knowledge, look for corresponding features within the experience art provides. In this way the student of art may make use of the independent work of the phenomenologist to further understanding of the very complex nature of his subject'.

As Sacha Golub states, 'Intentionality is a property, typically attributed to mental states, whereby those states are directed toward or about something' (Golub, pp. 423-424). Golub goes on to say that 'The technical term is central to both the phenomenological tradition and much analytic philosophy of mind and language, its modern history can be traced to Brentano, who revives the term from scholastic thought. However, the very centrality of the concept makes it hard to give a neutral characterisation of it' (Golub, p. 423).

The two main protagonists focused upon within my research are Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger whose interpretations of intentionality differ as follows: David Cerbone proposes that Husserl follows Brentano in that, 'All conscious experience, in so far as it exhibits intentionality has an essential structure that is independent of the empirical particulars of any being whose experience it is' (Cerbone 2006, p. 17). Or, as Polt puts it: 'Husserl refers to this essential directedness of consciousness as Intentionality' (Polt 1999, p. 14). This is subsequently critiqued by Heidegger and published in his 1925 lecture course *The History of the Concept of Time* (Heidegger 2009) in which Heidegger is concerned with our experience of things and where he interprets intentionality as:

'self-directedness, the manner in which we direct ourselves towards things' (Moran 2000, p. 231). This 'manner in which we direct ourselves towards things' as well as the concept of 'Dasein' is expanded in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Chapter Two: *Being-in-the-World in General, as the Fundamental Constitution of Dasein* (Heidegger 2010) where Heidegger emphasises that 'Being-in is thus the formal existential expression of the being of Dasein which has the essential constitution of being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 2010, p. 55). Heidegger takes what is for Husserl primarily a feature of consciousness, and for analytic philosophy a matter of psychology, and embeds it in a fully ontological account - we can be directed towards things because we are in a world, and the disclosure of things involves the world to which they belong. Both interpretations of intentionality are of value within this research and both approaches are explored within the research exhibition.

Of particular interest is how the '... concept of world figures prominently in Heidegger's account of how the truth of the essences of things comes to light, encompassing both their unhiddenness and their hiddenness, in the artwork' (Dahlstrom 2021, p. 827). This is continued in Mark Tanzer's discussion bringing together equipment, context and world when he says that, 'Ultimately, the various, increasingly comprehensive equipmental contexts, along with the equipment they make possible, are situated within, and thus made possible by, the all-encompassing equipmental whole. This overarching set of references wherein all available entities have their defining equipmental roles is what Heidegger calls 'World' (Tanzer 2021, p. 284).

Seamon and Mugerauer (1995) draw substantially from Heidegger to explore the themes of dwelling and our relation to the environment, but the focus is on built environments, e.g. architecture, the relation of towns to the natural environment around them. Insofar as there is a consideration of internal spaces, it is of structures, e.g. doors, openings rather than art and objects.

Edward S Casey has written on Heidegger and space over many years. Casey's taking up the social, cultural, and political dimensions of place, Casey (2009, p. xxv) leads him, interestingly, to a revised understanding of place itself. Interestingly, and according to this understanding, 'place becomes an event, a happening not only in space but in time and history as well. To the role of place as facilitative and locator we need to add the role of place as eventmental: as a scene of personal and historical happening'.

Malpas has also worked extensively on Heidegger and in particular on space. His book *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* shows that Heidegger embraced a topological sense of place over geometric space and Malpas explores this through analysis of Heidegger's thinking. Malpas's engagements with the question of Being, nihilism, death, biology and politics are not directly relevant to this thesis, but the chapter 'Place, Space, and World' provides an account of how Heidegger's understanding of place and world developed in the late 1920s and beyond. Malpas focuses on the importance of involvement and argues that Heidegger came to see his presentation of space in *Being and Time* as too subjective. Malpas addresses the idea of world-formation that Heidegger introduces in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, which concerns the way human beings participate in the opening of worlds. The notion is relevant to this research project, which treats the encounter with objects, and collections of objects, as a creative encounter. However, Malpas leads his discussion back first to language and then to Kant as a way of demonstrating the significance of Heidegger's work to cognitive science and this is not my concern.

Søren Overgaard's book: *Husserl and Heidegger on Being in the World*, is an excellent overall account, particularly good on their respective attitudes to the natural attitude and the question of the constitution of world. For example and as Husserl puts it, 'In ordinary life, we have nothing whatever to do with nature-objects. What we take as things are pictures, statues, gardens, houses, tables, clothes, tools, etc'.

The founder of phenomenology would, therefore have no reason to argue with Heidegger when the latter describes the immediately given object in Dasein's everyday life as a 'tool'. Both thinkers readily agree that the kinds of 'things' we humans mostly encounter are things for some kind of use, be it practical, aesthetic, or whatever. Husserl even admits that it is an abstraction to talk of 'value free' things that are simply 'there', since 'everything means something to us, everything has its role to play, even if it is just the negative role of 'uselessness" (Hua XV, p. 56). To all appearances, Heidegger not only agrees with this description, but also recognizes it as Husserl's. In other words, Heidegger does not believe that Husserl would claim that the world of the natural attitude is one of 'pure' matter with no significance. What he does accuse Husserl of, however, is the failure to offer any adequate account of the mode of access a subject could have to the equipment encountered in the lifeworld' (Overgaard 2007, p. 9). The question of access and its connection with world is significant for this research project.

In his paper *How To Do Things With Brackets: The epoché explained* (Overgaard 2015, pp. 181-195) Overgaard offers the following explanation of the epoché: 'As phenomenologists, we are supposed to 'bracket' beliefs about the existence or metaphysical nature of intended objects. But this does not – indeed, as we will see, must not - affect the reflected-upon experience in any way. Phenomenological descriptions under epoché, I will suggest, should be understood as efforts to 'quote' the experiences reflected upon, that is, recount how things are 'according to the experience' without either endorsing or rejecting that picture of things' (Overgaard 2015, p. 181).

The idea of the epoché as 'quotation' is interesting, though not obviously consistent with the way I proposed to set up the exhibition space, but the connection becomes clearer as Overgaard expands on his proposal. 'Husserl's thought is that without inhibiting or deactivating all our assumptions about the world, these are liable to influence and hence falsify our phenomenological descriptions.

What matters here is not the fact that many of these assumptions may be false. Even the most well-established knowledge must be bracketed if we are to secure access to our experiences and their objects purely as experienced. Even known truths - perhaps especially known truths - may lead us astray when our aim is to do phenomenology' (Overgaard 2015, pp. 181-182). This notion that even the most well-established knowledge must be bracketed has been central to the way I have approached the reduction, particularly within the design of the virtual exhibition, where the bracketing has been achieved not by denying the viewer knowledge but by overloading them.

Overgaard doesn't discuss Heidegger in this essay, but his work helps to clarify that Heidegger more directly addresses the way the disclosure of things, and our encounter with them, depends on our implication in the world as such and as a whole. Heidegger engages what Overgaard identifies as Husserl's transcendental project, which leads him to analyses of time and the ontological constitution of Dasein. While this thesis doesn't pursue Heidegger's problematic in this direction, it indicates that the question of world is at once about things and the constitution of the world in which they appear. Heidegger explored this further in *On the Origin of the Work of Art*.

Heinrich and Wolsing are not Heidegger scholars, but their piece (Heinrich and Wolsing 2019) demonstrates the value of Heidegger's thinking about art, making and world for practice. In this case the work in question is land art in the open woods, but their interest in how things that have been made or manipulated, relate to and change the world in which they are set is reflected in the way this thesis addresses the opening of a world through the curation of objects in a interior setting.

Bundgaard and Stjernfelt's book *Investigations Into the Phenomenology and the Ontology of the Work of Art: What are Artworks and How Do We Experience Them?* (Bundgaard and Stjernfelt 2016) investigates the nature of aesthetic experience and aesthetic objects.

With contributions from leading philosophers, psychologists, literary scholars and semioticians, the book addresses two intertwined issues. The first is related to the phenomenology of aesthetic experience: The understanding of how human beings respond to artworks, how we process linguistic or visual information, and what properties in artworks trigger aesthetic experiences. The examination of the properties of aesthetic experience reveals essential aspects of our perceptual, cognitive, and semiotic capacities. The second issue studied in this volume is related to the ontology of the work of art: Written or visual artworks are a specific type of object, containing particular kinds of representation which elicit a particular kind of experience. The research question explored is: What properties in artful objects trigger this type of experience, and what characterises representation in written and visual artworks? The volume sets the scene for state-of-the-art inquiries in the intersection between the psychology and ontology of art. The investigations of the relation between the properties of artworks and the characteristics of aesthetic experience increase our insight into what art is. In addition, they shed light on essential properties of human meaning-making in general.

Annina Schneller presents a convincing discussion on the relation between ontology, design and aesthetics in her dissection of the essential properties of a designed object from a philosophical perspective. She acknowledges the design dilemma when, 'Some definitions of design stress the aspect of function, others the similarity with art. Even if we try to break down the definition to design objects in the sense of designed material objects such as chairs, books or buildings, defining their essential properties proves difficult' (Schneller 2018). I believe this difficulty can be productive, insofar as it indicates that one can experience design objects without being able to classify them easily, which in turn can lead to a distinctive experience of the object.

Donnchadh Ó Conaill's discussion of John McDowell's perception of World (Ó Conaill 2012, pp. 419-518) claims that the rational link between perceptions and empirical judgements allows us to perceive objects as belonging to a wider reality, one which extends beyond the objects perceived and how, in this way, we can be said to have a perceptual awareness of the world. Ó Conaill argues that McDowell's account of this perceptual awareness does not succeed and his account as it stands does not have the resources to explain how our perceptions can present objects as belonging to a wider reality, regardless of the judgements we make about that reality. Ó Conaill suggests that we can give a better account of this perceptual awareness of the world by appealing to transcendental phenomenology. A phenomenological study of perceptual experiences describes how they are structured by a sense of the perceived objects as belonging to a world containing other objects of possible perception. Ó Conaill outlines this sense we have of the world, and argues that it allows us to perceive objects as belonging to a wider reality. Consequently, transcendental phenomenology can help to explain our perceptual awareness of the world.

Thomas Arnold, discussing Husserl's theory of objects within his paper *The Object(s) of Phenomenology* (Arnold 2020) introduces his position as follows: 'Object-hood is central to Husserl's work, yet he employs several different notions of object-hood without clarifying the differences, his work thus offers rich and nuanced reflections on object-hood, but in a theoretically underdeveloped, at times even paradoxical, form. This paper aims to develop Husserl's theory of objects systematically. In order to achieve this I distinguish five object-concepts operative in Husserl's phenomenology and prove that they are not co-extensional. I also argue that they form a layer in terms of transcendental constitution, one implying the other. I conclude the paper by exploring Husserl's paradoxical claim that the absolute is not an object. From these considerations, two meta-phenomenological lessons emerge:

- (a) object-hood is not total (there are not only objects), yet.
- (b) we cannot escape objectification while engaged in phenomenological reflection.

All acts of perceiving, valuing, judging are about objects, whatever we can talk about meaningfully is, in some sense, an object (Held 1966, p. 146). So object-hood forms part of the topical or thematic core of phenomenology's research agenda. Since phenomenology itself is an object-directed activity, object-hood is also a topical theme of phenomenology's reflexive self-grounding, the phenomenology of phenomenology or meta-phenomenology.' This is an interesting and relevant paper, particularly when read against Object-Oriented Ontology.

Graham Harman, founder of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) provides a viewpoint that, 'As a philosophy committed to the autonomous existence of objects apart from their various relations, OOO endorses the basic formalist principle of the self-contained object, while flatly rejecting the further assumption that two specific *kinds* of entities – human subject and non-human object – must never be permitted to contaminate each other (Harman 2019, preliminary note). Harman also says later in the work that, 'I will also refuse Greenberg's unified flat canvas in favour of a model in which every element of an artwork generates its own discrete background' (Harman 2019, pp. 83-109). This publication presents a compelling argument for ways of looking at, engaging with and relating to, both painting and the objects contained within the painting.

Ian Bogost, author of *Alien Phenomenology: or What it's Like to Be a Thing* (Bogost 2012) has put forward a definition of an applied Object Oriented Ontology (OOO) in which he says that: 'Ontology is the philosophical study of existence. OOO puts *things* at the center of this study. Its proponents contend that nothing has special status, but that everything exists equally—plumbers, cotton, bonobos, DVD players, and sandstone, for example.

In contemporary thought, things are usually taken either as the aggregation of ever smaller bits (scientific naturalism) or as constructions of human behavior and society (social relativism). OOO steers a path between the two, drawing attention to things at all scales (from atoms to alpacas, bits to blinis) and pondering their nature and relations with one another as much with ourselves' (Bogost 2009).

Stanford Howdyshell's informative and well-explained paper *The Essences of Objects: Explicating a Theory of Essence in Object-Oriented Ontology* draws on Graham Harman's work on OOO and Heidegger's thinking on the essence of being, presented in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2000) 'Harman touches on essences, describing them as the tension between a withdrawn object and its withdrawn qualities, but fails to distinguish between essential and inessential qualities within this framework. To fill in the gaps, I will turn to Heidegger's explication of *phusis* in order to show that an essential aspect of being is how one enters into causal relations and continually reveals oneself to other beings. In bringing OOO and Heidegger together, I will find that each object has a unique way of exerting itself in the world and that the domestic relations that make up this unique profile are essential to it, while other domestic relations, those that do not influence its particular way of exerting itself, are inessential. Thus, the essence will be found to be the set of domestic relations that make up the determinate form, or unique causal profile, of the object' (Howdyshell 2020).

Howdyshell concludes that 'Each object has its own structure, and that structure allows it to exert itself on the world in a way that is particular to it.' Further, and here Heidegger's notion of world is clearly important, an object is essentially the set of domestic relations in which it is lodged: 'these relations are not dependent on outside entities or grounded in a fundamental level of being. Instead, they come into being with the emergent properties of the object itself' (Howdyshell 2020).

This paper provides a very clear insight into both OOO and Heidegger's thinking on the essence of objects and helps to clarify for me that Heidegger rather than Harman will be the main resource for this research because of the importance in his thinking of world.

Finally, this is exemplified by Parry and Wrathall's (2011) discussion in *Art and Phenomenology* of the philosophy of art, which has traditionally been concerned with the definition, appreciation and value of art. Through a close examination of art from recent centuries, *Art and Phenomenology* is one of the first books to explore visual art as a mode of experiencing the world itself, showing how in the words of Merleau-Ponty 'Painting does not imitate the world, but is a world of its own'.

For me, this is particularly helpful when interpreting sixteenth century Italian painting from a phenomenological perspective. It also leaves open to investigation how the world of a painting may be experienced when the objects depicted in it themselves come from different worlds, which are juxtaposed in yet another world, as they may be in a curated design setting.

3.0: Background to the Virtual Exhibition

3.1: Introduction

My original intention was to produce a physical exhibition in the Uniqube Gallery at Staffordshire University, an intention that was explored in detail and involved:

1. Researching the possibility of exhibiting genuine examples of the objects represented in *The Feast of the Gods*. This was quickly discounted because of external factors including:
 - a) The objects were prohibitively expensive to purchase. For example, a Ming dynasty porcelain bowl of equivalent age, quality and pattern was available at Sotheby's for €92,000.
 - b) The museum-quality objects were unavailable for loan due to lack of security at the venue and possibility of damage to the objects.
 - c) The very high cost of additional insurance of the painting and objects for the duration of the exhibition.
 - d) The very high cost of locating, insuring and shipping from international locations.
2. Exploring the possibility of producing 3D printed facsimiles of the objects and a printed version of the painting *The Feast of the Gods*. This was discounted for the following reasons:
 - a) Very high costs of production at the scale and level of quality required, an example quotation for a smooth-sided bowl with an identical rose and peony pattern at full size would be £30,000.
 - b) Reduced-scale (and therefore affordable) examples would significantly reduce the phenomenological requirement of the exhibition where 'the objects show themselves to us'.
3. Finally, all possibility of creating a physical exhibition in any form was removed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The decision to produce a virtual exhibition obviated the logistical challenges associated with a physical installation whilst providing a number of additional benefits. The creation of a virtual environment allowed total control over the: sequencing, spatial dimensions, interior design and decoration, lighting, and viewer experience such as pacing, pausing, multiple image perception, and information delivery.

Advantageously, the virtual environment (Fig. 3.1) creates an environment that is more appropriate to the research aims than would have been possible to achieve in a physical exhibition whilst recognising that, in an ideal situation, phenomenology would require the actual objects to be on display. Given that the objects under investigation within the research are: a world-class painting by Giovanni Bellini, a thirteenth century Chinese bowl, a fifteenth century silver wine cup, and a fourteenth century Murano glass beaker, presenting the original objects rather than reproductions was not a realistic option.



Fig. 3.1

Anthony Rayworth

Room Two of the PhD virtual exhibition

This room overloads the viewer with musical, visual and narrative information in a way that would have been challenging to achieve in a physical environment.

The research was not intended to undertake a comprehensive investigation into phenomenology, but rather has adopted phenomenology as a tool for thinking of new ways in which to introduce the viewer, or client, to a more meaningful experience with the objects with which they associate. A phenomenological approach could extend the thinking of already successful practitioners by adding a layer of understanding *through experience* that may be otherwise elusive.

As will be discussed within Chapter Five: Context, of this document, there are designers, curators and dealer/designer/curators who source products for clients and curate their finds into a cohesive collection suitable for either a private or corporate client or gallery. Robert Kime and Axel Vervoordt, are introduced as exemplars of this approach to curatorial practice. However, before it is possible to ensure that a significant experience with the collections assembled as a result of such high-level curatorial skills is accessed by, for example, the clients of such designers, curators and dealers, it is necessary to reintroduce and respond to the central research aim, raised at the beginning of the research and repeated here:

'The research aims to ascertain whether, within the context of an exhibition of multiple objects, it is possible to precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information encroaching on such an experience'.

In order to respond to this question it is useful to 'move' through the virtual exhibition in the correct sequence, assimilating what effect each phenomenological encounter has achieved within the viewer and how each encounter more fully equips the viewer in readiness for the experience in the following room *without* the viewer being aware of such preparation.

Prior to examining the contextual location and the exhibition itself, it is necessary to first examine the rationale for selecting Bellini's *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. 3.2) as the critical artefact from which the research is developed.



Fig. 3.2

Bellini, G. (1514) Later additions by Dossi, D. and Titian (1529)

The Feast of the Gods

[Oil on canvas].

National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Source: NGA Visual Services, reproduced with permission.

3.2: *The Painting*

The Feast of the Gods is described by Vasari (2013, p. 433) as 'one of the most beautiful works that Giovanni Bellini ever created' combining the work of '... two great artists in one painting, signed and dated by both Titian and Bellini' (Bull 1990, p. 11). The choice of this painting as a vehicle for the exploration of phenomenology as a method for curating the 'worlds' of objects rather than the objects themselves, occurred as a result of the painting fulfilling specific criteria developed within the thesis. The painting had to provide a 'catalogue of possibilities' spanning art, design and philosophy in addition to demonstrating potential for the curation and presentation of objects *from within the painting itself*. To achieve this, the painting had to:

- Contain a number of objects relative to a residential interior
- Foster investigation into fine art, interior design and phenomenology
- Foster investigation into the painting itself
- Inhabit a rich and accessible provenance of patronage, context and traceable ownership
- Allow exploration of the worlds of the objects contained within the painting – the worlds of fine art and equipment and the movement of the objects between these worlds. The objects in the painting themselves come from different worlds and are brought together in the painting – as in an exhibition.
- Invite phenomenological investigation relative to specific and selected writings of Husserl and Heidegger

Other paintings were looked at and subsequently discarded. Most notably those from what is recognised as the Dutch Golden Age between 1588-1672, as these were initially considered to contain a broad selection of domestic objects and therefore appropriate to the research criteria. I met with Dr. An Van Camp, Curator of Northern European Art at the University of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum who, following very helpful discussion, suggested a painting from their collection which initially seemed to fulfil the necessary criteria. This was *Still Life of Fruit and Flowers* by Clara Peeters (Fig. 3.3).

Dr Van Camp also very generously suggested that the museum was also amenable to discussing the possibility of holding my exhibition in the temporary gallery at the *Ashmolean*. Clearly, in 2021 this would not have been possible.



Fig. 3.3
Peeters. C (1612-13)
Still Life of Fruit and Flowers
[Oil on Copper].
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

From within the painting I selected three objects for further investigation: The wedding knife (front, centre) the wine glass (front, left) and the container for fruit. However, on attempting to research these items for provenance, context and traceable ownership, very little further information was available. Further, Clara Peeters herself is something of a mystery amongst the male-dominated culture of Dutch painting in the early seventeenth century. Consequently, very little is known about her and her painting other than speculative 'Some have suggested' or 'She may indeed have been' comments. She signed and dated thirty-one paintings but no record of patrons is available.

Following subsequent investigation into the secular paintings of the Italian Renaissance as a possible area for representations of domestic objects linked to available provenance and context, *Still Life of Fruit and Flowers* was rejected for the purposes of this research in favour of the wealth of available material surrounding *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. 3.2). This was the painting that brought equal focus to: the collection of Alfonso Ist d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, his private study the Camerino d'Alabastro, the career of Giovanni Bellini, (*The Feast of the Gods* is recognised as his final, great, painting) and, more modestly, this research and its associated exhibition.

Giovanni Bellini and Titian's *The Feast of the Gods* is a representation of a scene from *The Fasti* (Latin: *Fastorum Libri Sex*.) *Six Books of the Calendar* Ovid (2004, Book 1). Within the poem (see Appendix I) the Gods - with Jupiter, Neptune, and Apollo among them - 'revel in a wooded pastoral setting, eating and drinking whilst attended by nymphs and satyrs. According to the tale, the lustful Priapus, god of fertility, stealthily lifts the gown of the sleeping nymph Lotis, as seen in the painting. A moment later, he will be foiled by the braying of Silenus' ass and the assembled deities will laugh at Priapus' misadventure' (NGA 2016, Overview).

The subject had previously been depicted in the first illustrated edition of *Ovid* in Italian, published in Venice in 1497. Another depiction of this rare subject in a Venetian print of 1510 has a very similar pose for Lotis but places much greater emphasis on the erotic nature of the story, including the outsize penis of Priapus, here only a hint under the drapery.

The figures shown (Fig. 3.4) are usually taken to be portraits of people at the Ferrara court, including Alfonso and his wife Lucrezia Borgia. See Appendix I for detailed contextual information surrounding the painting.



Fig. 3.4

The identities of the assembled Gods in the painting

3.3: Phenomenology and the Exhibition

My research is not an investigation into phenomenology *per se*, that is 'the description of things just as they are, in the manner in which they appear' (Moran 2000, p.xiii) and I do not present myself as a phenomenologist. Rather, I have adopted specific areas of phenomenology - Intentionality, The Reduction, World, Equipment - to inform the development of a method by which the worlds (in the Heideggerian sense) of objects relative to interior design may be revealed to a viewer through a combination of curatorial practice and a considered sequential presentation of contexts leading to an experiential intensity precipitated by the combination of phenomenology, object and context.

The four core areas of phenomenology previously mentioned each contributed to the development of a method by which domestic objects - bowls, cups, vessels and so on - depicted within the 1514 painting by Giovanni Bellini, could be dis-located from the painting and allowed to 'show themselves as themselves' before being re-presented to the viewer within a new range of contexts. These contexts are connected by their belonging to the worlds of either art or equipment, thereby altering the perception of the viewer relative to themselves, the objects and the context.

Intentionality

Sacha Golob defines intentionality as '... a property, typically attributed to mental states, whereby those states are directed toward or about something' (Golob 2021, p. 423). Within my research this is when a mental state (in this case, a gaze) is directed towards a bowl depicted within a painting. Boccaccini suggests that 'we can recognise in one single act, the awareness of a primary object, e.g. a physical phenomenon, and the awareness of a secondary object, e.g. a mental phenomenon' (Boccaccini 2015, p. 200).

Brentano had already discussed this point within *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* when he observes that 'The presentation of the sound (object) and the presentation of the presentation of the sound (object) form a *single mental phenomenon*, it is only by considering it in its relation to two different objects, one of which is a physical phenomenon and the other a mental phenomenon that we divide it conceptually into two presentations. (My italics)' (Brentano 1973, p. 88). It should be noted that Husserl preferred to refer to what Brentano called 'presentations' as 'objectivating acts' - that is, acts which present an object' (Moran 2000, p. 115).

Husserl discusses this 'being as consciousness' and 'being as reality' within *Essentially necessary differences between the modes of intuition* as follows 'With an *absolutely unconditional* universality and necessity it is the case that a physical thing cannot be given in any possible perception, in any possible consciousness, as something really inherently immanent. Thus there emerges a fundamentally essential difference between being *as mental process* and being *as physical thing*' (Husserl 1999, p. 72).



Fig. 3.5

Detail of *The Feast of the Gods* showing Ming dynasty porcelain bowl

Referring back to *The Feast of the Gods* and the objects depicted within the painting, if the Heideggerian concept of world is ‘... to show and to conceptually and categorically determine the being of beings present in the world’ (Heidegger 1996, p. 63) and this is then added to the awareness of a primary and secondary phenomenon as put forward by Brentano and later by Boccaccini, a further level of complexity is introduced. The porcelain bowl shown in Fig. 3.5 is clearly a bowl and therefore something towards which our gaze may be directed. The complexity occurs when the bowl is recognised as a depiction of a bowl, not a bowl in the reality of equipment as it has no equipmental whole belonging to it, but a painting of a bowl to which the critique of art history and painting is applied.

Polt tells us that ‘If truth cannot be captured in theoretical propositions, then maybe art has a unique role to play in bringing about unconcealment’ (Polt 1999, p. 134). By positioning Intentionality at the beginning of the research and as the concept informing the opening room of the exhibition where the viewer first encounters the painting *The Feast of the Gods*, it serves as a reminder that ‘This technical term (intentionality) is central to the phenomenological tradition and to much analytic philosophy of mind and language’ (Golob 2021, p. 423).

The Phenomenological Reduction

The Phenomenological Reduction (the reduction) is, by way of introduction, a rigorous two-part technique (the Epoché - Greek for ‘abstention’ - and the Reduction proper) which directs an individual towards a way of experiencing the world through the clarity of astonishment, thereby liberating the individual from all previously held convictions and perceptions. David Woodruff-Smith succinctly introduces the reduction as follows: ‘In *Ideas I* Husserl presents his method of phenomenological ‘reduction’: we are to study pure consciousness by ‘bracketing’ the general thesis of the ‘natural standpoint’ the thesis that there is a natural world of objects beyond our consciousness.

By this method of bracketing, we turn our attention from the objects of consciousness (things in the surrounding world of nature) to our consciousness of these objects, regardless of whether or not they exist' (Woodruff-Smith 2007, p. 29). This is particularly relevant when applied to the interrogation of a painting such as *The Feast of the Gods* as there is an inconsistent reality occurring throughout the painting. Some of the objects are 'real' objects and did exist and can be traced whilst some elements (the gods and satyrs for example) have never existed in reality. Nonetheless, they have been painted and therefore are able to exist within our consciousness with as much clarity as any other object. Husserl clarifies this by saying that 'The world is for me absolutely nothing else but the world existing for and accepted by me in such a conscious *cogito*' (Husserl 1988, p. 21).

The painting and therefore the content depicted within the painting, exists and can be thought about within the consciousness of the viewer. It is also important to understand Husserl's bracketing or 'putting into parentheses' of the world when performing the reduction. 'When I perform the reduction, I no longer attend to the worldly objects of my experience, nor do I wonder about the causal underpinnings of that experience, instead, I focus my attention on the experience of those worldly objects. I pay attention to the world around me (and myself) rather than what is presented'. The reduction is, therefore, a kind of reflection: for Husserl, the realm of reflection is 'the fundamental field of phenomenology' (Cerbone 2006, p. 23).

Entering into the reduction (from the Latin, *reducere* 'to lead back') is a particularly relevant practice when encountering an intentionally curated collection of objects, as it allows the viewer to interact with the objects 'as they show themselves to us' without the encumbrances of preconception, prejudice or misunderstanding, all things or 'attitudes' normally present when we are confronted with situations for which, in our experience, there has been no precedent and therefore no immediate reference point.

As Moran succinctly puts it 'We must put aside our beliefs about our beliefs' (Moran 2000, p. 146). Within this research the reduction prepares the viewer for the encounter with 'the things themselves' presented within Room Three of the exhibition where we, in Heidegger's words '...let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself' (Heidegger 1996, p. 127).

World

The complexity of meaning attributed to 'World' within *Being and Time* is acknowledged by Heidegger as 'striking' and requiring 'unravelling'. This he does within Chapter Three: *The Worldliness of the World* within which he presents four core meanings of World. See (Heidegger 1996, pp. 64 - 65) for definitions. The definition of World preferred by Heidegger (and for the purposes of this research) is the third meaning, reproduced here for the purposes of clarity and disambiguation.

'Again, world can be understood in an ontic sense, not as beings essentially unlike Dasein that can be encountered within the world, but, rather, as that *'in which'* a factual Dasein 'lives' as Dasein. Here world has a pre-ontological, existentiell meaning. There are various possibilities here: world can mean the 'public' world of the we, or one's 'own' and nearest surrounding world. Thus, terminologically 'worldly' means a kind of being of Dasein, never a kind of something objectively present 'in' the world. We shall call the latter something 'belonging' to the word or innerworldly' (Heidegger 1996, p. 65).

4.0: Methodology

4.1: Introduction

Within this research I am contributing to curatorial theory and practice, exploring a specific experience in the context of exhibitions, and extending some of these considerations from fine art to interior design.

I am interested in curating the world of the object, informed by phenomenological investigation, rather than the object itself. What I am *not* doing is presenting a phenomenological account in the sense that I provide a new phenomenological analysis, nor am I developing an extension to the phenomenological treatment of design objects in a theoretical way. That is not the purpose of this research.

In order to facilitate such an investigation, three interconnected core research elements comprising: phenomenology, curatorial practice, and interior design are recognised. The principal and underpinning element of the research is phenomenology - providing the philosophical as well as the methodological basis for the investigation. 'Phenomenological research employs a qualitative method that seeks to understand the lived meaning of events or phenomena which people experience in particular situations' (Moss and Keen 1989).

The adoption of phenomenology as the foundation for the research is entirely appropriate here as, 'The word "phenomenology" means "the study of phenomena" [things that exist, or that we can be conscious of, heard, seen, thought about, felt, tasted, encountered etc.] and how we experience them: where the notion of a phenomenon coincides, roughly, with the notion of experience. Thus, to attend to experience rather than what is experienced is to attend to the phenomena' (Cerbone 2006, p. 3). My interest is precisely the experience of viewing design objects in a curated setting, and phenomenology can illuminate this.

This chapter will further locate my work within such knowledge by focusing on my specific area of research as defined within the Research Aim, first presented as Section 0.2, also reproduced here for the sake of clarity.

Aim:

As previously stated the research aims to: ... *ascertain whether, within the context of an exhibition of multiple objects, it is possible to precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information encroaching on such an experience.*

The research is a combination of theory and practice, see (Chapter Five: Context) for discussion of curatorial practice. A discussion on the validity of the phenomenological analysis of the relationship between a person, a painting and the world is provided within the thesis *Understanding Museum Visitors' Experience of Paintings: A Phenomenological Study of Adult Non-art Specialists* (On 2006, pp. 22-24) where On says that, 'Unlike the Cartesian view that the mind is independent of the body and the external world, phenomenology maintains that mind and body co-constitute each other as an inseparable unity. The methodology approaches human experience as a total experience involving the viewer's mind and body, affective and cognitive faculties, and feeling and understanding, with an emphasis on the reciprocity of various elements. Thus phenomenology is appropriate for this study, which aims to understand the complex interplay between the person, the painting and the world.' While the emphasis within my research is between the viewer, the painting, the objects and *their* world(s), the understanding of human experience remains at the core of the methodology, an approach for which a combination of practice and phenomenology is appropriate.

'Known by a variety of terms, practice-led research is a conceptual framework that allows a researcher to incorporate their creative practice, creative methods and creative output into the research design and as a part of the research output' (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 5).

Within my research, the action of creative curatorial practice – the beginning of the practice element of the research – is evidenced by the selection of an appropriate painting from which in turn, objects referring to interior design are selected, isolated from the painting and subsequently employed as a vehicle for phenomenological enquiry where 'The product of creative work itself contributes to the outcomes of a research process and contributes to the answer of a research question. Most commonly, a practice-led research project consists of two components: a creative output and a text component, commonly referred to as an exegesis. The two components are not independent, but [as in my research] interact and work together to address the research question'. With the inclusion of a virtual exhibition, my work includes a practice element.

Presenting an exhibition as part of the research submission was an intended element of the submission from the beginning of my research planning – informed primarily by the requirement to produce an experience which would represent and extend, in physical form, the phenomenological exploration of the written thesis. As Gray and Malins (2004, p. 95) state, 'The sole use of written language for many disciplines is restricting: it is 'language doing the work of eyes ... or ears for that matter'. Phenomenological enquiry extends the experience of 'eyes and ears' to include the structure of the entire experience.

At this point it is useful to begin to articulate the methodology relative to each of the four research Objectives, placing each articulation within its appropriate context.

4.2: Objective 1

The development of a theoretical foundation leading to the deployment of ideas in Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, particularly those of: intentionality, the phenomenological reduction, the things themselves, and world.

A discussion of phenomenology occurs elsewhere within this research, the discussion here is to do with how the phenomenology is focused directly towards the research through thinking about the requirements informing the design of the research exhibition and how this enhances the viewer experience of the theory.

The interaction and integration of practice and theory begins at the start of the research where areas of phenomenological enquiry are being identified as having direct bearing on the requirements of the research question as addressed within Objective 1. Questions began to arise as I worked through the phenomenological contexture which, as my understanding of the writings of Husserl and Heidegger developed, channelled my thinking towards what could be the most appropriate visualisation of the perception of Intentionality, of World, and perhaps most perplexing of all, how to visually represent the Phenomenological Reduction.

As Donald Schön puts it in his chapter *Design as a Reflective Conversation with the Situation* (Schön 1983, p. 79) 'The designer shapes the situation, in accordance with his initial appreciation of it, the situation "talks back," and he responds to the situation's back-talk. 'In a good process of design, this conversation with the situation is reflective. In answer to the situation's back-talk, the designer reflects-in-action on the construction of the problem, the strategies of action, or the model of the phenomena, which have been implicit in his moves'.

During preparation of the framework for the research, I had in mind Schön and his 'reflection on action' approach where 'Stimulated by surprise, [practitioners] turn thought back on action and on the knowing which is implicit in action. They may ask themselves, for example, 'What features do I notice when I recognize this thing? What are the criteria by which I make this judgment? What procedures am I enacting when I perform this skill? How am I framing the problem that I am trying to solve?' (Schön 1983, p. 50).

At this time I was also reflecting on design exhibitions that had had an emotional, visual or in some other way, experiential, impact on me during my many years of visiting the *Salone del Mobile, Milano* where I was introduced to the idea that the experience of very precisely curated commercial exhibitions of designed objects to do with interior design could be extended by having a foundation of poetry and philosophy. This, in turn, led back to my thinking about Heidegger and Van Gogh and the presentation of phenomenology using a 'vehicle' or metaphor by which complex concepts could be unpacked through an experience initially provoked by recognisable visual stimuli. For example, a figurative painting that also contains depictions of objects relative to a residential interior.

Thinking about making the exhibition feed directly back into developing the phenomenological foundation of the exhibition as well as developing within myself the critical ability to sequence the placing within the exhibition of such phenomenological notions as World and the Reduction. The theoretical framework and the design content of the exhibition were being advanced as a direct result of this simultaneous, bipartite development.

4.3: Objective 2

Identifying and isolating specific objects depicted within a painting and formulating their journey as they move between the worlds of fine art and equipment within the exhibition.

'A phenomenological study of perceptual experiences describes how they are structured by a sense of the perceived objects as belonging to a world containing other objects of possible perception' (Ó Conaill 2020, pp. 419 - 518).

It was important to provide a means of approach to the often somewhat elaborate phenomenological suppositions of Husserl and Heidegger, setting these aside whilst presenting a method informed by them, allowing the viewer to access and engage with the exhibition on a conceptual level without being immediately overwhelmed and ready to abandon any attempt at understanding. An exhibition can be an unsettling experience which emphasises self doubt (What am I looking at? Should I like it? Am I meant to respond in a particular way?) particularly so if the tenets informing the exhibition spring from Continental Philosophy.

Returning to my experiences in Milan where the objects exhibited, were often presented within challenging contexts such as: a deconsecrated 15th century cathedral, an interrogation chamber from WWII, or an hotel suite once occupied by Byron, the objects themselves remained reassuringly familiar in their domesticity even though they were new imaginings of such objects. Domestic objects such as those relative to a residential interior are united by their need to function, however abstracted the expression of that function can become.

A jug must still be able to hold and decant liquid. If it is not capable of that then it becomes something else and belongs within a different referential totality, inhabiting a different world from that of design, such as fine art or archaeology, where it is looked at and thought about but not used.

The decision to use a traditional – rather than abstract – painting that presented recognisable domestic objects to ‘precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information’ was adopted as having a strong possibility of success. The next stage was to identify the criteria for the selection of the painting that would become the fulcrum of the exhibition.

The painting had to:

- Be available in high-resolution digital format
- Have an availability of information to do with its history and provenance
- Have an availability of information to do with the artist and commission
- Be traditional and representational, not abstract or conceptual
- Contain a number of domestic objects
- The objects themselves had to be traceable and with provenance

The painting identified and adopted within this research is *The Feast of the Gods* by Giovanni Bellini. An account of the journey to locate such a painting as well as detailed information about the painting itself, its provenance and the objects within the painting are available in Appendix I of this document.

The painting introduces the Husserlian notion of Intentionality, the research exhibition itself, and provides three objects of note for isolation and detailed study that also evidence the Heideggerian notion of world, the nature of the worlds of the objects and the changes in the perceptual and phenomenological experience of the viewer as the objects move between their worlds and the viewer moves through the exhibition.

4.4: Objective 3

Designing an exhibition space to reflect and enhance both the intention of the presentation of the exhibits and the experience of the viewer as they move through the exhibition.

The museum or gallery is not the most brilliant place to take in a lot of facts and information. It's a place for exploring your own feelings about things and it's also a place to learn how to look because looking is difficult' (Casson 2020, 08.28 - 08.46).

Thinking about ways of designing and presenting a model for the visualisation, within an exhibition context, of the phenomenological concepts developed by Husserl and Heidegger of Intentionality, the Phenomenological Reduction, and World, helped clarify my thinking about the concepts themselves which, in turn, prompted reflection and modification of the presentation and so on. The experience of the visual presentation of phenomenology therefore, '... must carefully describe things as they *appear* to consciousness. In other words, the way problems, things, and events are approached must involve *taking their manner of appearance to consciousness into consideration*' (Moran 2000, p. 6).

The exhibition was originally intended to be a physical installation within Staffordshire University 'Uniqube' space. Two factors influenced my decision to rethink this approach and present the exhibition virtually:

1. The arrival of COVID-19 and the accompanying restrictions regarding availability of human and material resources
2. The difficulties of securing the objects to be displayed. A specialist printer was able to produce a high resolution, large-format facsimile of the painting *The Feast of the Gods* but the objects isolated from the painting were impossible to secure or 3D print due to extremely high cost in either insurance, purchase, shipping or manufacture.

The enforced refocusing of my thinking about the exhibition allowed me to more fully integrate theory and practice through the composition of the interiors within a virtual environment. The creation of a series of four virtual rooms enabled the design of each room to visually represent a distinct phenomenological tenet through an integrated context of interior and object unconstrained by financial or physical limitations. Accordingly, the rooms could more fully represent the visual research and, through the development of such a considered contextual location for the exhibition, greatly reduce or remove the necessity for ‘facts and information’, a fundamental aim of the research which could potentially diminish experiential interaction with the viewer. Additionally, the virtual nature of the construction allowed the decoration to be precisely aligned with the intention of each room, further concentrating the theoretical phenomenological focus represented by the interior. A plan of the exhibition is provided below for the purposes of clarity (Fig. 4.1).

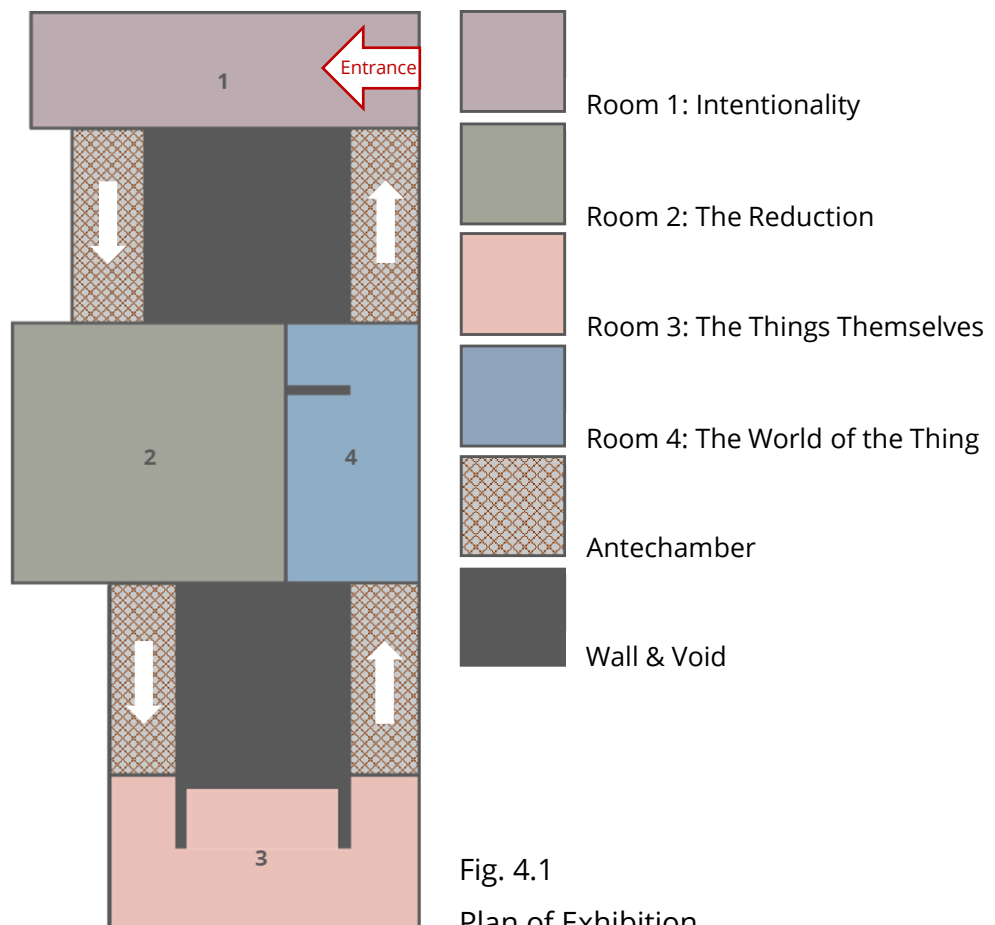


Fig. 4.1
Plan of Exhibition

4.5: Objective 4

Presenting the objects within alternative and unexpected contexts within the worlds of art and equipment to elicit new experiences in the viewer.

The objects isolated from the painting are presented in a range of contexts intended to modify the experience of the viewer by altering the world of the object. Following the phenomenological sequence of rooms within the exhibition, where the objects have moved consistently but persistently between the worlds of fine art and equipment, encountering objects originating in a recognisable and stable context (Italian High Renaissance painting) transposed into unexpected contemporary contexts following their exposure to phenomenology, introduces the viewer to possibilities of extemporary thought. By liberating the objects from their sixteenth century original context the objects are aligned to new referential totalities and regain diminished immediacy through their reorientation to contemporary culture.

This model of visual practice reflecting on phenomenological tenets and back again, in the style of both Schön and the Hermeneutic Circle - here describing text and context as equivalent (Fig. 4.2) has led me to a clarification in understanding the application of three tenets of phenomenology: Intentionality, the Reduction, and World. As stated earlier in this document, the contemporary interior now includes elements of *curated scholarship* and the placement of intangibles, the competence of which, I suggest, may be fostered by the adoption and advancement of such a phenomenological approach as that discussed within this research.

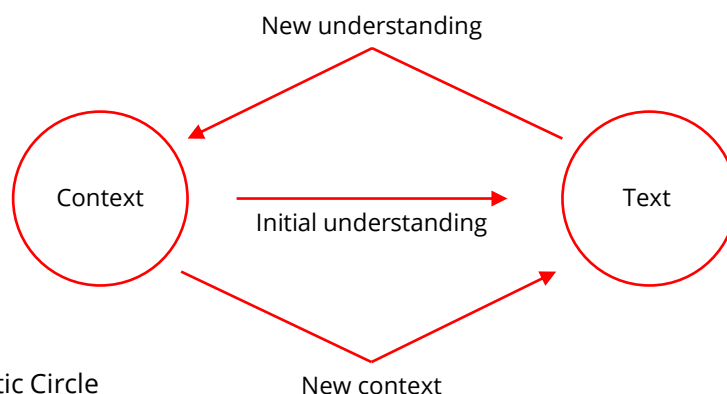


Fig: 4.2
Hermeneutic Circle

5.0: Context

5.1: Context 1 - Interior Design

As indicated within the abstract, this research is located at the precise point where the disciplines of philosophy, curatorial practice and design combine to interact, inform and reveal the propositions affecting the presentation of objects within residential interior design. Each of these disciplines are complex and demanding subjects in their own right and, when brought together to inform one field of enquiry such as interior design, the combination becomes at once significant and dynamic.

Successful residential interiors are inhabited spaces which bring together: craftsmanship, inspiration, curatorial skills, proportion, philosophical discourse, and a keen awareness of the history of furniture, lighting, art, and the designed object (Fig. 5.1). Stewart-Smith (2013, p. 106) emphasises that at any one point within the design process the renowned interior designer Alidad will be 'co-ordinating a number of people involved in different trades: juggling several aspects of a multifaceted design, the proportion of a cupola, the width and balustrade for a new mezzanine, the details for *verre églomisé* panels that are being incorporated into a complicated wall design in an adjoining space, the exact aged finish on hand-printed and hand-coloured wallpapers, the colours and texture for stamped leather wall panels, and the recolouring of document fabrics that are being woven specifically for existing antique furniture.'



Fig. 5.1

In this detail of a dining room by Alidad, a contemporary portrait of a sultan, commissioned for this space, is surmounted by a blue *verre églomisé* frame, surrounded by a hand-painted paper that is then edged with a painted and gilded moulding. The 19th century samovar in the centre of the Alidad-designed table echoes the shape of the frame of the portrait of a Sultan.

Interior design as evidenced through: spatial sequencing, philosophical referencing, sculptural allegory, and proportional balance, is informed by a thorough understanding of history. As stated by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (Vitruvius 30-15 BC, Book 1, p. 6) 'Unless acquainted with history, he (the architect) will be unable to account for the use of many ornaments which he may have occasion to introduce. For instance, should any one wish for information on the origin of those draped matronal figures crowned with a mutulus and cornice, called Caryatides (Fig.5.2) he will explain it by the following history. Carya, a city of Peloponnesus, joined the Persians in their war against the Greeks. These in return for the treachery, after having freed themselves by a most glorious victory from the intended Persian yoke, unanimously resolved to levy war against the Caryans. Carya was, in consequence, taken and destroyed, its male population extinguished, and its matrons carried into slavery. That these circumstances might be better remembered and the nature of the triumph perpetuated, the victors represented them draped and apparently suffering under the burden with which they were loaded, to expiate the crime of their native city. Thus, in their edifices, did the ancient architects, by the use of these statues, hand down to posterity a memorial of the crime of the Caryans.'



Fig. 5.2
The Caryatid Porch of the Erechthion
(421-406 BC.)
The Acropolis, Athens.

History therefore, allows access to the understanding of the essential nature or 'essence' of what we now call 'classical' architecture. For example: a description of a classically – proportioned room or interior could briefly be said to consist of a double cube room with a series of five windows on three sides with pediments above and deep sills below, the whole flanked by columns decorated in one of the five orders of classical architecture – Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Roman (also described as Composite).

The above, rather spare, description provides no indication of relative proportion, subsequent ambience, or scale in relation to the human body, in the words of Sir John Summerson CH CBE 'That, I think is one fair description of what classical architecture is but it is only skin-deep, it enables you to recognise the 'uniform' worn by a certain category of buildings we call classical. But it tells you nothing about the essence of classicism in architecture' (Summerson 1980, p. 8).

(Sir John Summerson was among the greatest of English architectural historians. Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum from 1945 until his retirement in 1984, he had been Slade Professor of Fine Art at both Oxford and Cambridge. Of his many books, the best known are probably *Georgian London* and *Architecture in Britain 1530-1830* - both are considered to be the standard works on their subject).

The adoption of phenomenology within this research as a means to interrogate the history and content of *The Feast of the Gods* stems from the understanding that the *practice* of phenomenological investigation may be an effective tool by which to access the 'essence' of the painting, the objects within the painting, and the worlds of the objects contained within the painting. Phenomenology is the appropriate method by which to achieve this as it: 'emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as *whatever appears in the manner in which it appears*' (Moran 2000, p. 4) that is, as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer.

Modernism in architecture and design, despite its determination to break with the past, nevertheless returned to the 'essence' of historical design as both a point of reference and departure. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, for example, possibly the most accomplished, scholarly and influential of the Modern architects, continually referred to the tatami rooms of traditional Japanese interiors, as well as the proportions of Gothic architecture, translating these proportions directly into the floorplans of country homes and headquarters buildings for his wealthy and influential American corporate clients.

Mies maintained that his greatest Patron was philosophy, continuing lifelong study into the philosophical debate concerning architecture, particularly through the work of Hegel and Nietzsche. Neumeyer (1991, p. 31) states that Mies' particular interest was the question of whether architecture was '... construction or interpretation of reality. Only questions into the essence of things are meaningful.' Here again is an example within the history of design of the search for the essence of things as a guiding principle for the creative act, returning this research back to an enquiry into phenomenology.

The tatami room (Fig. 5.3) is an excellent example into Mies' enquiry into history, 'The modular (about 3' X 6' - 91.44 X 182.88cm) tatami floor mat became the controlling element of planning in Japanese interiors' (Pile 2005, p. 94). Originally used exclusively for the castles of the Samurai nobility in and around Kyoto in the mid-sixteenth century, the form was eventually adopted by all classes of Japanese society, the poorest being a simple mat on a rammed earth floor.

There were strict guidelines for the layout and orientation of tatami mats. Mies adopted this modular system of design programming and continued to refer to the tatami tradition of proportion throughout his career (Fig. 5.4). This simple act of historical adaptation by Mies van der Rohe effectively established the (literal) ground rules for Modernist interior design for over fifty years.



Fig. 5.3
The Wa-shitsu or traditional
Japanese tatami room



Fig. 5.4
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe
(1945-51)
Farnsworth House, Illinois

Following the Post-Modern 'revolution' in the 1970s and 1980s, history, once again, became acceptable within architecture and interior design. Modernism, together with its rejection of history, itself began to be perceived as part of the history of architecture and design, allowing function, historical reference and what Michael Graves called the 'Poetry' of design to co-exist. In his book, *Buildings and Projects 1966-1981* Graves said that: 'Could these two attitudes, one technical and utilitarian and the other cultural and symbolic, be thought of as architecture's standard and poetic languages?' (Graves 1982, p. 11).

Similarly, Joseph Giovannini describes the New York practice of Shelton Mindel and Associates (Giovannini 2013, pp. 12-15) as: '... not history victims but interpreters. They carry forward the past into the present in Hegelian acts of synthesis. They incorporate tradition into their designs with rigour rather than sentiment.' Within the same essay, Giovannini also said of Shelton Mindel: 'Rather than traditionalists warming history over, or knee-jerk avant - gardists rejecting it completely, the [Shelton Mindel] team interpret architectural history as a complex but uninterrupted continuum, without the schism that early Modernism posited.'

The inclusion and presentation, of 'serious' antiques, antiquities and art as integral components within contemporary interior design projects, differs from traditional or mainstream presentations of such objets d'art in a residential interior in that the interior itself is often furnished or presented so that an 'important' object or painting is afforded the same attention as a pebble, textile fragment, or book.

Hamish Bowles, (Sartori-Rimini & Peregalli 2011, pp. 7-16) describes the work of Laura Sartori-Rimini and Roberto Peregalli who, as Studio Peregalli, are one of the leading protagonists of the approach. As 'Palimpsests of memory.' (Fig.5.5) Sartori-Rimini and Peregalli themselves, describe their approach as a balance between beauty, psychology, philosophy (Roberto Peregalli has an MA in Philosophy from the University of Milan) objects, and the clients' lives. '... conjuring memories and invoking things forgotten by time.'



Fig. 5.5
A Milan entrance
hall, restored in 2010
by Studio Peregalli.

At its best (and in addition to practicalities such as warmth, light, comfort etc.) a residential interior can elevate scholarship, thought and behaviour through the bringing together, or making connections between – in other words, curating - collections of objects reflecting the interests and requirements of the client. Writing in *The Curator's Handbook* (George 2015, p. 5) observes that these collections could be 'chosen to focus on an artistic or historical theme, or be brought together by artists who were working in a similar way.'

These designer/curators were, and in some cases still are, advised by historians, art dealers, collectors and other experts, most notably the 'Antiquaires', a small group of elite antique dealers working together to refine the taste of an equally small circle of discerning and highly influential clients from their perfect showrooms in Paris, London or Antibes, resembling more 'Cabinets of Curiosities' or *Wunderkammer*, than retail enterprises.

The reputation of these Antiquaires has to be impeccable as it the trust between the client and their dealer/decorator that allows the existence of the Antiquaires to continue. As brothers Alexis and Nicolas Kugel of Galerie J. Kugel (Fig. 5.6) of the 8th Arrondissement in Paris put it, 'When, some months after the death of our father, we bought a bronze microscope attributed to Caffieri (1725-1792) in Monaco, for which we paid four times the estimated value and sold it only a month later to the Getty Museum, people in the trade realised that the firm was in safe hands' (Gaillemin 2000, p. 84).



Fig. 5.6
Interior
Galerie J. Kugel
25 quai Anatole France
75007 Paris.

Developed out of the presentation of reliquaries in medieval churches, the Wunderkammer, or Cabinet of Curiosities had a slight air of the supernatural about them. This was possibly because many of the objects (for example, elephant tusks or rare, tropical shells) involved almost impossibly prolonged, dangerous or arduous journeys to acquire. Some objects were invented, creative exemplars of the art of taxidermy or 'curated' according to subject or theme including: death, medicine, sea creatures, birds, maps and so on (Fig.5.7). Many collections outgrew the limitations of the Wunderkammer, whether cabinet or room, often developing into full scale museums such as the combined collections of John Tradescant and Elias Ashmole in 16th century Oxford, now known as the Ashmolean Museum.

Patrick Mauriès (2011, p. 7) eloquently sums up the emotion driving such passion for collecting and curating when he says: 'Amid the eclectic profusion of objects that they have bequeathed to us we may still discern their visions and desires, we can still touch with our own fingers the objects – scarcely any dustier now than then – that they once held, and we too can take pleasure in the symmetries and the variations in shape and colour that they coveted, classified, added to and modified with such obsessive devotion, day after day and year after year.'



Fig 5.7

The Wunderkammer of Imperato Ferrante (1599).

Palazzo Gravina, Naples, this engraving became the first pictorial representation of a Renaissance humanist's displayed natural history research collection.

There are those connoisseurs who began their careers as curator/dealers in fine art or antiques before becoming extremely successful interior designers in their own right. This scholarly and cultivated approach to interior design is of particular significant to this research because of the informed curatorial process applied to objects of historical, philosophical or cultural value in order to create an interior of depth and meaning.

Robert Kime (Fig. 5.8) and Axel Vervoordt (Fig. 5.9) are two notable examples of this approach. Robert Kime beginning his antiques dealership as a means to pay his Oxford tuition fees following a crisis at home while Axel Vervoordt, who began collecting at the age of 14, bought his first Matisse at the age of twenty-one and subsequently sold it for a substantial profit as a way to convince his father to allow him to become a dealer rather than follow him into the family banking and racehorse breeding businesses. Both now have highly successful interior design, product manufacturing and antique dealership businesses with Kime including HRH The Prince of Wales among his clients. Vervoordt, whose client list includes HM The King of the Belgians, believes that ‘... the most inspiring spaces are invitations to new experiences’ (Vervoordt 2011, p. 15).



Fig. 5.8
Robert Kime
Town House Bedroom
Edinburgh
www.robertkime.com



Fig. 5.9
Axel Vervoordt
Rustic Bedroom
Tuscany
www.axel-vervoordt.com

The work of Robert Kime is to do with the juxtaposition of time and emotion. He works closely with Mary-Lou Arscott RIBA, who is also Head of School at Carnegie-Mellon School of Architecture. A former Head of Furniture at Sotheby's, Kime insists that he is an 'assembler and not a scholar' (Fig. 5.10) whose first client and mentor was Dame Miriam Rothschild and who he says 'rescued him from Sotheby's' and introduced him to Geoffrey Bennison (1921-1984) one of Britain's most influential designers. Bennison encouraged Kime to create magnificent settings for his clients, using objects from a broad range of social hierarchies. He observed that: 'Something ordinary put next to something beautiful creates a fusion: objects should be at different levels of emotion to avoid rivalry, the ordinary can be elevated and the beautiful made more accessible' (Langlands 2015, p. 13).



Fig. 5.10

'The cornice of the room in this Edinburgh Townhouse by Robert Kime has been given prominence by gilding the classic egg and dart details. The Felletin tapestry has been framed by the vertical hanging of a series of paintings by Claude Lorraine. Beneath it is a Marble-topped nineteenth century table which has details that faintly echo those of the cornice, while the Chinese lamp picks up colours from the Turkish carpet. On either side are two French chairs covered in Bargello stitch' (Langlands 2015, p. 154).

The shift toward an historically loaded yet simplified form of understanding within the design of interiors is, in part, a response to an increasingly challenging exterior world leading to the desire to inhabit a retreat in which continuity, memory and narrative remain relevant and comforting. As Harvey (2011, p. 213) succinctly describes the culture in which we live: 'There is in postmodernism, little overt attempt to sustain continuity of values, beliefs or even disbeliefs.'

Although published prior to Harvey's observation above, Gaston Bachelard could be said to be providing an antidote to the harshness of postmodernity. He begins his elegant and compassionate study of habitation *The Poetics of Space* with this statement: 'The house, quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavour to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value. For the house furnishes us dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. In both cases, I shall prove that imagination augments the values of reality' (Bachelard 1958, p. 1).

The sense of 'imagination augmenting the values of reality' is pertinent to the structure of the exhibition accompanying this thesis in the same way that the exhibition, by exposing the viewer to art, beauty, history, and refined culture, triggers values that augment the experience of the viewer as they journey through the presentation. A combination of imagination and actuality, developed in response to the precise curation of the exhibition, a combination of responses which may then be subsequently interrogated through the deployment of phenomenological practice.

5.2: Context 2 - Curatorial Practice

In his Preface to *A Brief History of Curating* (Obrist 2018, p. 5) Christophe Cherix posited the question: 'How can one *be* with art? In other words, can art be experienced directly in a society that produced so much discourse and built so many structures to guide the spectator?' If this point is then expanded to say 'How can one *be* with art *and design*?' the difficulties still remain, the many 'structures to guide the spectator' persist. However, if the question is then condensed to 'How can one *be* with design, specifically interior design, then the answer becomes simultaneously more straightforward and more problematic. More straightforward because the discourse built over centuries by which civilisation is able to refine its opinions and certainties about art has matured and fragmented. Whatever is set before the viewer in the art world is very likely to have an existing and (mainly) helpful 'theory' by which to access the work.

More problematic because design, in comparison, has relatively little published critical history. As Paola Antonelli (Fig.5.11) Curator of the Department of Architecture and Design and Head of the Department of Research and Development at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, succinctly puts it when interviewed in *Design and Architecture* magazine 'When we talk about curators, the first thing we think about is art. Maybe it is because art curators come from academia, and moreover from the same institutions. Architecture and design curators are often architects. They usually do not have Ph.D.s' (Antonelli. 2019, p. 93).



Fig. 5.11

Paola Antonelli
Curator, MOMA

Antonelli curates exhibitions that test the parameters of what can be exhibited. Her 2020 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York presented the work of Neri Oxman, Professor of Mediated Matter at MIT MediaLab (Fig. 5.12) who, in the words of Antonelli when interviewed in *MOMA* magazine (2019, No:211) 'demonstrates the importance of mastering technology and connecting with other scientific fields, from biology to physics, in order to speculate on firm grounds. Speculative design, the discipline that imagines possible futures through design at all scales, is very important. However, we are today facing very urgent and deep problems - the environmental crisis above all, and then issues concerning privacy, geopolitical imbalances and tensions - anxiety related to the spread of AI-enabled technologies, and much more - and speculative designers cannot afford anymore to just dabble in science fiction. They have to propose ideas and solutions that are plausible and imaginable, however far-fetched. Neri is always believable because, while her design is arrestingly elegant and could be enough for anyone interested in objects for their own sake, her science is strong and her technology effective. Her beautiful forms are demos for groundbreaking innovations.'



Fig. 5.12

Oxman, N. (2011)

Cartesian Wax (far left), *Materialecology Project*

MOMA, New York.

14 May – 18 October 2020.

Curator: Paola Antonelli

The 2006-7 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London *At Home in Renaissance Italy* was co-curated by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis. Accompanying the exhibition was a 419 page comprehensive book/catalogue (Ajmar-Wollheim & Dennis 2006) itself a comprehensive scholarly work documenting domestic life in the homes of the middle and artisan classes in Italy between 1400-1600.

An extensive team comprising: 180 art historians, historians of music, socio-economic historians, medieval archaeologists and Islamic studies scholars contributed essays, visual information and historically important material resources to the project. The scale of the project was exhilarating and included:

- A section devoted to the famous study in the Palazzo Medici in Florence
- The re-uniting, after centuries of separation, of Paolo Veronese's double portrait of the da Porto-Thiene family, who were one of the most powerful Renaissance families in Vicenza
- *The Birth of the Virgin* painting (c. 1504-8) by Vittore Carpaccio, depicting a succession of rooms
- Surprising survivals from everyday Renaissance life – including the only known baby-walker, the earliest surviving Italian spectacles, embroidered sheets and unexpected items such as a pastry-cutter and an ear cleaner
- *Sisters playing Chess* painting (c.1555) by Sofonisba Anguissola, showing an intimate family scene by one of the few prominent female artists of the period
- Rare examples of Renaissance furniture, including a 16th-century inlaid table and a Florentine painted wedding chest.

The guiding principle for the exhibition was 'fragment'.

The presentation was impressionistic, creating installations based around collections of objects. Rooms were defined by a metal skeleton, suggesting their size and shape while allowing visitors to make visual connections across and between rooms. This pioneering form of display marked a radical departure from more traditional, white wall presentations. It also represented the voices of the period by including many contemporary quotes that gave context and depth to the interpretations of the objects. 70,970 visitors came to the exhibition and comments included:

An Arts and Humanities Research Council funded Case Study (AHRC 2007, p. 5) found that The exhibition (Fig. 5.13) presented the Renaissance in a different way to the way it is conventionally presented, and in a way that is accessible to the general audience, but still with its original research context.



Fig. 5.13
The Veneto Room, At Home in Renaissance Italy
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
12 September 2012 – 13 January 2013.

At the Palazzo Fortuny in Venice (Fig. 5.16) Axel Vervoordt (Fig. 5.14) has curated a series of five annual exhibitions in collaboration with Daniela Ferretti (Fig. 5.15) Director of the Palazzo Fortuny, the final exhibition in the series '*Intuition*' was held in 2017. The exhibition highlighted the intuitive experience and feeling that drives the creative process, eventually leading to the rise of abstract art. In an interview with *Sotheby's*, London (Vervoordt 2018) Vervoordt says of the experience of curating the series: 'I'm very proud of the exhibitions we've created in Venice. Together with Director Daniela Ferretti we have made a series of six fabulous exhibitions in Palazzo Fortuny exploring the transversal links between philosophy, science, music, history, creative heritage and art. Every exhibition was born out of think tanks held with scientists, philosophers, mathematicians, architects and musicians.'



Fig. 5.14
Axel Vervoordt



Fig. 5.15
Daniela Ferretti



Fig. 5.16
Artempo: Where Time Becomes Art (2007)
Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.
9 June – 7 October 2007.

The exploration of these 'transversal links between: philosophy, science, music, history, creative heritage, and art' is significant to the parameters of this research and may perhaps be most clearly expressed as a diagram. (Fig. 5.17)

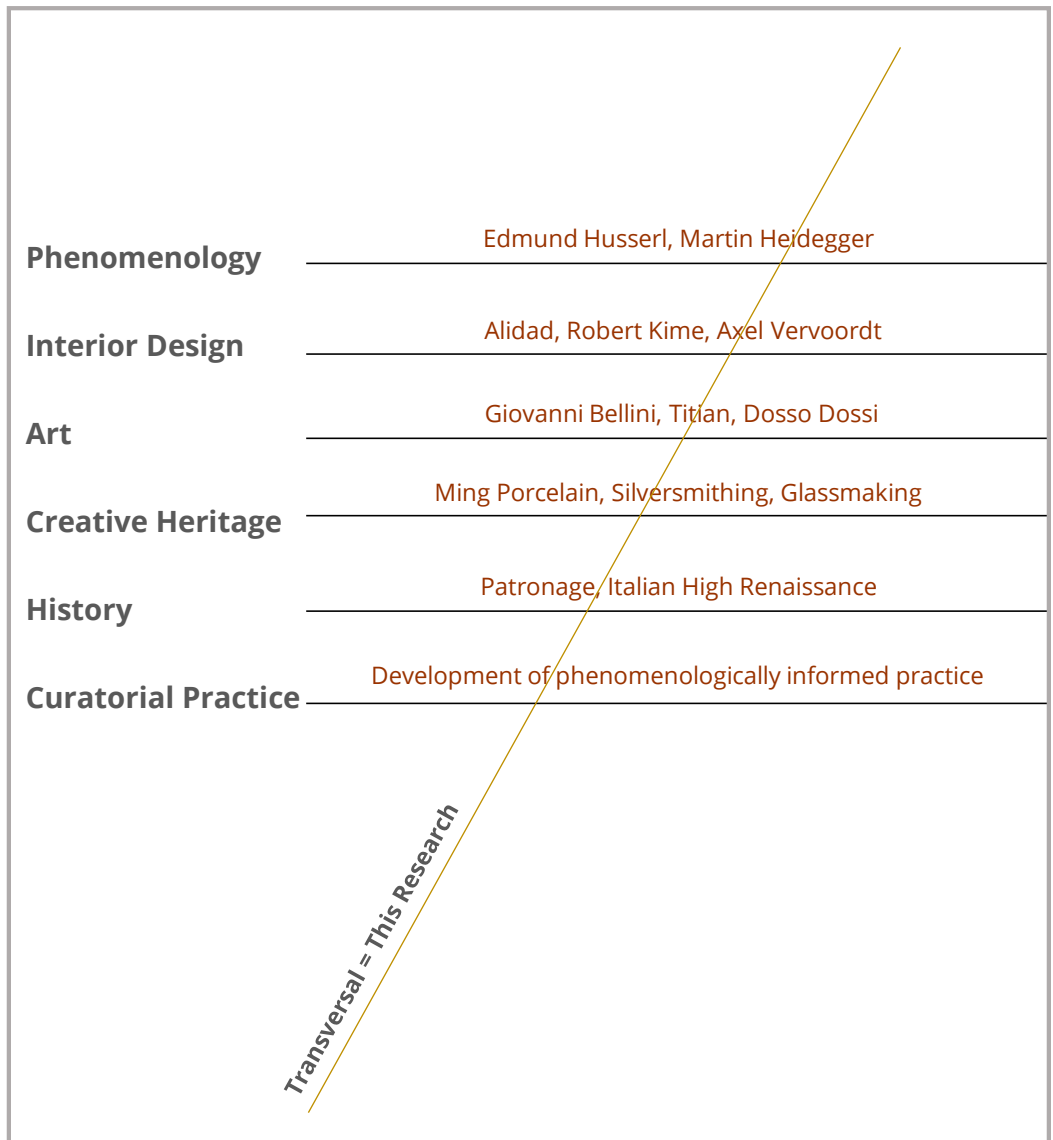


Fig. 5.17

Transversal links relative to this research

The full list of exhibitions curated by Axel Vervoordt and Daniela Ferretti at the Palazzo Fortuny or, to be historically accurate *Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei* is:

Intuition 2017

Proportio 2015

Tapies: The eye of the artist 2013

TRA: Edge of Becoming 2011

Artempo: Where time becomes art 2007.

Exhibitions curated by Vervoordt and Ferretti are known for their innovative, scholarly and often challenging approach to curatorial practice. Their combined capability to collect expertise of the highest calibre is exemplary and the range of scholarly interaction is entirely dependent upon the capability viewer. At its most basic, the exhibition is presenting fascinating images: paintings, sculpture, objects of anthropological significance, antique documents, and antiquities but, from this starting point of accessibility, it is possible to enter into philosophical dialogue, scholarly analysis or the discovery of previously unimagined connections.

For example, the catalogue for *TRA: Edge of Becoming* (Vervoordt 2011, p. 166) introduces the exhibition content as:

- A passage through an open doorway
- A gateway to what lies beyond
- The threshold of thought
- The expansion of perception
- The energy within the void
- The power of beginnings
- The edge of becoming

Within the catalogue to the exhibition *TRA: Edge of Becoming* (Vervoordt, 2011, p. 3) Axel Vervoordt describes the overall intention of the exhibition: 'We gave *TRA* the subtitle *Edge of Becoming* to bring us closer to discovering the interconnectedness with a more universal sense of experience. It represents the state of infinite becoming, a moment when you're standing on the edge of the past and present and looking toward the future.' (Figs. 5.18 and 5.19).



Fig. 5.18

Torso of a Shakyamuni Buddha: Thailand. (7th century AD).

Tuymans, L. *Reuntgen.* (2000)

TRA: Edge of Becoming (2011)

Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.

4 June – 15 November 2011.

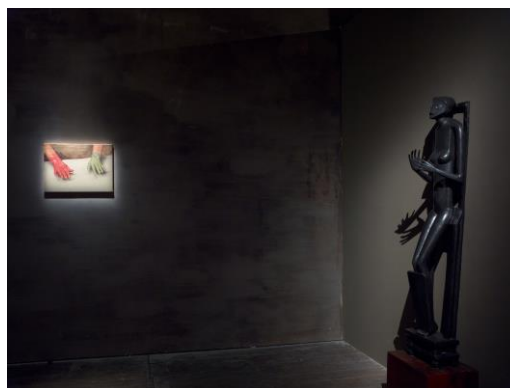


Fig. 5.19

Borremans, M. *Red Hand, Green Hand* (2010)

Giacometti, A. *Hand Holding the Emptiness* (1934)

TRA: Edge of Becoming (2011)

Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.

4 June – 15 November 2011.

A further exhibition from this series by Vervoordt and Ferretti at the Palazzo Fortuny is *Proportio* introduced in the catalogue to the exhibition, (Derycke and Vervoordt 2015, p. 11) by Walter Hartsarich, President: Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia as follows:

'The wonderful spaces of Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei are open once again to the curious visitor, this time to tell of the universal value, which since ancient times has been the number of divine proportion (or Golden Section). This irrational number, 1:6180, is able to give a harmonious dimension to all things.

I wish here to extend my heartfelt thanks to the international committee composed of scientists, philosophers, musicians, architects, historians and art historians expertly coordinated by Axel Vervoordt and Daniela Ferretti, which has succeeded in transposing the difficult theme of proportion in the work of art into an evocative exhibition, while at the same time stimulating an important reflection on the absolute harmony of things.'

A further introduction is provided here within an essay written specifically for the exhibition (Derycke and Vervoordt (2015, pp. 18 - 34) by René de Bartiral, Tatsuro Miki and Axel Vervoordt:

'As an exhibition, the aim of *Proportio* is to re-start a contemporary dialogue surrounding the lost knowledge of proportions and sacred geometry. The work of artists, scientists, architects, philosophers and others provides a lens to help us see what proportion can teach us about the essential design of the present and how we can use this knowledge to create a blueprint for the future. Giving body to the void and feeling a difference in the quality of the void-that is for me all about proportion. Every proportion creates a void that has its own character and expression and influence.' (Figs. 5.20 and 5.21).



Fig. 5.20

Miki, T., Hempel, J.

Five Pavilions (2015)

Proportio (2015)

Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.

9 May – 22 November 2015.

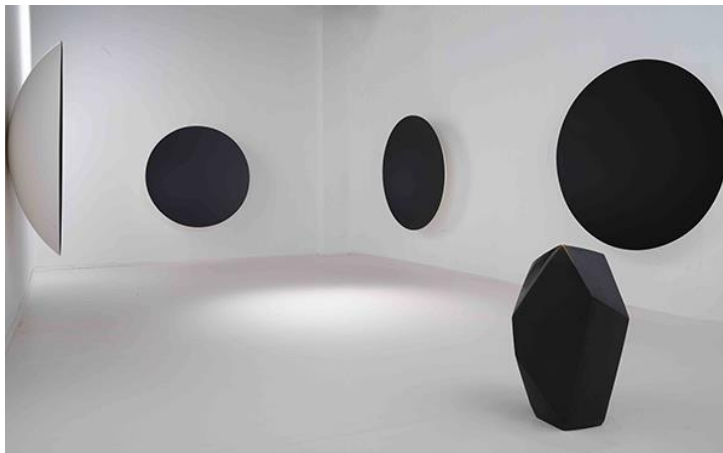


Fig. 5.21

Kapoor, A.

Gathering Clouds I-IV (2015)

Proportio (2015)

Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.

9 May – 22 November 2015.

'Exhibitions are strategically located at the nexus where artists [*as well as designers, architects, videographers and so on*] their work, the arts institutions, and many different publics intersect. Situated so critically, they function as the prime transmitters through which the continually shifting meaning of art and its relationship to the world is brought into temporary focus and offered to the viewer for contemplation, education, and, not least, pleasure' (Marincola 2015, p. 93). This quote (my addition in brackets) by Paula Marincola (Fig. 5.22) is an apposite place in which to begin to answer the question of why an exhibition format is an appropriate format for the presentation of the research.



Fig. 5.22

Paula Marincola became the first Executive Director of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage in 2008. Her work as an editor of several Center publications on topics critical to contemporary cultural practice has substantially contributed to the professional and artistic development of the local and international community of artists, curators and cultural practitioners. Center-produced anthologies such as *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, *Curating Now* and *In Terms of Performance* offer in-depth texts for professionals and university programs.

The *continually shifting meaning of art* is reflected in the phenomenological analysis of the painting *The Feast of the Gods* chosen as the painting to bring focus to the research and from which the objects subjected to phenomenological interrogation within the exhibition are extracted. Within the context of this research, the painting has been situated at the nexus where art, design and philosophy intersect, reflecting the investigation into the continually shifting meaning of art and its relationship to the world.

Whilst there are similarities in curatorial approach, evident from the previous paraphrasing of the quotation by Paola Marincola, the use of phenomenology to interrogate and investigate a work of art, the objects presented within that work of art and the worlds inhabited by the objects themselves, has not been previously undertaken within curatorial practice. The three areas of art, interior design and phenomenology, have sometimes appeared within the same room (the previously discussed exhibitions *Proportio* and *TRA: Edge of Becoming* curated by Vervoordt and Ferretti are two such examples) but the three distinct disciplines have not been brought together to explore the effect on a viewer of the presentation of the essential qualities of art within the context of interior design as distilled through the rigour of phenomenology.

Architects have considered elements of phenomenology within their approach to architectural practice (Fig. 5.23). Swiss architect, Peter Zumthor, for example is guided by remembered images and moods, moulding these through ambience and sensorial memory to generate 'place'. In *Atmospheres* (Zumthor 2006, p. 25) he says that: 'When I work on a design I allow myself to be guided by images and moods that I remember and can relate to the kind of architecture I am looking for'.



Fig. 5.23
Thermal Spa
Vals, Switzerland
Architect: Peter Zumthor

In his essay *Architecture of the Seven Senses* (Holl, Pallasmaa & Gomez 2006, p. 41) a collaborative publication discussing the sensory nature of architecture, Juhani Pallasmaa focuses on the important role the senses play in triggering a memory. Pallasmaa, criticises how the detachment of construction (within much of contemporary architecture) from the reality of matter and craft, 'turns architecture into a stage sets for the eye, devoid of the authenticity of material and tectonic logic'.

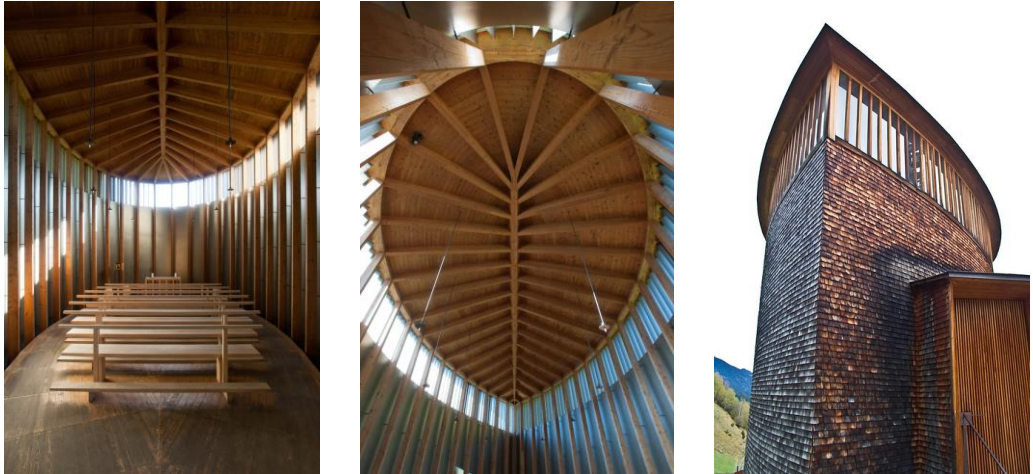


Fig. 5.24 - a, b, c.

Saint Benedict Chapel, Graubünden , Switzerland.

a) Interior, b) ceiling, c) exterior

Architect: Juhani Pallasmaa

Juhani Uolevi Pallasmaa is a Finnish architect and former Professor of Architecture and Dean at the Helsinki University of Technology. Among the many academic and civic positions he has held are those of Director of the Museum of Finnish Architecture 1978–1983, and Head of the Institute of Industrial Arts, Helsinki. He established his own architect's office – Arkkitehtitoimisto Juhani Pallasmaa KY – in 1983 in Helsinki. From 2001 to 2003, he was Raymond E. Maritz Visiting Professor of Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis, and in 2013 he received an honorary doctorate from that university. In 2010–2011, Pallasmaa served as Plym Distinguished Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and in 2012-2013 he was scholar in residence at Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin. His work (Fig.5.24 - a,b,c) has been inspired by the simplicity of Japanese architecture and the abstraction of modern Deconstructivism.

Part of this research submission is an exhibition presenting phenomenology as applied to the experience of interior design and fine art. Within this review therefore, a leading exhibition design practice has been included whose work resonates with this research by focusing on the creation of previously unknown experience through a highly detailed presentation of the subject being exhibited, often from unusual perspectives (Figs. 5.25, 5.26).

Casson-Mann was founded in 1984 by the daughter of architect Sir Hugh Casson, Dinah Casson CBE, RDI, Hon FRCA. and Roger Mann RDI. Casson's book *Closed on Mondays: Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (Casson 2020) is a series of essays exploring themes such as:

- Why are most paintings in carved, gilded frames, regardless of artist, period or subject matter? (Frames can lead to confusion by alluding to a completely different story than the painting)
- Why do so few contemporary art galleries have windows? (People are comfortable being able to see daylight and to locate themselves in relation to the ground, and if they are comfortable, they are likely to get more from their visit)
- If a label text irritates us, what should it say instead? (Casson advocates for labels that encourage the viewer to connect with their feelings, not simply absorb factual information)
- Why do facsimiles make some people so uncomfortable?
- Why do we keep all this stuff?
- What is it exactly that visitors want from our museums? (Casson puts forward the notion that it is a complex *melange* of truth and interpretation)

All bracketed notes following the bullet points on this page (Buxton 2020).

Examples of work by Casson Mann



Fig. 5.25
Lascaux International Centre for Cave Art
Centre International de l'Art Pariétal
Montignac, Dordogne.
Permanent display.



Fig. 5.26
Great Expectations
Vanderbilt Hall, Grand Central Station, New York.
14 – 28 October, 2001.

5.3: Context 3 - Philosophy

Whilst architecture frequently mentions phenomenology within its discourse, the main thrust of the architecture/philosophy relation is semiotics and, to a lesser extent, aesthetics - mainly championed by architectural critic Charles Jencks (Fig. 5.27) with the subsumption of the ideas of philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard who wrote a short work on phenomenology Lyotard (1954) Gilles Deleuze, who was interested in 'design as the practice of materialising possibilities' (Marenko & Brassett 2015, P. 1) Roland Barthes whose collection of essays *Mythologies* Barthes (1957) discussed the additional meaning placed upon cultural phenomena simply because they had become popular, and Jean Beaudrillard whose writing included *The System of Objects* (Beaudrillard 1968) within which he anticipated and posited a cultural critique on the commodification of society.



Fig. 5.27
Thematic House (1979)
Holland Park, London.
Jencks, C. and Farrell, T.

Hall lightwell, presenting a fusion of semiotics and historical architectural language

In *The Handbook of Interior Design* the first paragraph is *An Overview of Phenomenology for the Design Disciplines* (Wang 2015, pp. 9-28) within which phenomenology is described as: 'Phenomenological inquiry takes facets of human experience largely ignored by 'scientific method' and makes them material for rigorous study. Perhaps more importantly, it provides a philosophical basis upon which to situate many factors encountered in the design disciplines daily - immediate experience in response to environmental designs, understanding creative processes, aesthetic and sacred dimensions of space and place.'

Mads Nygaard Folkmann's 2010 essay *Evaluating Aesthetics in Design: A Phenomenological Approach* (Folkmann 2010, pp. 40-53) published in *Design Issues* puts forward the notion that it is aesthetics that cause design to be successful rather than form or even meaning. Folkmann's essay suggests some directions that design theory might take if the subject is serious about developing its own philosophical and aesthetic framework rather than 'borrow' those already applicable to the world of art. Folkmann then goes on to develop *An Aesthetics of Sensual Realism* citing Merleau-Ponty and the 'impossibility of separating the experiencing subject from the experienced world where subject and object are reciprocally intertwined, the sensing subject cannot be separated from the sensed material and the viewer cannot be separated from the viewed but participates in it and is influenced by it.'

The essay raises some interesting questions pertinent to this research and is one of the few examples of critical writing to address fundamental phenomenological issues informing design. I include one further example from the essay by Folkmann; a question of particular relevance to this research and which asks of design objects, 'How do they define a relation to reality in the relation of physical manifestation/idea, and how can they be seen as mediums for meeting the world in new and/or reflective ways where new kinds of experience and of experiencing are evoked.'

Phenomenology has been adopted within this research as a means to inform curatorial practice leading to an enhanced engagement with objects within a specific environment that has adopted the early sixteenth century painting by Giovanni Bellini as the core from which objects, contained within the painting and originating from other periods in history, may be explored and interrogated.

As a background to this interrogation of historical objects through phenomenology, Heidegger stated that: 'Past objects and events can have meaning for us, and can be studied by historians, only because the past is still with us, serving as our heritage' (Polt 1999, p. 101).

It is this ability and desire to question that determines as unique the condition of human existence, *Dasein*. Moran (2000, p. 198) states that: 'Heidegger has raised to an ontological level, the essential role of humans as *questioning* beings. Understanding what it is to be a questioner reveals the purely human mode of 'being-in-the-world' as a kind of protective caring and involvement in the world.'

Directly and correlatedly related to this desire to question (within the parameters of this research) is Husserlian Intentionality – part of which is the relation of consciousness to its object, referred to by Husserl as the 'noematic sense, or, object-as-intended' (Woodruff-Smith 2007, p. 304). To clarify, there are three parts to Intentionality:

- *The Intentional Act* is focused on the subject: it perceives, it judges, it imagines, etc.
- *Intentional Content* is the *matter* (material) of such perception, judgement or imagining. Intentional content therefore can be said to be 'the *way* in which the object that is intended is thought about by the subject' (Spear 2013, p. 580).
- *The Intentional Object* is that which is perceived (it does not have to be an object in existence) it may be a thought, or, in the case of this research, an object depicted within a painting.

According to Fink (1941, p. 41) 'The Phenomenological Reduction is the meditative practice whereby one is able to liberate oneself from the captivation in which one is held by all that one accepts as being the case. Once one is liberated from this captivation-in-an-acceptedness, one is able to view the world as a world of essences, free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute' (Fink 1941, p. 41). The Reduction is represented by Rooms Two and Three of the exhibition. Room Two represents the Epoché, and Room Three the Reduction proper.

The main protagonist of the reduction is Edmund Husserl (Fink 1941, p. 41) and the Husserlian rationale for the Reduction is: 'Once we have accepted that there are multiple structures of consciousness existing outside of the natural attitude it becomes possible to recognise that the unquestioned acceptance of our recognised world is just that - an acceptance. We can, through the phenomenological reduction, begin to 'blast open our captivation-in-acceptedness and achieve liberation from the acceptedness that is limiting our experience and perception of the world and our 'self'.

In Husserlian terms Room Three could be described by Fink (1941, p. 41) as being a space 'That signifies that I may accept such a proposition [of truth about the actualities of the world] only in the modified consciousness, the consciousness of judgement-excluding, and therefore *not as it is in science, a proposition which claims validity and the validity of which I accept and use.*'

For Heidegger, the self has no Being apart from its Being-in-the-World. He understood that: 'Authentic existence is not an escape from the world but a way of existing in it'. For Welton (1999, p. 65) Heidegger therefore differs from - or rather extends - the Husserlian investigative process by insisting that the hermeneutic goal of 'Being-centred' phenomenology is always to allow interpretation of Being. Importantly, Heidegger claimed that phenomenology is not only transcendental (concerned with the knowledge and structure of Being) but also and according to Polt (1999, p. 90) hermeneutic (concerned with the theory and knowledge of interpretation).

Heidegger (1935, p. 70) also states that 'art is the 'becoming of truth' - 'the 'setting-into-work' or 'unconcealing' of truth.' He explains that works of art are 'things' that have a 'thingly' character and he proposes that there are three accepted ideas about what constitutes a Thing, propositions that are discussed further within Chapter Six: Philosophy.

It is, however, appropriate to mention here that all of these ways of thinking about a Thing originate (*der Ursprung* – springing forth from a source) from our recognised world of tools and equipment: ‘the world of the ‘ready-to-hand’ or ‘Zuhanden’. For Heidegger (2010, p. 69) this world of equipment always occurs in a set of relations with other pieces of equipment. ‘A ready-to-hand entity (tool) is only ready-to-hand when it fits into a pre-existing network of expectation, practice and function, in other words, the ‘world’ of the hammer.’ Design both operates within and constructs such networks of things we use, layered in meaning but inviting us to make new meanings through our engagement with them.

6.0: Philosophy

6.1: Introduction

The research is located at the confluence of interior design, phenomenology and curatorial practice. Presenting and explaining the origins and existence of objects, particularly those located within or closely associated with the set of codes, beliefs and critique associated with fine art, has a distinct set of considerations if a meaningful experience to the viewer is to be effected.

The principal dilemma arising from such presentations is one of informational and experiential balance which may be interrogated by the research question:

'Whether, within the context of an exhibition of multiple objects, it is possible to precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information encroaching on such an experience'.

If the original intention of an artefact is not understood by the viewer, the confrontation may be reduced to the perception of a culturally loaded or symbolic artefact as being, once again, the merely decorative. It is not the intention here to suggest that the meaning intended by the creator of the artefact should always be reproduced, as this could in some instances place at risk the 'transparency of experience' in which the viewer encounters the artefact as it shows (reveals) itself to him or her. Also, it may not be possible to reproduce the meaning of an artefact as intended by its creator, for example if it were an object of great antiquity, belonging to a now 'lost' civilisation.



Fig.6.1

This example of rock art from the Blombos Cave, Western Cape, South Africa is approximately 100,000 years old. It is, to date, the earliest known example of drawing on Earth. No-one has yet understood its meaning.

By presenting the objects investigated by this research within the context of an exhibition intended to provoke a phenomenological experience whereby symbolism, history, or interpretation by the viewer are considered to be either unnecessary or indeed actively discouraged, the objects become liberated and able to present themselves to the viewer *as they are themselves* unfettered by any requirement of understanding by the viewer. The objects present to the viewer, rather than the usual exhibition protocol where the viewer interrogates the objects. In this revised condition, the relationship between the object and the viewer may become meaningful without that meaning having been constructed by the provision of any external information (Fig. 6.1).

In order to address this position within an appropriate context, I have adopted the format of an exhibition, whereby a specific painting is analysed using phenomenological techniques. The painting bringing focus to the exhibition is *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. 6.2) painted in 1514 by Giovanni Bellini with additions to the background in 1529 by Titian and minor alterations by Dosso Dossi, whose additions were mainly overpainted by Titian. Dossi was court painter to Alfonso d'Este, 1st Duke of Ferrara who commissioned the work.

The painting, depicts an outdoor picnic with assembled Gods and Satyrs and includes a number of objects relative to a residential interior. A Ming dynasty porcelain bowl (the earliest known depiction of Chinese porcelain in European painting) a highly polished silver wine cup and a Murano honeycomb glass drinking vessel have been selected from the group of objects for particular analysis.

The painting and the three selected objects described above, provide the foundation of the research exhibition designed to bring the viewer not just to a new experience of objects but to a phenomenological experience of objects, achieved by directing the viewer on their journey through the exhibition as the objects are disengaged from the context of the painting prior to being presented within a series of their own phenomenological worlds. The phenomenological account of experience may then be used to develop new understanding relating to the presentation of design objects and the viewer's experience of them.

The physical layout of the exhibition strengthens this approach by presenting the curated set of objects – a painting, a bowl, a wine cup and a glass vessel – in a specific phenomenological sequence leading to the mapping of the objects as they move through their worlds and as they move back and forth between things that we look at and think about – objects – and things that we use – equipment.



Fig. 6.2

The Feast of the Gods

Selected objects circled in white:

1: Ming porcelain bowl

2: Murano wheel-cut glass beaker

3: Silver wine cup

6.2: Phenomenological equivalents

Within the exhibition, images of the porcelain, silver and glass objects have been digitally isolated from their fine art 'world' (the work of art) and, following rigorous analysis and presentation of history, provenance and contextual existence, re-presented in a series of rooms (worlds) each representing a specific area of phenomenology. Room One (Intentionality) presents the painting in its totality, Room Two provides a setting which is neither subjective or objective (The Phenomenological Reduction) before allowing the objects to reveal themselves to the viewer in Room Three (The Things Themselves). Room Four and its Annexe (World) concludes the exhibition by relocating the objects inside new 'worlds' of residential interior design (equipment) and fine art in a 21st century context (art). As the objects move back and forth between their worlds, defining the relationships between viewer, artefact and context becomes increasingly problematic. Within Room Four, residential interior design is selected to be the contextual 'world' of in which to present the objects which now inhabit locations not previously available to them. Room Four Annexe finally returns the objects to a fine art context, restoring them to their original world, albeit now resolutely located within the 21st century.

These contextual worlds present locations in which the relationship between the viewer, the objects themselves and the spatial framework within which the objects are encountered, become intensely personal, dynamic and complex. For example, the Ming Dynasty porcelain bowl is first perceived by the viewer as an artefact to be looked at within an 'Old Master' painting with all the theories and preconceptions associated with such a context, i.e. the work of art. In fact, the bowl is an item of Ming dynasty porcelain produced for export purposes and usually (at the time of manufacture) intended to be sold to the Persian market for use as a serving bowl for a pilaf or stew therefore - before appearing in the painting and when it was acquired by the Venetians in 1492 - belonging to the world of equipment.

The original context for the bowl should, therefore, be recognised as a 'tool' – something to be used - forming part of a contextual whole that Heidegger refers to as the 'Being of equipment' Polt (1999, p. 50) thereby recognising and returning the object/viewer relationship to the personal, useful and human-centred.

At this point, the significance and appropriateness of adopting a phenomenological approach to the examination of the experiential interaction with the selected group of objects as they move through their 'worlds' becomes apparent. A complete overview of phenomenology is beyond the scope of this research, accordingly, selected areas pertaining specifically to the experience of the perception of objects, each of which corresponds to an element in phenomenology and phenomenological method, will be discussed.

6.3: Phenomenological Experience

There are four sections within the exhibition: Intentionality, The Phenomenological Reduction, The Things Themselves, and World. Each section within the exhibition addresses a specific area of phenomenological experience.

1: Intentionality.

Intentionality denotes the relation of consciousness to its object and, as such, according to the view of consciousness as intentional - consciousness is always consciousness of something. As conscious beings, we are always already in relation to:

- (i) Things
- (ii) A world
- (iii) The meaning of things relative to our involvement in that world.
'Intention' indicates in this context, a propositional attitude rather than an intention to do something.

The Intentional Act

The Intentional Act is the act of presenting *itself*. Moran (2000, p. 115) states that 'In a sense, all objects of thought are mind-transcendent and the Intentional Act is directly focused on the object, not on its own contents.' Within this research, the selection and presentation of the work of art (the painting) and recognition of the possibility to investigate the overlapping worlds of art, equipment and essence contained within the painting provide the focus for the Intentional Act. The potential to map the journey through the Heideggerian 'worlds' Heidegger (2010, p. 63) of selected objects depicted within the painting, may be realised by isolating a bowl (for example) from its original context of traditional fine art painting and presenting it within new context(s) such as forming part of a curated private collection of museum-quality decorative art or as a piece of equipment in use as a domestic fruit bowl in a contemporary interior,. As Husserl suggests, 'an object that exists in an intentional relation to an act of consciousness' (Woodruff Smith 2007, p. 304).

The Intentional Object

The relationship between the intentional act and intentional object is reciprocal and correlative – it is a mutual and equivalent relationship. In order to perceive, one must perceive *something*. Similarly, if something is there, one must perceive it whether it is in fact real or imagined. The group of feasting Gods in the previously mentioned painting by Bellini do not exist and could never have assembled for this feast in this landscape. However, because they have been painted, they are able to be perceived and because they may be perceived, the viewer(s) may have meaningful thoughts and beliefs about them.

Intentionality makes it possible to engage in meaningful thought with equal sincerity about both the existent and the non-existent. Recognising and accepting this possibility allows that intentional content can present an intentional object whether or not a physical object is there at all or ever existed - such as the drunken Satyr in the Bellini painting. This Satyr evidences that even when the viewer perceives that the activity shown is a painting of an actual event (intentional act) and presents to the viewer a 'real' Satyr (intentional object) there is in reality, no physical object at all as Satyrs have never existed. The viewer however, whilst remaining absolutely certain that Satyrs never existed, will still continue to construct experiences, thoughts and beliefs about the mythological creature and the world that it inhabits.

Intentional Content

The Intentional Act is focused on the subject: it perceives, it judges, it imagines, etc. Intentional Content is the *matter* (material) of such perception, judgement or imagining. Intentional content therefore can be said to be 'the *way* in which the object that is intended is thought about by the subject' (Spear 2013, p. 580).

For example, by removing the Ming bowl from its original context of the painting and placing it in a different contextual location such as the information-rich, anthropologically curated and carefully lit display case of a museum style presentation, the intentional content of the bowl is altered to become, in both anthropological and Heideggerian terms, part of equipment, a tool (something to be used) as well as an inspirational example of 15th century ceramic decorative art (something to be looked at as well as used) rather than the original art gallery presentational context, defining it as an object within a painting (a work of art, something to be looked at and thought about).

2: The Phenomenological Reduction

The Phenomenological Reduction (the reduction) is a rigorous two-part technique, developed by Husserl which directs an individual towards a way of experiencing the world. There are two parts or 'moments' to the reduction. The term 'moment' is important as the reduction is not performed in two 'steps' where one precedes the other. Time (one before the other) is not involved in the reduction, rather, the two moments – the epoché (the bracketing of the world) and the reduction proper – occur together. The two main protagonists of the reduction, and indeed Phenomenology, are Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Fink (1941, p. 41) describes the Phenomenological Reduction as '... the meditative practice whereby one is able to liberate oneself from the captivation in which one is held by all that one accepts as being the case. Once one is liberated from this captivation-in-an-acceptedness, one is able to view the world as a world of essences, free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute.'

Zahavi (2003, p. 45) draws attention to Husserl's statement that 'In order to avoid presupposing commonsensical naiveté (as well as a number of different speculative hypotheses concerning the metaphysical status of reality) it is necessary to suspend our acceptance of the natural attitude.' Additionally, Husserl characterises the suspension of the natural attitude as a 'reduction to 'pure' consciousness' that is, to be intentionality purified of all psychological or 'worldly' interpretations and described simply as it gives itself. A condition agreed by Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* when he affirms that: 'The real has to be described, not constructed or formed' (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. xi).

A further meeting point between the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl is to do with the reduction, and a recognition of the necessity to 'put out of play' or 'to refuse complicity with' (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. xi) our relationships with the world. This is not a rejection of the natural attitude but an understanding that, rather than continually acknowledge *as reality* our relationships with the world '... we have to suspend, for a moment, our recognition of them' (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. xiv).

As Moran (2000, p. 11) points out 'We should attend only to the phenomena in the manner of their being given to us, in their '*modes of givenness*. *Givenness* sums up the view that that all experience is experience *to someone* according to a particular manner of experiencing.' For Husserl, once one is liberated from captivation-in-an-acceptedness through the practice of the reduction, one is able to view the world as a world of essences, free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute.

The reduction, although presented as a single mode of implementation, is comprised of two moments and, being central to Husserl's understanding of the practice of phenomenology, led him simultaneously into two directions of thought:

- a) Towards the transcendental ego as the formal structure of all experience.
- b) Towards the manner in which consciousness is always wrapped up in its intentional correlate, completely caught up in a world, the *worldliness of consciousness*' (Moran 2000, p. 12).

Heidegger's proposition of worldliness however, differs from that of Husserl in that, for Heidegger (2010, p. 55) 'being' is always and either the infinitive of 'I am' (to dwell near or to be familiar with) or 'is' (a being is). In an earlier paper, Heidegger (1927, p. 21) introduces this as 'Being-in is thus the formal existential expression of the being of Dasein (But not of being in general and not at all of being itself-absolutely) which has the essential constitution of being-in-the-world.'

For Heidegger, what appears in the natural attitude – the normal state of awareness - is simply there. 'The chair for sitting on, the cup left on the kitchen worktop - now come into view as a unity of meaning, a pure 'phenomenon' that is what it is *specifically because* of its place in the centre of intentional acts and experiences in which it 'comes to given-ness' (given-ness may be described as the essence of something, without dilution by context or alteration by interpretation. This is not confined to the physical object e.g. the chair, but the 'chairness' of the chair). It is important that the thing as it shows itself phenomenologically, is not considered solely as an object - wholly independent of consciousness.

The 'chairness' of the chair is not the physical object - and it is precisely the quality of 'chairness' that is of importance to this phenomenological investigation. It is also the quality of 'chairness' that may be obscured by treating the thing, the chair, as an object with properties, including such facts of as historical provenance or materiality.

The reduction as summarised by Dreyfus and Wrathall (2009, p. 21) therefore, 'allows phenomenology to study the intentional constitution of things - that is, the conditions that make possible, not the existence of entities in the world (the issue of existence has been bracketed) but their sense as existing, and indeed their being given as anything at all.'

3: The Things Themselves

This is where all contextual information is removed or completely hidden in order to 'let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself' (Heidegger 2010, p. 32) and which brings the objects and the viewer together in a phenomenological experience where the objects are at last allowed to 'show themselves to us.' We do not visit or look at the objects, the objects reveal themselves to us.

It is important to recognise here that, when a thing 'shows itself to us' this does not mean 'objectively' - which would mean in terms of its colour, dimensions, material composition etc. Having gone through the reduction in Room Two, the viewer can now see the thing as it shows itself in the sense that the viewer can begin to establish a new intentional relation to it that is not pre-determined by inherited associations.

4: World

The placement of the bowl and other selected objects from the painting into contexts unexpected for a work of art can be unsettling for the viewer. For example, the Ming bowl deposited onto a kitchen breakfast bar in a contemporary residential penthouse interior, alters the perception of both the bowl and its context yet again. In this context the 'work of art' that first originated, both conceptually and physically, within the world of equipment as a Chinese bowl produced for the export market to Persia for use as a serving bowl for stews or pilaf, is returned to the world of 'equipment' albeit in a new and previously unimagined context where the primary function of the bowl is not as a container but as a signifier of the sophistication and available resources of the owner of the penthouse.

This new context - within which the bowl, initially perceived as having been returned to the world of equipment, is in fact phenomenologically closer to that of the representation of the object within the Bellini painting – a work of art - than that of its original context of equipment, as a serving bowl - *even though* it is now located within an equipmental context (as a fruit bowl within the kitchen of a New York penthouse).

This perceptual alteration of the relationship with both object and context by the viewer, subsequent to and precipitated by, the unexpected contextual placement of the objects, is significant as it changes the relationship not only of the object to the viewer and the context to the viewer but also the object/context relationship itself. The previously acknowledged and accepted tripartite relationship-experience between object-context-viewer normally anticipated during an exhibition environment is now challenging as all three elements interact as unpredictable experiential determinants.

Determinants

Phenomenology is therefore established as an appropriate tool with which to interrogate such relationships as it emphasises the ‘attempt to get to the truth of matters’ (Moran 2000, p. 4). Investigating this ‘attempt to get to the truth of matters’ is fundamental to the understanding of what actually occurs when a viewer encounters an intentional presentation of objects. An understanding of where these phenomenological ideas intersect and interact with each other, with the presentation of collections of objects, and with potential audiences, fosters a curatorial approach articulating phenomenology defined by Marenko and Brassett (2015, p. 2) as ‘a practical process with which the possibilities of new futures can be thought and materialised.’ There are three core points which, singly or in combination, influence the decision to adopt phenomenology as an appropriate tool by which to inform curatorial thought and practice:

- 1: *To use phenomenology to help us understand what happens when a viewer encounters an intentional presentation of objects.*

This is clearly very important as phenomenology attempts to 'describe *phenomena* in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer' (Moran 2000, p. 4).

- 2: *To draw on phenomenology to contribute to ideas on how to design or curate an exhibition of objects.*

This Point very closely follows Point 1 as it allows the development of possibilities for the application of phenomenology as an exemplar for curatorial practice and other considerations affecting the design and implementation of an intentional exhibition of objects.

- 3: *To engage in a curatorial practice to explore philosophical ideas.*

This is where points 1 and 2 are combined and applied as a catalyst towards the engagement of curatorial practice as an exploration of philosophical ideas leading to '... a creative act (which would be) completely autonomous and independent of market rules' (Marenko and Brassett 2015, p. 61).

6.4: Intentionality

Intentionality – the essence of conscious experience – was initially posited within a lecture by Franz Brentano (1838-1917) entitled *Of the Natural Sanction for Law and Morality* subsequently retitled (by Brentano) *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* delivered to the Vienna Law Society in 1889. In this lecture, Brentano (1889) posited that 'Truth is recognition of what is asserted, and the correspondence is between the thing and its self-giveness' (Moran 2000, p. 31). The introduction of the concept of a thing having 'self-giveness' is crucial for Brentano's subsequent development of the theory of intentionality, including the intentional object or the intentional relation, and his assertion that 'description is of greater importance than explanation' is confirmed through his belief that presentations form the basis for judgments and other mental acts.

Also within this lecture Brentano proposes that ‘the relation that we bear to an object has been called intentional, it is a relation to something which may not be actual but which is presented as an object’. Intentional presentation can be said to have three core meanings:

- 1: The *act of presenting* itself.
- 2: What is *actually presented* in the act.
- 3: The *object* presented, or referred to, by the act

In 1894, Twardowsky (1894, p. 16) proposed that Brentano’s notion of presentation was ambiguous and wrote that:

- 1: What is presented *in* a presentation is its content.
- 2: What is presented *through* a presentation is its object’

Twardowsky, therefore, separates the intentional objectivity (which every intentional act possesses) from the existence of the intentional object in reality. As a result of this separation of the ‘intentional object in reality’ from its corresponding psychological mode of thought, the intentional act becomes an intellectual act such as perceiving, believing or remembering, but which does not include the physicality or materiality of the object.

Relative to the research, the relationship of intentionality to curatorial practice becomes apparent as, one of the central areas of reasoning within curatorial practice is to ‘select, organise and present objects, experience or content typically using expert or professional knowledge’ (Simpson 1989).

There are many ways in which an object may be presented, both physically and conceptually. These may include perception, judgment, memory and experience – all of which combine (or conspire) to cloud the true essence – essentialness – of an object or group of objects.

For the purposes of this research, the intentional thinking - Noesis - as existent within the viewer, may be clarified, minimised, manipulated or even subjugated by the curator to allow the objects to present themselves as themselves, prior to their developing new worlds of habitation.

There are two sides to intentionality: the noesis and the noema. The noetic is that which gives sense to the immanent (existing or operating within) object of consciousness. Examples of such noeses are believing, remembering, valuing and so on. Correlative to the noesis is the noema. Noema is the sense which is immanent to the noesis, for example in the act of perceiving, there is the perceived as perceiver, in the act of judging, the judged as judges, and so on. The noema (the thought) is not to be confused with the object.

To develop this further, a more 'traditional' account of consciousness sees it as separate from the world, to which it must then establish a relation. This creates a problem when it comes to meaning insofar as it pushes us towards two alternatives, each of which is unsatisfactory:

Alternative 1

Meaning is in the thing itself (objective).

Alternative 2

Meaning is something consciousness attaches to things (subjective).

The first alternative encourages us to identify the meaning of the thing with the information provided about it. The second alternative is often dismissed as not important, or as merely aesthetic in a shallow sense.

Intentionality sees consciousness as a relation, thereby undoing the distinction just made. Consciousness is always situated in a world, which means that it is already connected to meanings which, in turn, lie in its relations to the thing through which the thing presents itself.

As Merleau-Ponty (1945, pp. xi - x) puts it 'To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge' and later 'The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making, it is the natural setting of - and field for - all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions'. Or, as defined by Heidegger (2010, p. 63) 'What can it mean, to describe 'the world' as a phenomenon? It means letting what shows itself in the 'beings' within the world be seen'.

Taking consciousness as intentional means that to elucidate the structure of consciousness is at the same time to work towards retrieving meaning, perhaps multiple meanings, embedded in the experience that may otherwise have been concealed by the distinction between objective and subjective.

Intentionality can be said to influence a broad spectrum of phenomena, including the phenomena of memory, experience, and judgement that are normally present within the viewer when encountering objects or objects within an exhibition. Husserl believed that intentionality also influenced the clarification of other philosophical areas such as the philosophy of language, the philosophy of logic, epistemology, and the theory of consciousness. As Husserl (1927, p. 324) asserts 'Consciousness of something is not an empty holding of something, every phenomenon has its own total form of intention, but at the same time it has a structure which, in intentional analysis leads always again to components which are themselves also intentional.'

The intentional act pertains to a specific mental *event* such as perceiving, evaluating or remembering. This is distinct from its *object* which is the 'thing' that the act refers to, for example, the intentional content of an intentional event is the way in which the subject thinks about or presents to themselves the intentional object.

According to Moran and Mooney (2002, p. 61) Husserl denies that what is intended directly is the object and determines that we do not perceive our own sensations. Sensations are, instead, 'part of the *matter of the act*, the act-matter.' In other words, sensations are not merely subjective, but neither are they purely objective. They belong to the act through which the thing presents itself, an act in which consciousness is necessarily involved. In terms of the exhibition illustrating this research therefore, the intentional structure of the encounter with an artefact presented in the exhibition can be explicated as:

The Intentional Act

Perceiving the artefact (a Ming dynasty porcelain bowl)

The Intentional Object

Evaluating the artefact (monetary value, cultural context, social context, materials used, skills required to make the bowl, paint the decoration, apply the glaze, control the kiln temperature)

Intentional Content

Thinking about the artefact in a particular way that is often directed towards personal experience, for example: 'That is a prettily painted blue bowl that could be used in my kitchen at home, I must find out more about it'. Intentional content always involves presenting an object in one way rather than another. Importantly, during the recognition of the artefact there occurs a moment of cognitive significance when the viewer realises that the initial perceptive and evaluative certainties concerning the artefact are in fact questionable as, in this instance, the porcelain bowl being observed within the painting is a painted representation of a bowl not an actual object. To be absolutely precise in the intentional evaluation therefore, the importance of the previously mentioned value judgements concerning skills used to produce the bowl should be diminished and replaced by those concerning mastery of allegory, technique, brushwork, colour selection, and draughtsmanship - all of which combine to produce a painting internationally recognised as a masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance.

The distinction between intentional act and intentional object is essential, as it is possible for a single intentional act to encompass a range of objects and contexts. The intentional act of perceiving remains constant whether it is directed towards perceiving a mirror in a museum, perceiving a carpet in an hotel, or perceiving a Raeburn portrait above a fireplace in the home of a friend. It is also possible for a range of intentional acts to be directed at a single object such as *perceiving* the subject of a Raeburn portrait, *evaluating* the quality of brushwork within the Raeburn portrait, or *remembering* noticing the Raeburn portrait during an earlier visit.

The relationship between the intentional act and intentional object is reciprocal and correlative – it is a mutual and equivalent relationship. In order to perceive, one must perceive *something*. Similarly, if something is there, one must perceive it whether it is in fact real or imagined.

For example, the group of feasting Gods in the previously mentioned painting by Bellini do not exist and could never have assembled for this feast in this landscape. However, because they have been painted, they are able to be perceived and because they may be perceived, the viewer(s) may have meaningful thoughts and beliefs about them just as viewers may have thoughts about an assembly of curated objects within an exhibition.

Intentionality makes it possible to engage in meaningful thought with equal sincerity about both the existent and the non-existent. Recognising and accepting this possibility allows that intentional content can present an intentional object whether or not a physical object is there at all or ever existed - such as the drunken Satyr in the Bellini painting. This Satyr evidences that even when the viewer perceives that the activity shown is a painting of an actual event (intentional act) and presents to the viewer a 'real' Satyr (intentional object) there is, in reality, no 'real' object at all as Satyrs have never existed.

The viewer, whilst remaining absolutely certain that Satyrs never existed, will still continue to construct experiences (intentional content) thoughts and beliefs about the mythological creature and the world that it inhabits. This constructed belief framework may also be applied to an exhibition of curated objects in a gallery. The objects may exist, but they would never have existed together anywhere else in either a spatial or temporal context.

The focus – whether concept, object or content – of an intentional act is, for Husserl, known as the ‘act-matter’ – the way in which the intentional object is presented as being. In this way, the act-matter both determines the object itself and how it is perceived. It becomes a perspective, a particular way of looking at (for example) an object such as the Ming bowl depicted within *The Feast of the Gods*.

From one perspective therefore, the act-matter of the bowl is simply an interestingly patterned bowl, on loan from the Doge of Venice to Bellini and temporarily added to the extensive collection of decorative objects (objects to be looked at and thought about) in the collection of Duke Alfonso 1st at the Court of Ferrara. From another, the act-matter of the bowl is a treasure stolen from its intended destination (Persia) where it was to be used as a serving bowl (equipment) and from which point becomes a symbol of the military power and status of the Doge of Venice (Lorenzo Loredan) and, by extension, the military power, status and social standing of Duke Alfonso 1st.

From yet another perspective, the bowl is simply a decorative but useful container for fruit during a picnic (equipment). These are three example initial possibilities of perceiving the object – a curated exhibition of the bowl or its representation in the painting might, with the active involvement of the viewer, prompt further alternatives. The matter of an intentional act (the act-matter) is, therefore, its content. For Husserl, the notion of act-matter is simply that of the significant object-directed mode of an act, to be perceived, judged or wished for.

Accordingly, act-matter may be described as :

Perceptual, Imaginative, Memorial, Potentially both or either linguistic or non-linguistic, Particular and indexical (self-aware), General, context-neutral and universal.

To provide clarification of this list and its application to a specific object it may be useful to take the example of a Windsor chair and apply the headings as follows:

Perceptual:

An open-frame chair made of wood.

Imaginative:

Evocative of rustic charm, elves, fairy folk, simplicity and practicality.

Memorial:

A reminder of honest values such as integrity and honesty.

Remembered as a deceased family member's favourite chair.

Linguistic:

A continuum in the tradition and development of a visual language as applied to regional craft.

Non-linguistic

A Modernist architect's kitchen chair of choice due to its design rigour and spare use of materials.

Particular and indexical (self-aware):

Representing the cultural values of a specific region or time in history.

General, context-neutral and universal:

Iconic, transcending the original context and social group of origin.

It may be useful here to introduce the Heideggerian extension of Husserl's view of intentionality. Rejecting (or extending) the transcendental phenomenology proposed by Husserl.

Heidegger's view of intentionality is more existential (being both particular and individual: *my* existence, *your* existence, *his* existence, *her* existence). Humans are therefore called Dasein - there-being, the experience of being, being-there, being in the world - because they are defined by the fact that they exist, or are in the world and inhabit it. 'The closest world of everyday Dasein is the surrounding world' (Heidegger 2010, p. 67).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2010, p. 71) describes two ways of describing objects or *modes of being*, these are described as being 'ready-to-hand' (Zuhanden) or 'present-at-hand' (Vorhanden) 'Handiness is the ontological categorical definition of beings as they are *in themselves*.'

A ready-to-hand entity, such as a tool '*is*' or 'comes into existence as' a temporal, historical being when it fits into a meaningful network of purposes and functions, i.e. when it becomes part of a world of practice. For example, if we are using a pencil, it fits into our notion of the world as 'ready to hand' - a tool used as an extension of our hands - a part of what Heidegger (2010, p. 72) refers to as translated as 'equipment' or 'useful thing' - *Zeug*.

As a point of clarification: 'Equipment' is the best known translation of the term '*Zeug*' that Heidegger uses as it is the translation given by Macquarrie and Robinson in the 1962 edition of *Being and Time*. The translation I have used throughout this research is the 2010 edition, translated by Joan Stambaugh. This edition translates *Zeug* as 'useful thing'. However, as I am discussing this within the context of an exhibition of fine art and designed objects, the use of 'equipment' is the most appropriate and is adopted throughout the research.

Equipment shows itself as that which is *in-order-to*, as that which is *for* something. A pen is equipment for writing, a fork is equipment for eating, the wind is equipment for sailing, etc. Equipment is ready-to-hand – ‘*Zuhanden*’ and this means that it is *ready to use, handy, or available*. Equipment, when operating correctly, disappears from our consciousness.

If the pencil I am using breaks and becomes useless as a tool it then reappears as a distinct object within our field of attention, our mindfulness or, as Heidegger puts it, we direct towards it our theoretical, problem-solving gaze. The pencil then becomes an object that is ‘present-at-hand’ - ‘*Vorhanden*’.

Heidegger (2010, p. 74) further points out that it is only when this dislocation occurs, when the object becomes problematic, the tool fails to work or the pencil breaks, that the object becomes present-at-hand that ‘... we discover the unusability not by looking and ascertaining properties, but rather by paying attention to the dealings in which we use it.’

Therefore, to the question asked by Heidegger ‘How is it that things show themselves to us?’ The answer is usually ‘Through the everyday familiarity of use’. We interact with the world, becoming familiar with things through handling and using things – that is our first experience. Only later, when we are so familiar with an object that it has become ready-to-hand, can we subject things to the ‘theoretical gaze’ and begin to make value judgements or perceptual adjustments.

A typical example is as follows:

- One person walks into a room, sees a chair and sits down
- Second person walks in, stops and says ‘Wow! Have you seen that chair you are sitting on?’
- First person says ‘Gosh, yes, now that you mention it, it is amazing.’

The first (primary) relationship is that it is a chair – a tool for sitting – equipment. An immediate and almost subconscious relationship is formed with its ‘chairness’. It is ready-to-hand. Only afterwards may it occur to us to look at it as an object to be admired, studied or thought about as an object that is present-at-hand.

This approach is related to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology but here it is occurring through our everyday interaction with the world around us. In the previous example, why the connection between the viewer (first person) and an object (the chair) occurs in this particular sequence is because, for Heidegger, such connections are never initially through an object in isolation. The connection comes about because of its connection with the world, with *its* world. The reason that it is possible to sit on that chair is because that is what you do with chairs, it is part of a world (equipment) that we understand and this, in turn, is linked directly to our understanding of the role of chairs within that world. Once that is understood, it becomes possible to distance ourselves from seeing the object ‘as it is *itself*’ – in isolation – because for Heidegger an object is always located within the context of its own world.

It is through this moment of becoming unusable, moving from ready-to-hand to present-at-hand, from *Zuhanden* to *Vorhanden*, that the object takes on an existence as an entity, whose meaning is determined by the character of the theoretical gaze to which it is subjected. This happens through involved, embodied action, a consequence of which is the change in its relation to *Dasein*, manifest in the way in which one acts and handles ‘things’.

6.5: The Phenomenological Reduction

According to Husserl, we are all held in a 'self-limiting captivation' by our acceptance that what we experience is in fact a true experience. We are held in captivation by our acceptance that our world view is the only and correct view, we judge – and therefore limit – before we fully engage with an experience. Husserl refers to this as 'captivation-in-acceptedness' and suggests that this supposedly true experience is 'contaminated' by our own ego – the things we think we understand, our prejudices, our previous experiences and our upbringing, all of which may collectively be known as our opinions.

Husserl (Fink 1941, p. 41) proposes that it is only when we free ourselves from captivation-in-an-acceptedness we are able to experience the world as a world of essences 'free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute' This experiencing of the world without the limitation of prior knowledge is the experiencing of astonishment and is comparable to the experience of wonder. Aristotle believed that the pursuit of philosophy begins with wonder, which may be interpreted to mean that philosophy begins as the love (pursuit) of wisdom.

As previously discussed, The Phenomenological Reduction (the reduction) is a rigorous two-part technique which directs an individual towards a way of experiencing the world through the clarity of astonishment, thereby liberating the individual from all previously held convictions and perceptions. There are two parts or 'moments' to the reduction and the term 'moment' is important as the reduction is not performed in two 'steps' where one precedes the other. Time (one before the other) is not involved in the reduction, rather, the two moments – the epoché (the bracketing of the world) and the reduction proper – occur together.

Within the context of this research, entering into the reduction (from the Latin, *reducere* 'to lead back') is a particularly relevant practice when encountering an intentionally curated collection of objects as it allows the viewer to interact with the objects 'as they show themselves to us' without the encumbrances of preconception, prejudice or misunderstanding, all things or 'attitudes' normally present when we are confronted with situations for which, in our experience, there has been no precedent and therefore no immediate reference point. As Moran (2000, p. 146) succinctly summarises: 'We must put aside our beliefs about our beliefs'.

The Epoché

The epoché is an ancient Greek word literally meaning 'suspension' but normally translated as 'suspension of judgement' or 'withholding of assent'. Within phenomenology and specifically within the first 'moment' of the reduction – the epoché describes a bracketing of the world in order to remove, distance or block self-limiting captivation or 'belief in the world' so that we are able to perceive ourselves as no longer of this world. The world continues to exist, we are not denying its existence, but we 'abstain from belief' in the world. The whole point of the epoché is that it is *neither* an affirmation *nor* a denial in the existence of the world. Welton (1999, Ideas I, Sections 4 - 46) observes that Husserl offers another definition of bracketing which is 'putting out of action'.

'We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude'

This perhaps provides an easier to grasp definition as it removes any incorrect temptation to 'deny' the world' but emphasises the 'putting out of action' or 'setting aside' of the world so that our self perception is no longer located within or attached to this world - 'this world' - being all that we currently accept as 'reality'.

In this sense, the epoché is a change in perceptual orientation for the purpose of effecting access to a transcendental experiential life no longer limited by captivation or acceptance. In this state, we are able to allow objects to 'show themselves to us' without this revelation being either an objective (not influenced by personal feelings or opinions) or a subjective (influenced by personal feelings, tastes or opinions) experience. The experience remains dis-located from these worlds. For example and to link the epoché directly back to this research and its exhibition:

Following the introduction to the painting *The Feast of the Gods* through Intentionality, the next stage is to present all available information about the painting, the painter(s) the objects within the painting, the subject matter, the patronage and provenance of the painting and the contexts in which all of these are, and have been, located.

If all of this information is then directed towards an encounter with the judgements, prejudices, world-view and personal beliefs of the viewer, disorientation and anxiety caused by an inability to intellectually and emotionally process such an amount of information occurs.

The viewer experiences doubt and uncertainty because of an inability to process the information based upon their usual world view or 'natural attitude'. This then results in a 'preparing of the way for a philosophical interpretation of the world' leading to the epoché which, by bracketing or putting out of action the natural attitude, liberates the viewer from their previously held convictions - presenting the possibility of a purely phenomenological experience to occur. It is important to remember that the act of seeing (for example) the Ming bowl within the painting, qualifies as an experience whether one sees the bowl:

- As a physical object, depicted within a painting
- As an element encountered within a dream
- As part of a hallucination.

'Bracketing' the viewing of the bowl suspends any judgement about the bowl as *noumenon* (an object or event that exists independently of human sense and/or perception) and instead analyses the *phenomenon* (a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen) of the bowl, as constituted in intentional acts (specific mental *events* such as perceiving, evaluating or remembering).

Bracketing may also reveal layers of phenomena associated with the Ming bowl such as provenance, technique, symbolic meaning, practical use and so on. Once revealed, these layers may be systematically peeled away to eventually reveal 'the thing itself' as intended and experienced by the culture that produced it – the Chinese and the Persians during the mid-late 14th century.

The Reduction Proper and The Natural Attitude

The epoché is the moment within the reduction when we free ourselves from captivation-in-acceptedness and step aside from the accepted view of the world. The reduction proper is an inquiring back into consciousness where it 'removes reference to the real world of existent entities, and all appearances are taken as genuine in their own right' (Moran 2000, p. 152). The reduction proper is where the realisation occurs that the acceptedness of the world *is* an acceptedness and not an absolute condition of reality.

In order to better understand the concept of acceptedness and, therefore, the reduction proper, it is necessary to introduce in greater detail the natural attitude and how this differs from the phenomenological perspective of viewing the world. The 'natural attitude' is our normal state of being-in-the-world, where we see the objects with which we are familiar, trees, people, and even concepts and ideas within an accepted framework of acceptance.

We don't question their existence, they just 'are'. As Husserl (1950, p. 34) puts it 'We stand on the footing of the world already given as existing'.

'Natural' in this sense reflects an ordinary way of being-in-the-world. When we look at the world from the perspective of the natural attitude, we see a world of familiarity, of everyday life which consists of facts, Husserl speaks of 'facticity' - the quality or condition of being. For Husserl, the dependence upon facticity to provide an awareness with which to inform our existence is rooted in naivety, 'any instance of actual being-here, he argued, is necessarily encountered upon a horizon that encompasses facticity but is larger than facticity' (Applebaum 2012). In other words, there are larger areas of existence and experience that cannot be accessed within the (perceptually limited) framework of the natural attitude, as the framework itself is only a small part of a greater meaningful structure first mentioned by Husserl (1975) in *Experience and Judgement*.

In *Experience and Judgment* Husserl introduced the notion of 'A structure of and for consciousness that can be grasped within the reduction, that which makes the very seeing of individual empirical objects as objects possible for us'. That the natural attitude is only a small part of this much larger 'structure of consciousness' reveals the limitation or 'naivety' inherent in this ordinary way of being-in-the-world that requires that we experience the world 'as already present' prior to being thought about. The natural attitude can only bring a single structure of consciousness, an *acceptedness* to the viewing of an object, a construct of thought or an encounter with another person.

Viewing or encountering the same objects, constructs or people when adopting a phenomenological perspective allows the deployment of multiple structures of consciousness arising from the knowledge that we are not only being-in-the-world but that there are different worlds co-existing at the same time, the world of art, the world of business, the world of family and so on.

Once we have accepted that there are multiple structures of consciousness existing outside of the natural attitude it becomes possible to recognise that the unquestioned acceptance of our recognised world is just that - an acceptance. Husserl proposes (Fink 1941, p. 41) that we can, through the phenomenological reduction, begin to 'blast open our captivation-in-an-acceptedness' and achieve liberation from the acceptedness that is limiting our experience and perception of the world and our 'self'.

6.6: *Dasein, Being and Heidegger*

For Heidegger, the self has no Being apart from its Being-in-the-world. In an Introduction by Polt (1999, p. 90) Heidegger understood that: 'Authentic existence is not an escape from the world but a way of existing in it'. Before discussing Heidegger's approach to the world it may first be useful to briefly return to the notion of Dasein (there-being). Dasein indicates a being that is capable of comprehending physical, mental and ideal facts about its own Being. Dasein is not 'the' physical human being and not 'the' person but more the *entity* that human beings are.

Dasein is central to understanding Heidegger's concept of world as it is the means by which he identifies the distinctive modes (method, manner or way) of Being particular to human beings. 'Modes' (plural) is deliberately used here as there are many 'characterisations' of Dasein in Being and Time (Heidegger 2010) which is also where Heidegger defines the term Phenomenology as 'an enquiry into that which shows itself in itself' which may also be formulated as 'the things themselves'. Importantly, Heidegger claimed that phenomenology is not only transcendental (concerned with the knowledge and structure of Being) but also hermeneutic (concerned with the theory and knowledge of interpretation). Of considerable importance to Heidegger was the *interpretation* of Being as an interpretation that is ceaselessly open to revision, enhancement and replacement.

Heidegger's approach to phenomenological investigation therefore, shares a 'point of departure' with that of Husserl by examining everyday experience in order to uncover the theoretical transcendental conditions that inform such experience. Heidegger then differs from, or rather extends, this Husserlian investigative process by insisting that the hermeneutic goal of 'Being-centred' phenomenology is always to allow interpretation of Being.

For Heidegger, the cyclic combination of historically embedded thinking and continuous revision (known as the Hermeneutic Structure, Circle or Spiral (Fig.6.3) does not impose limitations on understanding but is a precondition of achieving understanding (particularly philosophical understanding). Encountering the sequence of knowledge as presented within the *Hermeneutic Spiral* results in increasingly deeper (or higher, depending on the perceived perspective of the Spiral) levels of understanding.

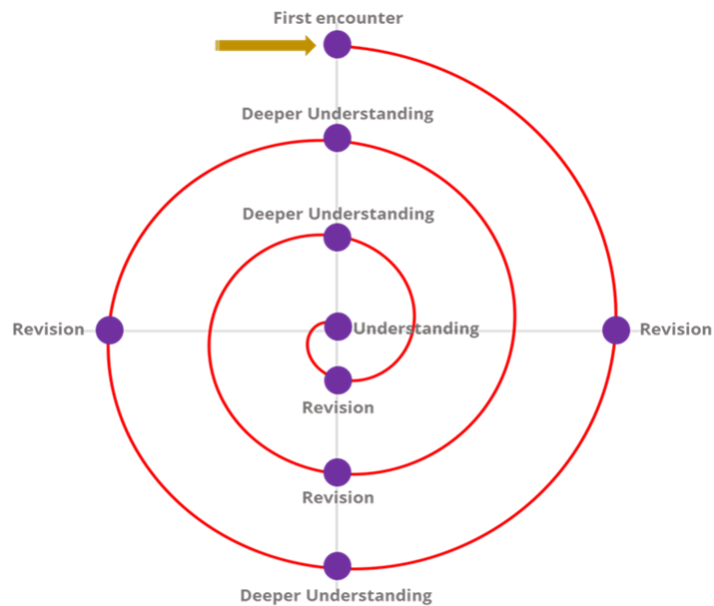


Fig. 6.3
The Hermeneutic Spiral

Equipment, Zuhanden and Vorhanden

Heidegger proposes that we normally encounter objects (he refers to them as *entities*) by using them in daily life, as tools for specific tasks. Collectively, these tool-entities are referred to by Heidegger as 'equipment'. We form such close relationship with these entities that they are no longer noticed – they become integrated extensions to our arms, hands, feet and so on. Heidegger suggests that tools (entities) used and assimilated in this way not only become part of our everyday equipment but also develop their own specific nature of Being, known as *Readiness-to-hand*.

As discussed earlier in this chapter (using the example of a broken pencil) entities, when used regularly over time, become themselves 'ready-to-hand' (Zuhanden) Heidegger (2010, p. 69) explains this in the following extract from *Being and Time*, using a hammer as an eloquent example:

'The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is - as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses - in which it manifests itself in its own right - we call 'readiness-to-hand'.

We do not look at or notice these entities – tools for woodworking, cooking, eating or painting for example. Given the assumption that the tools don't break during use, Dasein has no conscious experience of this equipment as distinct, separate objects, they remain in a state of readiness-to-hand. For example, if a carpenter were to be asked how many times he had hit a nail with the hammer he was using in order to secure the connection of two pieces of wood, it is highly unlikely that he would know or recollect. The equipment simply 'worked', the readiness-to-hand remained uninterrupted. This readiness-to-hand increases in direct correlation with the proficiency of the carpenter, when the activity undertaken is performed at its best, there are no subjects and no objects, there is only the experience of the task being performed. A ready-to-hand entity (tool) is only ready-to-hand when it fits into a pre-existing network of expectation, practice and function, in other words, the 'world' of the hammer. If the activity is interrupted in some way, for example a tool breaking, an object blocking or otherwise preventing completion of the task or a vital piece of equipment is missing, then the experience moves into a state of 'un-readiness-to-hand'. The carpenter will then become aware of his tools, his surroundings and his own physicality. The experience of only experiencing the task being performed is shattered.

The phenomenological category which in many ways is the most problematic in terms of clear definition is the present-at-hand (Vorhanden). To continue the analogy of the carpenter the object which is present-at-hand may be said to be outside the world of work of the carpenter. It may remain connected in terms of possibility but is disconnected in terms of readiness-to-hand.

For example, if a carpenter had cleaned and set down his hammer at the end of a day's work where it had been embedded in the world of the ready-to-hand and an artist or product designer saw the hammer and thought 'That is a beautiful hammer, I am going to frame it and hang it on the wall'. When the hammer had been framed and hung, it would have been removed from the daily 'work-world' of the carpenter where it had become almost invisible, immersed as it had been in the ready-to-hand. The hammer - now removed from the practical world of the tool-entity and placed within the theoretical object-to-be-seen-and-thought-about world of the present-at-hand - is simply *there*. It has been transformed from a tool to be used, into an object to be looked at, from Zuhanden to Vorhanden.

Another, less poetic example perhaps, could be that the handle of the hammer cracked during the carpenter's regular use and, from the perspective of the carpenter, entered the state of un-readiness-to-hand or uselessness as a tool. The carpenter then set the hammer aside in order to use a replacement. The broken hammer, lying on a table next to the carpenter's work bench, has lost any possibility of being ready-to-hand and may only be perceived as present-at-hand - an object to be viewed in the abstract, no longer a tool to be used but an object to be looked at or thought about, in this case possibly in anger or disappointment, or as an element of composition in a work of art.

The ability of an object to move between the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand is of central importance to the research being undertaken within this study which follows the 'journey' of a group of objects as they move between the worlds of fine art, artefact, exhibit and interior design. The movement between these worlds includes the perceived transition from ready-to-hand (for example, the Ming bowl, a ready-to-hand object filled with fruit is first introduced within the Bellini painting whilst the same Ming bowl, now considered too precious to be used as an article of equipment is shown elsewhere in the exhibition as a present-at-hand work of art – as well as other contextual locations). The interrogation of this journey requires the discussion and alliance of two other conditions within phenomenology, Intentionality and World. Intentionality has been introduced earlier within this document but will be revisited in the following section with specific reference to the movement of objects between worlds.

World

The concept of World is significant to the research as it is the movement of objects selected from the Bellini painting between actual and perceived worlds that both connects and stabilises the research. The most commonly used of Heidegger's definitions of 'world' and the one which most closely fits with this research is as follows: 'World' can be understood in another ontical (from the point of real existence) sense. Not, however, as those entities which Dasein essentially is not and which can be encountered within-the-world, but rather as the *wherein* a factual Dasein as such can be said to 'live'.

'World' has here a pre-ontological existentiell signification. Again there are different possibilities: 'World' may stand for the 'public' we-world, or one's 'own' closest (domestic) environment. Here, existentiell refers to the aspects of the world which are identifiable as particular delimited questions or issues, whereas existential refers to Being as such, which permeates all things and can not be delimited in such a way as to be susceptible to factual knowledge.

It follows then that 'world' can be understood not as the physical, factual element underlying our own individual reality, nor as a thing outside of our present understanding which is able to be investigated according to a structure allocated to it by a human being but, because Dasein 'understands itself' in terms of possibilities, world can be understood as the network of relations between things as items of equipment that hang together to form a whole and in doing so give structure to Dasein's possibilities and thereby to the way that Dasein can understand itself and its relation to things.

By using the painting *The Feast of the Gods* and the objects connected with it to expose the world of an artefact and its contents, the research has echoes of the example put forward by Heidegger of the painting *A Pair of Shoes* by van Gogh (Fig. 6.4).



Fig. 6.4

Van Gogh, V. (1886)

A Pair of Shoes

[Oil on canvas].

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Thingness

Heidegger (1935, p. 70) states that 'art is the 'becoming of truth' – 'the 'setting-into-work' or 'unconcealing' of truth.' He also explains that works of art are 'things' that have a 'thingly' character and he proposes that there are three accepted ideas about what constitutes a Thing:

- 1: The Greek concept of 'Thing as substance with attached qualities' for example and to use the Ming bowl illustrated in Fig 3 – the substance is the bowl to which qualities are attached (it is made of porcelain, it has a peony and rose design painted on it, it is round ... and so on).
- 2: A Thing may also be a collection of sensations in the mind leading to an object of thought such as a glass of wine or a poem.
- 3: Most importantly for Heidegger is the Thing that consists of '*matter that has 'form' imposed upon it*'. This idea is developed by Heidegger from the metaphysics of Aristotle (4th Century BC, p. 124) who proposed that '... every generated thing, whether generated naturally or in any other way, comes *from matter*'.

All of these ways of thinking about a Thing originate (*der Ursprung* – springing forth from a source) from our recognised world of tools and equipment – the world of the 'ready-to-hand' or *Zuhanden*. This world of equipment always occurs in a set of relations with other pieces of equipment.

Heidegger (2010, p. 17) refers to this state of relativity (a state of dependence in which the existence or significance of one entity is solely dependent on that of another) as a 'Referential Totality'. 'Referential' because one element refers to another, and 'Totality' because it occurs fundamentally as a whole from which one then accesses or makes sense of the parts, not the other way around. For example: the screwdriver makes no sense without a screw, without something to be screwed in etc. The Totality is essentially *my* world, the world that is made up of things that exist to me because they have a place in my world.

This world makes sense to me because it is structured according to my beliefs, concerns, experiences and aspirations. Things that matter to *me*. Therefore, when we try to see what something 'really is in itself' as Heidegger describes it, we are only able to understand it through its relativity to other things and its place in the world.

However, when we encounter a work of art, such definitions of 'thingness', originating as they do from the world of tools and equipment – the world of the referential totality – become inadequate as art exists outside of a referential totality. Taking the van Gogh painting *A Pair of Shoes* (Fig. 6.4) as an example, this painting reveals ('unconceals' in Heidegger's terminology) the world of the peasant who wore the shoes. It is possible to look at the painting simply as a painting of 'equipment' – tools for walking – but this would be to miss the point of the painting and is clearly inadequate as a definition. When viewed from the perspective of world, what is revealed – unconcealed – in the painting is the drudgery of day-to-day existence as experienced by the wearer of the shoes.

As Heidegger (1935, p. 70) states in *On The Origin of the Work of Art* 'Art then is the becoming and happening of truth'. We see within the painting not only the thing but the whole world that comes with the thing – the world in which the thing belongs and makes sense. For example, within the context of this research, the painting by Bellini *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. 1.4) provides the focus for enquiry by reason of its depiction of a mythical world populated by mythical inhabitants. The Gods – mythical beings once believed to be real – are using 'real' objects and dressed in Renaissance clothing in order to reinforce the intention by Bellini of presenting the Gods in a believable reality contemporary to their viewers. This world of the Gods is further discussed within Chapter Seven: The Exhibition, but it is important to introduce the point here to clarify the role of the painting specifically with reference to the research.

As a painting *The Feast of the Gods* presents a world that does not exist and a pantheon of Gods that could never have assembled for this (or any other) feast in this (or any other) landscape. However, because they *have* been painted, they are now able to be perceived and, because they may be perceived, the viewer may have meaningful thoughts and beliefs about them. The Gods and Satyrs inhabit their own world which has, through painting, been made explicit to the viewer and which consequently reveals other multiple worlds.

Before considering the worlds of the objects presented within the painting, it is useful to introduce the Husserl (1936) proposition of 'life-world' - in this instance the life-world of the viewer. Zelić (2007, p. 424) goes on to say that: 'The philosophical and scientific investigation into the life-world, encounters diversified phenomena of social practice and praxis such as acting, communicating, and evaluating, and so on as well as cultural, aesthetic and religious achievements in the broadest sense and sorts of utility and value, beauty and ugliness, sacredness and profanity'.

Accordingly, the viewer will experience *The Feast of the Gods* within their own 'self-limiting captivation' - by their acceptance that what they experience is in fact a true experience. The viewer is held in captivation by their acceptance that their world view is the only and correct view, they judge - and therefore limit - before fully engaging with an experience. Given, therefore, that a viewer is likely to experience the painting 'as if' it were true, in the sense that it simply represented an imaginary world 'like' (and unlike) our own, they will view the objects presented within the painting as belonging there and only there, making sense in that world alone? What we then miss is that things have always 'belonged' in multiple worlds and can continue to belong in multiple worlds - the worlds of their provenance *and* the possible worlds conjured by placing them together in different settings.

The 'life-worlds' of Bellini and Titian, the two artists primarily responsible for *The Feast of the Gods* as we see it today (Dosso Dossi's additions having been almost entirely overpainted by Titian in 1529) were a product of the way that they moved through the world and their sophistication as friends of Popes, Doges, Dukes, Artists, Musicians, Philosophers, Writers and Courtiers. They were also considered by their contemporaries to be the two finest painters in Renaissance Italy and at that time their technique, vision and skill was unsurpassed. Both artists were responsible, with the resources and support of Duke Alfonso 1st, for founding the distinctive and highly influential Venetian School of Art.

The objects (tools) that the Gods are using to eat with and drink from did physically exist as real objects at the time of this painting but, because they are now within a painting and located within the context of a picnic attended by Gods, they have in actuality 'disappeared' from the physical only to reappear as Intentional objects inhabiting another, equally real world of fine art, able to be perceived, thought about and discussed just as much as their physically real antecedents. These, and other worlds of the objects will be discussed in detail within Chapter Seven: The Exhibition.

7.0: The Exhibition

7.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the visualisation of the research through the design and production of a virtual exhibition. Before moving forward into this chapter in any detail, it may be helpful to set out precisely why the format of an exhibition was selected to present the research.

The research is located at the confluence of interior design, phenomenology and curatorial practice. Within this section of the research, attention is directed towards the development of a virtual presentation visualising the thought processes occurring at such a convergence, specifically those which concern the interaction between phenomenology, artefact and viewer.

The practice of interior design consistently and clearly demands the application of curatorial reasoning to the selection and presentation of art, objects and images within precisely determined residential, commercial or cultural environments. This research investigates what happens when phenomenology is applied to such reasoning whilst the viewer is experiencing an exhibition relative to interior design.

The perceived significance attached to a curated collection of both fine and decorative art is considerably increased when presented to a viewer within the context of a well-designed and clearly structured exhibition interior, or as here, through a carefully considered presentation in the home of a serious collector of such objects (Fig. 7.1).



Fig. 7.1

The power of curation as evidenced in the library of the Dallas home of Betty Gertz, the eminent collector of rare decorative art who passed away in August 2020 aged 94. Her library evolved in collaboration with her great friend, influential Belgian designer, collector and curator, Axel Vervoordt.

The impact on the perception of a viewer experiencing, for the first time, a profound engagement with carefully selected art and related objects presented in an exhibition format designed specifically to highlight phenomenological structures is also investigated in this section of the research.

A virtual exhibition of art and objects associated with an interior design context provides a natural platform for the visualisation and evidencing of the research thesis. Further; by extending the relationship between interior design, phenomenology and curatorial practice to include an examination of the impact and meaning of intentionally curated objects upon the viewer, this critical exhibition brings together in one experience and with a new dynamic, the disciplines of fine art, design and philosophy through the phenomenological thinking of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.

The significance of this symbiotic and intentional, tripartite relationship of fine art, design and philosophy becomes increasingly apparent when the perception of the viewer is applied to three core considerations.

These three core considerations: The Intentional Act, The Intentional Object, and Intentional Content, remain unmodified despite their application to the organisation and presentation of objects, the experience of the viewer or the often changeable or unstable content.

By combining curatorial reasoning with phenomenological intentionality, the exhibition presents and explores four key propositions:

- a) That it is possible to experience the exhibition and encounter the objects exhibited within it, whilst, as Moran (2000, p. 4) confirms 'avoiding all 'misconstructions and impositions placed on (the) experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense or, indeed, from science itself. Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within'.
- b) That the exhibition is allowed to work on the viewer as it directs them on their journey through the exhibition. The viewer is influenced by the exhibition as certain exhibits are removed from their original context and modified as they move through a series of their own phenomenological 'worlds' resulting in yet other worlds being presented to the viewer, allowing both the objects and their contexts to be perceived in new ways.
- c) That an unexpected understanding of the objects is experienced by the viewer through prescribed information whilst subsequent loss of experiential (phenomenological) impact arising as a result of such understanding is prevented.
- d) That the viewer of such presentations enter into a significant, personal dialogue with the objects on display *as they show themselves to us* without curatorial guidance or educational information diminishing such an experience. The methodology of informational presentation is therefore pivotal in allowing a phenomenological experience to take place within the viewer.

At this point, it may be beneficial to introduce the layout of the virtual exhibition itself, the content, the journey experienced by the viewer and the significant stages within that journey. It is this journey of the viewer and the effect upon the viewer as they follow the objects that, having been selected from the painting *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig.7.2) move across and between worlds, that forms the core purpose of the exhibition. An exhibition format that, whilst being virtual, allows the viewer to experience the transition of the objects as they move from their original context of fine art where they were presented as things to be looked at and thought about, into new contexts to do with the Heideggerian concept of 'Equipment', or things (tools) to be used. For the purposes of this exhibition the objects/tools selected from the painting are: a blue and white porcelain Ming dynasty Chinese bowl, a silver wine cup and a wheel-cut Murano glass beaker.



Fig. 7.2

Bellini, G. (1514) Later additions by Dossi, D. and Titian (1529)

The Feast of the Gods

[Oil on canvas].

National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Source: NGA Visual Services, reproduced with permission.

7.2: *The Four Rooms of the Exhibition*

Room One: Intentionality

This is introduced at the very beginning of the exhibition where it presents the painting to be examined and introduces the objects presented within the painting that have been selected for particular attention as they journey through multiple worlds. Some of these worlds may not belong to either the painting or the objects - becoming revealed (unconcealed) and introduced only as the viewer progresses through the exhibition. This room also introduces the Intention of the exhibition as well as the phenomenological concepts of the Intentional Act, Intentional Object and Intentional Content.

Room Two: The (Phenomenological) Reduction

This is where one is able to view the world as a world of essences, free from any contamination or influence that presuppositions of conceptual frameworks or psyche might contribute. Here, this state is achieved through 'overloading' the viewer with information about the objects on display, saturating their ability to impose any presuppositions and allowing the experiencing of the world through astonishment. It is also where the viewer is encouraged to realise that all that is accepted as reality *is* only an acceptedness. Room Two is where Husserl shows that the reduction and its suspension of the natural attitude is not a step towards a kind of 'mere observation' (an impossibility because of the sheer volume of information being presented simultaneously) but a step towards exposing the meaning deeply embedded in our experience.

Room Three: The Things Themselves

Room Three is where all contextual information is removed or completely hidden in order to 'exclude any consideration of the causes of experience so as to focus on the essential structure of experience' and which brings the objects and the viewer together in a phenomenological experience where the object is at last allowed to *show itself to us*, free of all 'knowledge' brought to the object by the viewer, in other words and, as

Dreyfus and Wrathall (2006, p. 11) confirm ‘... how the things themselves show themselves’. Both Husserl (through a transcendental approach, concerned with the essential and intuitive basis of knowledge and consciousness, independent of and leading to experience) and Heidegger (through an examination of both the viewer and the artefact’s relationship with ‘world’ and ‘equipment’) conclude that ‘we always and only experience what is meaningful’ although in different ways. The two approaches are addressed within the exhibition as follows:

The Transcendental

Following the introduction of Intentionality and the painting within Room One, Room Two engages the Reduction through the overload of information leading to the Fink (1941, p. 41) ‘blasting apart of the captivation-in-an-acceptedness’ of the viewer in order (in Room Three) to ‘return to the things themselves [which] is to return to that world which precedes knowledge’ (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. ix,x).

The World and Equipment

The viewer and their relationship with world and equipment are addressed within Room Four, where objects from the painting are re-presented within unexpected art and equipment contexts focusing the attention on the worlds of the object, the viewer and the, sometimes bewildering, new contexts.

Room Three, being ‘located’ between Rooms Two and Four is intellectually and philosophically withdrawn from the previous approaches, occupying a distanced yet loaded place that is outside of, but relating directly to, both the transcendental and the worldly explorations of Rooms Two and Four. (Figs. 7.3 – 7.7)

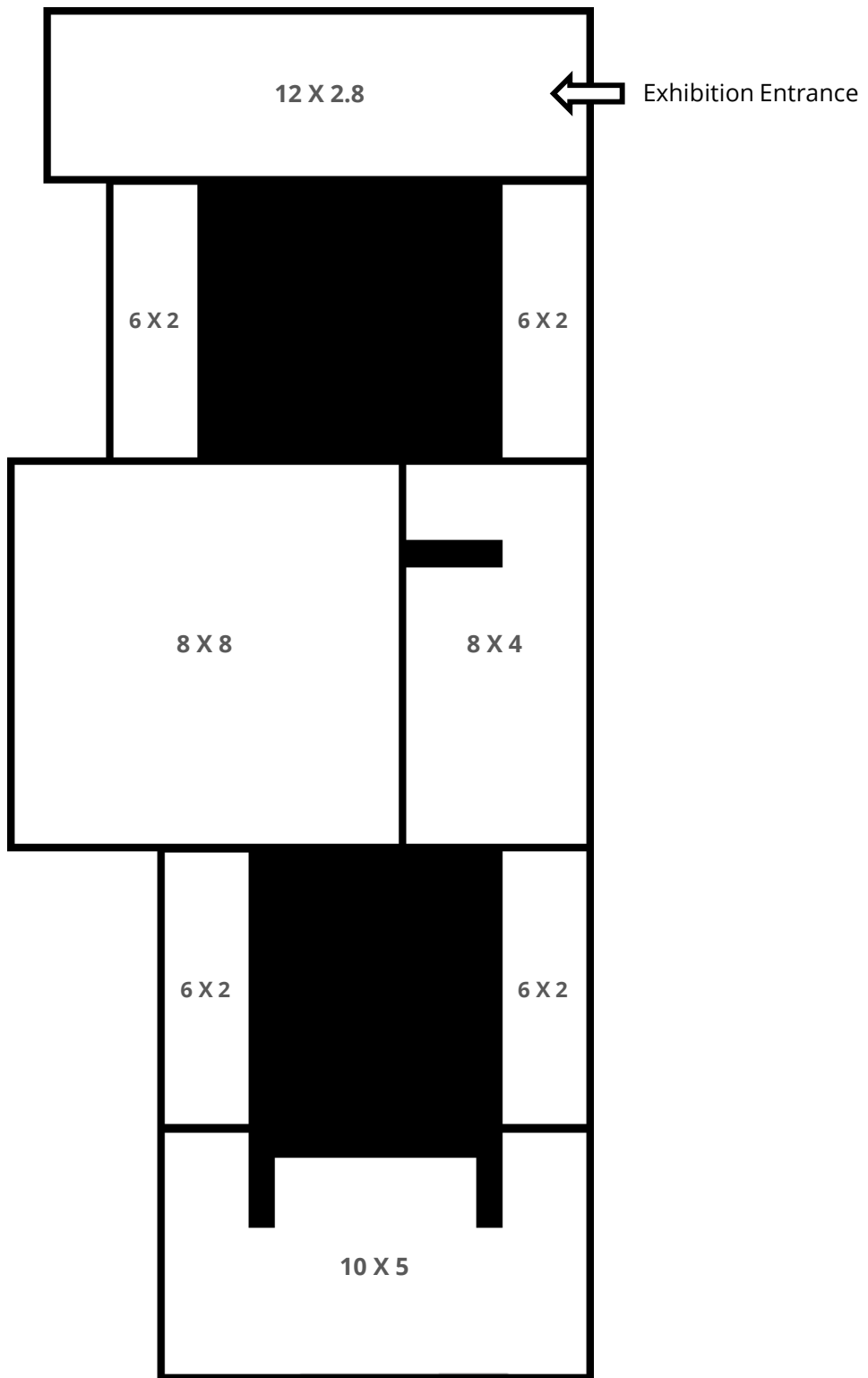


Fig. 7.3
Plan of virtual gallery with overall dimensions in metres.

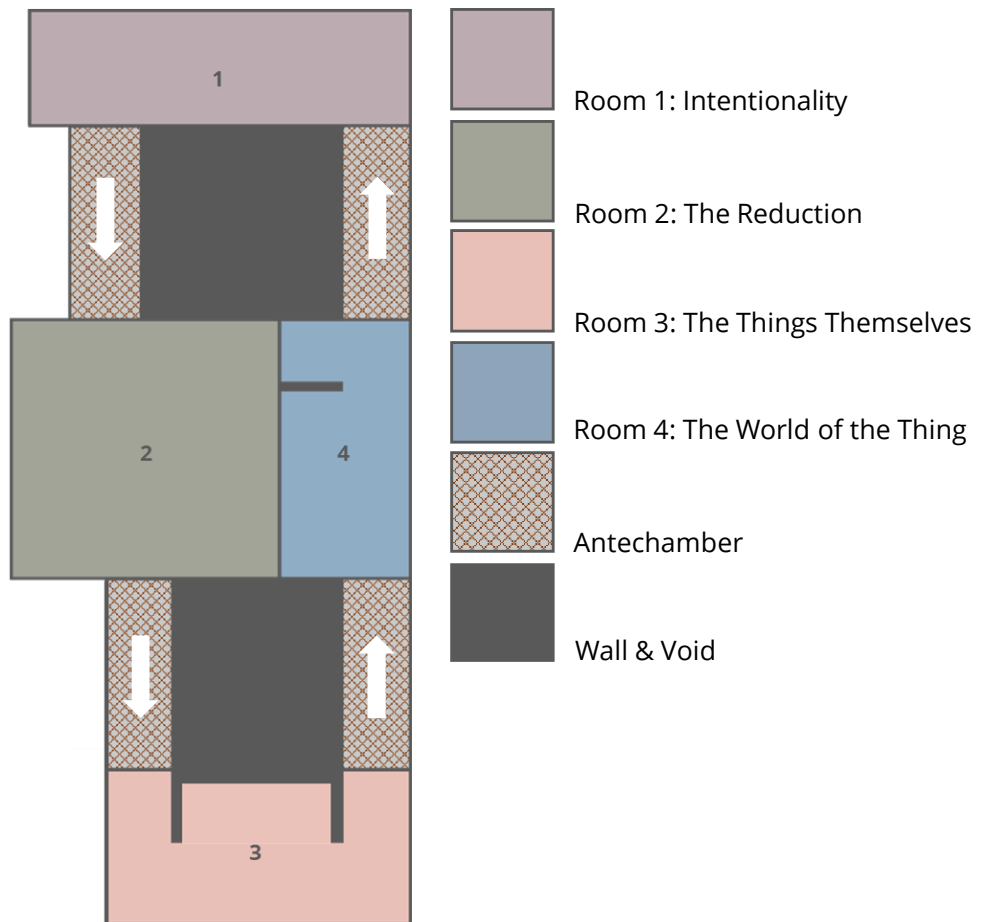
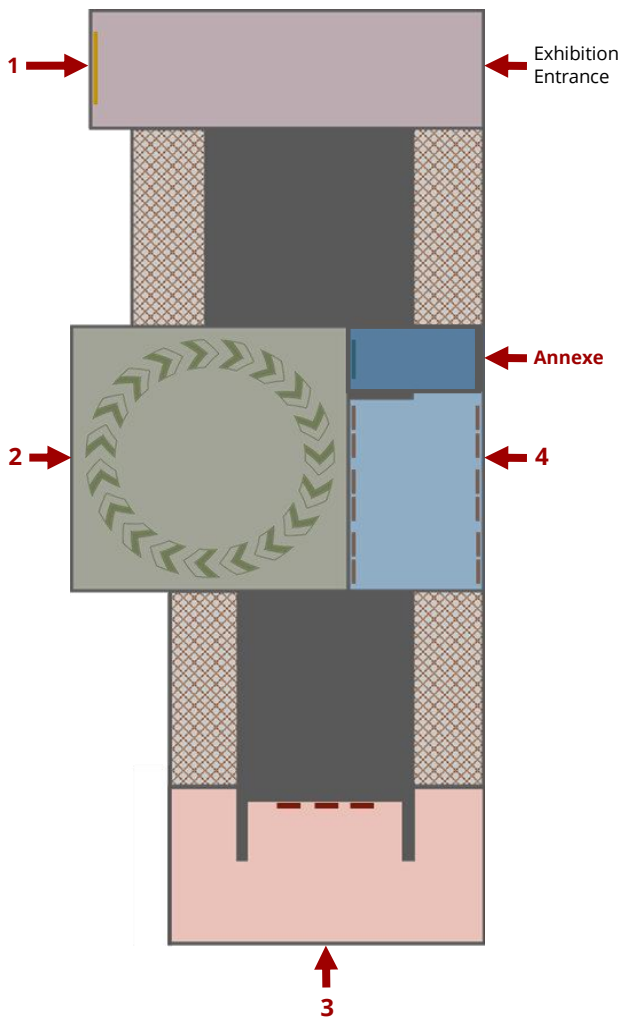


Fig. 7.4

Plan showing the four key rooms of the exhibition.

Each room introduces the viewer to the worlds of fine art and interior design through the application of a particular phenomenological perspective.

The antechambers allow both readjustment from the previous experience and preparation for the next step of the journey through the exhibition.



Room 1

Intentionality

Giovanni Bellini's "The Feast of the Gods" is presented both in isolation and in context. The painting provides a frame of reference and a contextual location for the research.

Room 2

The Reduction

An expansive, encircling and immersive presentation of information relative to the painting and the objects selected from the painting.

Room 3

The Things Themselves

The three objects selected from the painting, presented 'as they show themselves to us' devoid of context, analysis or experiential judgement.

Room 4

The World of the Thing

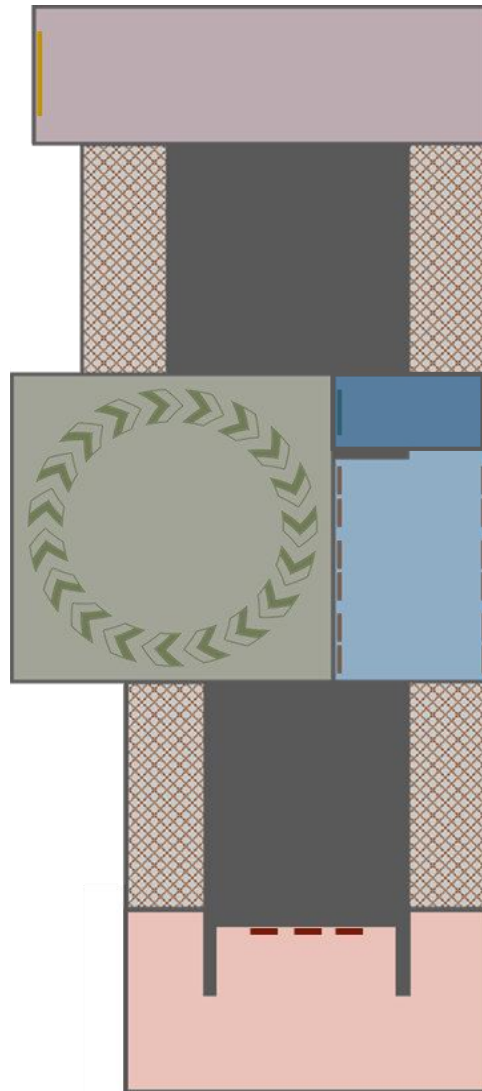
Contrasting with the previous context-less experience within Room Three, this room explores the object / context / viewer relationship.


The Annexe of Room Four concludes the exhibition with an abstraction of the selected objects, returning them to the world of fine art.


Fig. 7.5


Location of exhibition content by room.


Fig. 7.6:
Plan of the exhibition showing sequence of installation.




- 
Reproduction of the painting *The Feast of the Gods*.

- 
Contextual, historical and other factual information connected with the painting and the objects selected for further study from within the painting.

- 
Images of the objects 'as they show themselves to us'.

- 
Six pairs of images presenting the movement of objects between new contexts and their 'worlds' exposing the enigma of definition.

- 
The three objects presented as an abstract composition, thereby returning them to their original world of fine art.

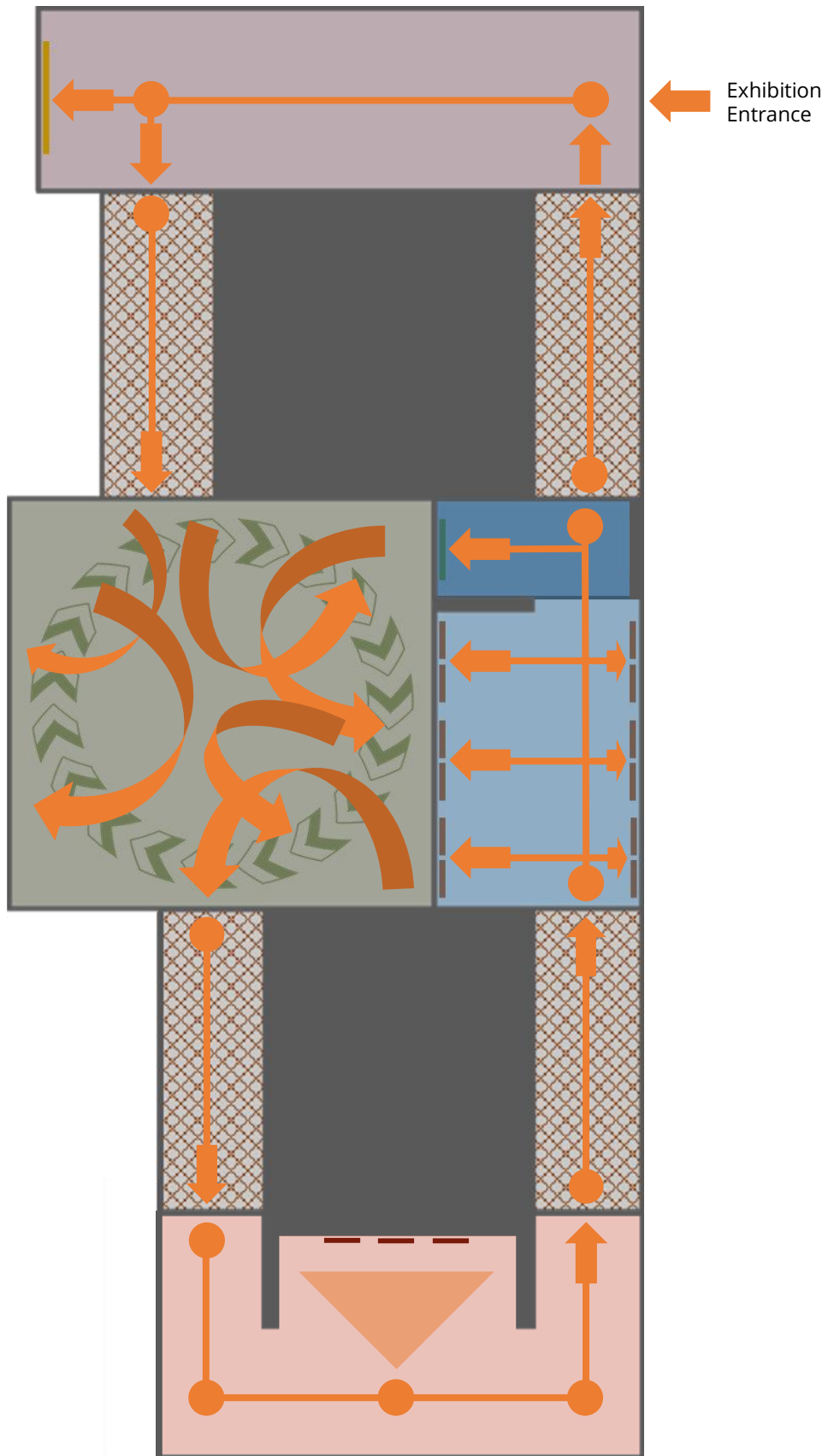
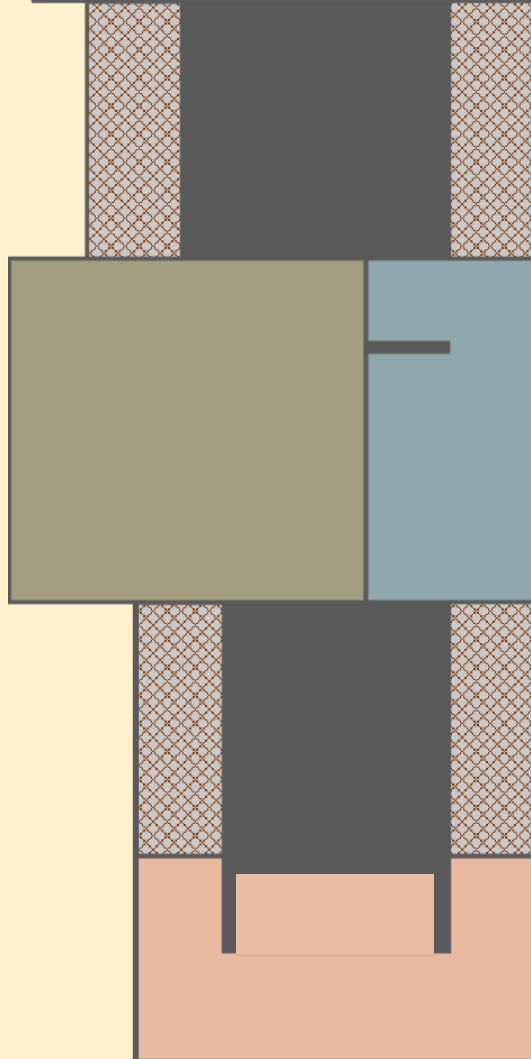


Fig. 7.7.
Route through the exhibition.

Room One Intentionality



7.3: *The Intentional Act - The act of presenting itself*

Physically, Room One is the area of the exhibition entered by the viewer immediately after crossing the entrance threshold and moving into the exhibition. It corresponds to the Italian Renaissance *antecamerino* and is the area within which the exhibition proper is encountered for the first time. Its function is to encourage the viewer to disengage from their 'known' world and to prepare them for a previously unimagined experience. Italian marble *pietra dura* (inlaid stone) panels, painted ceiling and inlaid marble floor, all dating from the late 15th and early 16th centuries, combine to provide an appropriate contextual location alluding to the time of Duke Alfonso I of Ferrara (Fig. 7.8) the man responsible for commissioning *The Feast of the Gods* from Giovanni Bellini. It is impossible to authentically recreate the Duke's private apartments at Ferrara, the Camerini d'Alabastro (Alabaster Rooms) as they were dismantled on the orders of Pope Clement VIII in 1598 and no visual records survive. Written records confirm that they were lined, as the name suggests, with fine inlaid marble panels.

The exquisitely decorated 'antecamerino' of Duke Alfonso I, led directly to the Camerino d'Alabastro where guests could view Duke Alfonso's most prized and private collections of paintings. In this case, the collection included a masterpiece by Giovanni Bellini, four paintings by Titian and one by Dosso Dossi (now lost) who also created the wall frieze and ceiling decorations.

All the paintings within the Duke's antecamerino referred to love, marriage or erotica and this suite of rooms which presented them was recognised throughout Italy as the most magnificent gallery of its time. The influence of the collection and their setting was so widespread that the entire Venetian School of painting was founded because of the financial and social patronage of Duke Alfonso 1st, his friendship with the painter, Giovanni Bellini and the renown amongst connoisseurs of this particular set of rooms in the Palazzo Ducale.

Room One of the exhibition is also intended to introduce the exhibition as a distinct entity. It aims to:

- Distance the viewer from the 'normality' of the outside world and its external distractions.
- Allow the viewer to acclimatise to the different world of the exhibition.
- Prepare the viewer for the phenomenological journey ahead.
- Focus the viewer's attention on the key exhibit - *The Feast of the Gods*.
- Locate the viewer within the contextual landscape of the exhibition.
- Introduce the viewer to the key points of the research as illustrated within the exhibition whilst ensuring that 'Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within'.

As an introduction to the exhibition, some brief contextual information about this specific point of the Italian Renaissance is provided here to lead the viewer into the world of the painting and its objects as well as into the world of the research itself.



Fig. 7.8

Titian (attr.) (1530-34)

Portrait of Alfonso I d'Este

[Oil on canvas].

Bemberg Foundation Museum, Toulouse.

The combination of sophisticated thinking with the wealth and power of the great Renaissance families such as the Medici, Borgia, d'Este, Sforza, Visconti and Farnese led to competition between these families as to who was able to secure, by patronage, the most accomplished artists, craftsmen, thinkers and architects available at that time. In interiors, the result of such commitment was evidenced through the creation of extremely refined collections of objects, decorative art, sculpture and paintings, with the artists themselves, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Bellini, Titian, Botticelli and so on, supervising the placement of their work within the interiors of their patrons to ensure best advantage. Similarly, it was customary for an artist to bring a painting almost to completion, then hang it in its intended location and finish the painting *in situ*. This was to ensure that the final brushstrokes worked in harmony with the intended lighting of the picture, whether natural or artificial, to enhance the subject matter of the painting by directing the gaze of the viewer to the most important area of the painting - the face of Christ, for example. This new development in the relationship between art, location and viewer matured rapidly amongst the *cognoscenti* into the knowledge that, for the first time in history, context and placement was as important as the artefact. Within Italian society, it was no longer sufficient to secure and commission works from the most fashionable and in-demand 'tradesmen'.

In Renaissance Italy, artists such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci viewed themselves as tradesmen, rather than artists. Michelangelo famously said to Pope Julius II when initially refusing the commission to paint the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican 'Painting is not my trade'.

The skilful manipulation of decoration and other contextual elements such as allegory and metaphor amplifying the perception of the finished work of art became the new signifier of the level of culture and sophistication attained by those families who commissioned the works.



Fig. 7.9

A fine panel of *pietra dura*, inlaid marble and alabaster. This style of decoration was applied within the Camerino d'Alabastro, the contextual location for *The Feast of the Gods*. All trace of the original decoration is sadly now lost - written descriptions however, do survive.

The intended effect on the viewer when encountering for the first time within the exhibition *The Feast of the Gods* in combination with the pietra dura (Fig. 7.9) wall panels, painted ceiling and inlaid marble floor, is both complex and subtle. Potential responses may be:

- **Reassuring** to the viewer, in the sense that all images are essentially non-threatening.
- **Informative**, introductory information is provided introducing both the painting and the research.
- **Preparatory**, the viewer has left the real world outside and is preparing to move deeper into the exhibition experience.
- **Disorientating**, the viewer is unsure of their 'role' in the exhibition or what is expected of them. What precisely are they looking at and why that particular painting?
- **Apprehensive**, will they enjoy the experience?

- **Recognisable**, the Italian Renaissance is a well-known and therefore non-threatening aesthetic. Classical mythology is a familiar genre within art. Greek and Roman Gods are established characters, for example 'Poseidon/Neptune is the God of the sea'.
- **Uncertainty**, the viewer may feel unsure of how they 'should' or 'are expected to' feel when looking at the painting. Is it correct to make value judgements such as: Do I like this painting? What are the criteria upon which I make any judgement? Should I be judging at all? Should I know something about this painting already? Is it 'wrong' to not know about art? What is the 'correct' answer that I should provide? Is there a correct answer at all?

Within the painting itself, the selected objects add to this combination of often contradictory impressions by simultaneously inhabiting the worlds of fine art and equipment, leaving the viewer without any reliable or consistent frame of reference upon which to base their point of view. The consequential lack of confidence of the viewer in their own responses in turn reinforces their feelings of disorientation and uncertainty - a condition which continues to be accentuated within Room Two of the exhibition and their encounter with *The Reduction*.

b) **The Intentional Object:**

The *object* presented, or referred to, by the act

The painting bringing focus to the exhibition and introduced within Room One is *The Feast of the Gods*. This is the object referred to by the act. It is also the primary object (the painting) presenting the three further objects selected from within the painting for analysis as they move between their worlds. As discussed in Chapter Six: Philosophy - the relationship between the Intentional act and the Intentional object is reciprocal and correlative - it is a mutual and equivalent relationship. In order to perceive, one must perceive *something*.

Similarly, if something is there, one must perceive it whether it is in fact real or imagined. The group of feasting Gods in the painting by Bellini do not exist and could never have assembled for this feast in this landscape. However, because they have been painted, they are able to be perceived and because they may be perceived, the viewer may have meaningful thoughts and beliefs about them. Similarly, the objects (tools) that the Gods are using to eat with and drink from did physically exist before this painting but, because they are now within a painting and located within the context of a picnic attended by Gods, they have in actuality 'disappeared' from the physical only to reappear as Intentional objects inhabiting another, equally real, world of fine art, able to be perceived, thought about and discussed just as much as their physically real antecedents.

The painting, depicting an outdoor picnic or *bacchanal* (described by Ovid in the early 3rd century BC as 'a picnic with assembled Gods and Satyrs') introduces a number of objects relative to a residential interior. Three in particular (Fig. 7.10) have been selected for detailed analysis within the exhibition and will be discussed in detail in 'The Reduction'.

A Ming dynasty (1386-1644) porcelain bowl presenting the earliest known depiction of Chinese porcelain in European painting.

A highly polished Italian 15th century silver wine cup.

A 14th century, Murano, wheel-cut, opaque honeycomb glass drinking vessel.

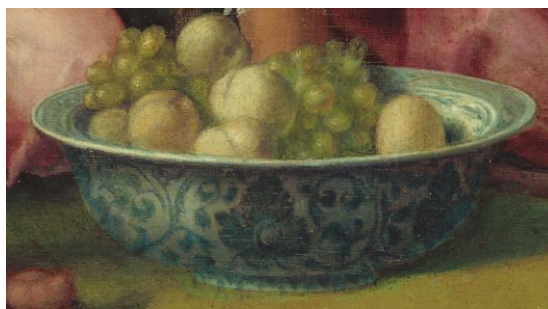


Fig. 7.10
The three objects selected for analysis circled in white, with details.

c) Intentional Content: What is *actually* being presented in the act

When a viewer first encounters a complex painting such as *The Feast of the Gods* it may be difficult for them to understand precisely what it is they are looking at. For example - it is an illustration of a poem from ancient Greece about a picnic attended by a group of mythological deities, it is also an 'Old Master' painting with:

- a) A significant place within the history of painting.
- b) All the assumptions and presuppositions associated with such a classification.
- c) A highly eventful provenance.

Simultaneously, it is a largely 'domestic' painting featuring a considerable amount of - in Heideggerian terms - 'equipment' such as bowls, trays, drinking vessels, flagons and other objects necessary for a moveable feast, unlike the van Gogh painting *A Pair of Shoes* (Fig. 7.11) of the peasant woman's boots which present the world of the peasant (the mud, the drudgery, the era) rather than the fashionable, hedonistic world of the Gods in Bellini's painting (Fig. 7.12).



Fig. 7.11
A Pair of Shoes



Fig. 7.12
The Feast of the Gods

In order to clarify, direct and focus the attention of the viewer, the role of the curator (in this case, the researcher) assumes greater importance within this exhibition than is perhaps usual. The viewer of this exhibition requires their attention to be directed towards specific areas at specific stages of their progress through the exhibition in order to understand when and where to look, what to look for and how to perceive, if a meaningful - phenomenological - relationship with the exhibition is to be realised.

For example; the Ming Dynasty porcelain bowl filled with fruit and placed in the foreground of the painting is first perceived by the viewer as an artefact to be looked at and therefore thought about. It is accepted as an artefact situated within an 'Old Master' painting, with all the theories, preconceptions and distancing associated with such a context (an important work of fine art). In fact, the bowl is an item of Ming dynasty (1368-1644) porcelain produced for export purposes and usually sold to the Persian market for use as a serving bowl for a pilaf or stew. The bowl was acquired by the Venetians in 1492 by means of a presentation to Doge Agostino Barbarigo from the Syrians in gratitude for Venetian protection along mutually beneficial trade routes. The original context for the bowl should, therefore, be recognised as a 'tool' - something to be used - forming part of what Heidegger refers to as 'equipment'. This article of equipment, a serving bowl, has been elevated by Bellini to the status of high art and art theory by its inclusion in what is widely thought of as his greatest painting.

The recognition that objects are able to move between worlds - another Heideggerian term - dislocates the conventional, noetic, object/viewer/fine art relationship, destabilising certainty and shifting attention from the personal, useful and human-centred to a complex and often sophisticated, theoretical fine art critique.

There are yet other worlds to which the bowl may belong, some of these are unexpected such as using the bowl as a payment for the safe passage of a trading camel train as it moves across an inland trade route. These worlds will be encountered as the viewer moves through the exhibition where the objects, originally presented within the painting, move back and forth between their worlds as the viewer moves deeper into the exhibition.

As the progress of the viewer through the exhibition continues, defining the relationship between viewer, artefact and context becomes increasingly problematic. The objects within Room Four, *The World of the Thing* are presented as inhabitants of locations previously unavailable to them or unconnected with them, leaving the viewer unsure how to categorise or process the objects, unable to determine the 'reality' in which the objects are located or confused as to how to consider and classify their realities. Are they indeed objects or are they now tools – part of equipment? Are they design products or do they remain fine art objects? Is this attempt at classification an impossibility? Are the objects in fact none of these but simply exist 'as they show themselves to us' as presented in Room Three, *The Things Themselves*? Is this now the only possible way to view the objects; as objects that are no longer attached to a reality, liberated from any conceptual or contextual framework? The final location returns the fragments of objects (Fig. 7.13) removed from the original painting to the world of fine art by presenting them as an intellectual composition, a contemporary abstract work of art in its own right (Fig. 7.14) focusing attention away from the objects themselves and onto the abstract void left by the objects' interaction with the Gods – a partial hand form or an outline of fruit. The final trace of their previous existence.

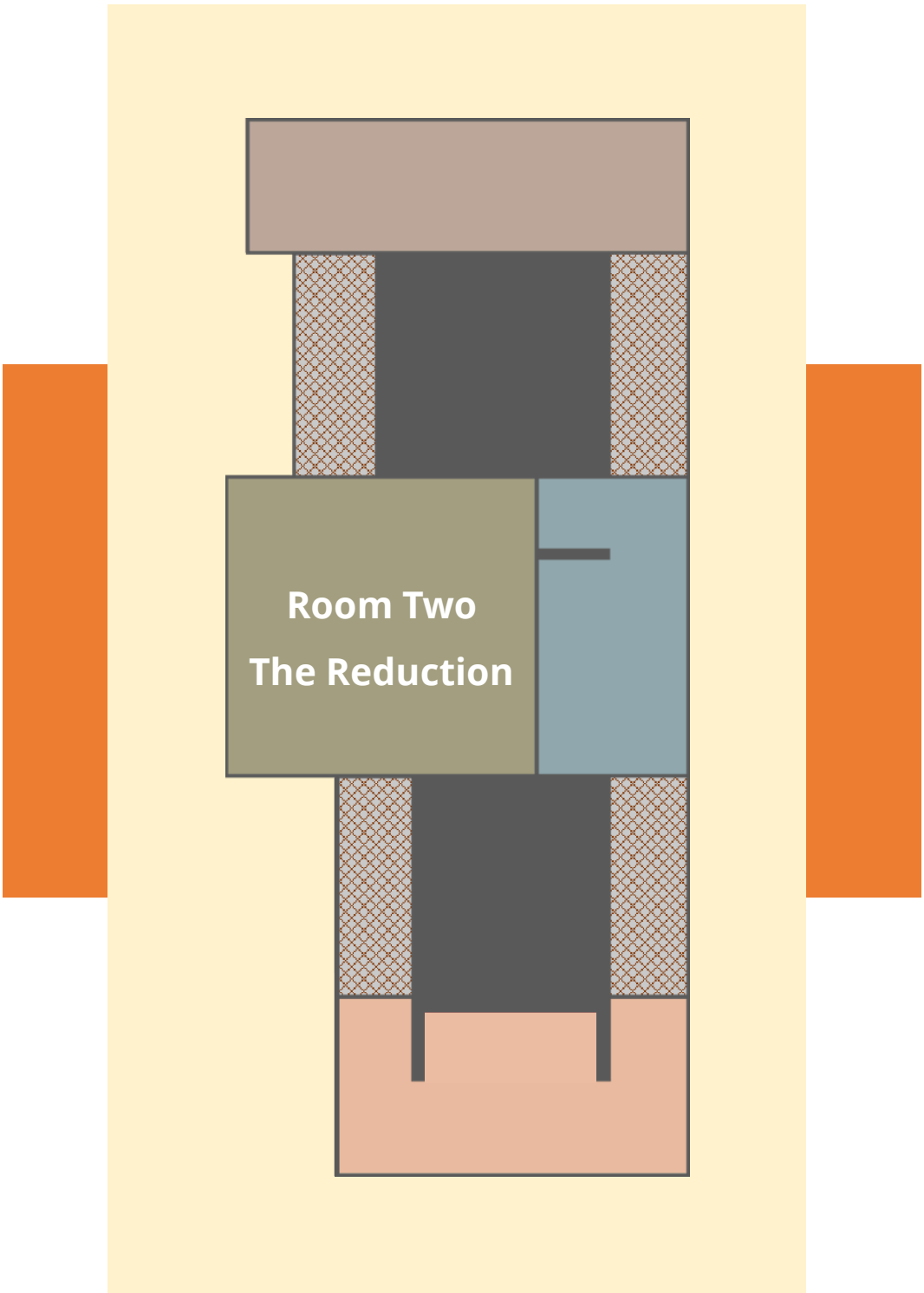


Fig. 7.13
Objects removed from the painting bearing traces of human contact.



Fig. 7.14

This abstraction of the objects previously shown in Fig. 7.10 concludes the complex journey through Intentionality made by the objects – as art, as equipment, as symbol, as signifier, as other, by returning the objects to the fine art context within which they began their journey, but which has now concluded with them inhabiting their own distinct and independent world of fine art in the 21st century.



7.4: The Phenomenological Reduction

Husserl states that 'The phenomenological Reduction is the meditative practice whereby one is able to liberate oneself from the captivation in which one is held by all that one accepts as being the case. Once one is liberated from this captivation-in-an-acceptedness, one is able to view the world as a world of essences, free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute' Fink (1941, p. 41).

Husserl characterises this process as a reduction to 'pure' consciousness, that is, to intentionality as a reduced correlation or compressed interrelationship between subject and object, purified of all psychological or 'worldly' interpretations and described simply as it gives itself. This, in turn, allows phenomenology to study the intentional constitution of things - the conditions that make possible *not* the existence of entities in the world (the issue of existence has been bracketed) but their sense of being as pure existence.

As discussed previously within Chapter One, the Phenomenological Reduction (the Reduction) is a rigorous two-part technique which directs an individual towards a way of experiencing the world through the clarity of astonishment, thereby liberating the individual from all previously held convictions and perceptions. As previously discussed, there are two parts or 'moments' to the Reduction. The term 'moment' is important as the Reduction is not performed in two 'steps' where one precedes the other. Time (one before the other) is not involved in the Reduction, rather, the two moments - the epoché (the bracketing of the world) and the Reduction proper - occur together.

The epoché describes a bracketing of the world in order to remove, distance or block self-limiting captivation or 'belief in the world' so that we are able to perceive ourselves as no longer of this world. The world continues to exist, we are not denying its existence, but we are 'abstaining from belief' in the world.

The Reduction proper is described by Siewert (2017) as an 'inquiring back into consciousness where reference to the real world of existent entities is removed, and all appearances are taken as genuine in their own right'. The Reduction proper is where the realisation occurs that the acceptedness of the world *is* an acceptedness and not an absolute condition of reality.

Room Two of the exhibition is the area intended to liberate the viewer from this 'captivation-in-an-acceptedness' by applying the Reduction as preparation for encountering in Room Three, the objects selected from the painting 'as they show themselves to us' free from worldly interpretations. Within Room Two, the selected objects are disconnected from the painting and presented as objects, in their own right, within their own world(s) and distinct from the painting, in order to make explicit to the viewer the worlds inhabited by the objects and the journey between and across these worlds made by the objects as the perception of the viewer is altered. Room Three presents the objects as objects, 'as they show themselves to us'. In that room, we do not look at the objects, the objects are showing themselves to us, liberated from our worldly presuppositions and expectations.

Establishment of the conditions necessary to precipitate such a liberation is achieved in this instance not, as may be expected, by reducing the amount of content in order to evoke a meditative state but by exposing the viewer in Room Two, to an overwhelming amount of information to do with the history, production, provenance and context of the painting and the objects selected from the painting. The effect of such a surfeit of information on the viewer is that the validity of any 'presuppositions' brought to the exhibition by the viewer such as 'I don't like Renaissance painting', 'I don't know when Ming porcelain was produced' or 'What am I supposed to be thinking as I look at this exhibition?' is diminished to the point of triviality by the deluge of factual information presented to them.

The presuppositions, subconsciously brought by the viewer to the exhibition and previously believed by them to be absolute, are rendered insignificant and inconsequential by the impossibility of processing such an overwhelming amount of unfamiliar information. The realisation that all certainty, sustained by the belief that formerly held presuppositions are absolute, is no longer tenable or even relevant in the face of such an overwhelming amount of unfamiliar new knowledge. This realisation precipitates a condition of astonishment, profound uncertainty or unease within the viewer.

7.5: The Perception of an Object

As the viewer moves through the exhibition, a dynamic relationship is developed between the painting, the objects within the painting, the viewer and the exhibition context. By directing and controlling the journey of the viewer through the four sections of the exhibition (Fig. 7.15a) specific responses may be engendered within the viewer.

There is a potential irony in controlling the journey of the viewer so carefully in order to allow them to experience the objects without 'presuppositions'. By being so prescriptive, it could perhaps be argued that the presuppositions of the viewer are simply being exchanged for those of my own; this, of course, is not the case. The carefully planned sequential experience of the exhibition creates within the viewer specific responses that combine and build according to that sequence (Fig. 7.15b). These include, in order of experience, interest, curiosity, confusion, uncertainty, openness, receptivity, realisation, anticipation, comprehension, delight and exhilaration.

At the end of the exhibition, the viewer is returned to the original starting point where they again encounter *The Feast of the Gods*. The response of the viewer to this second encounter with the painting will have been transformed as a result of their journey through the exhibition. If their journey had followed a haphazard or arbitrary and non-sequential progression, the response would have been either considerably diminished or completely invalidated.

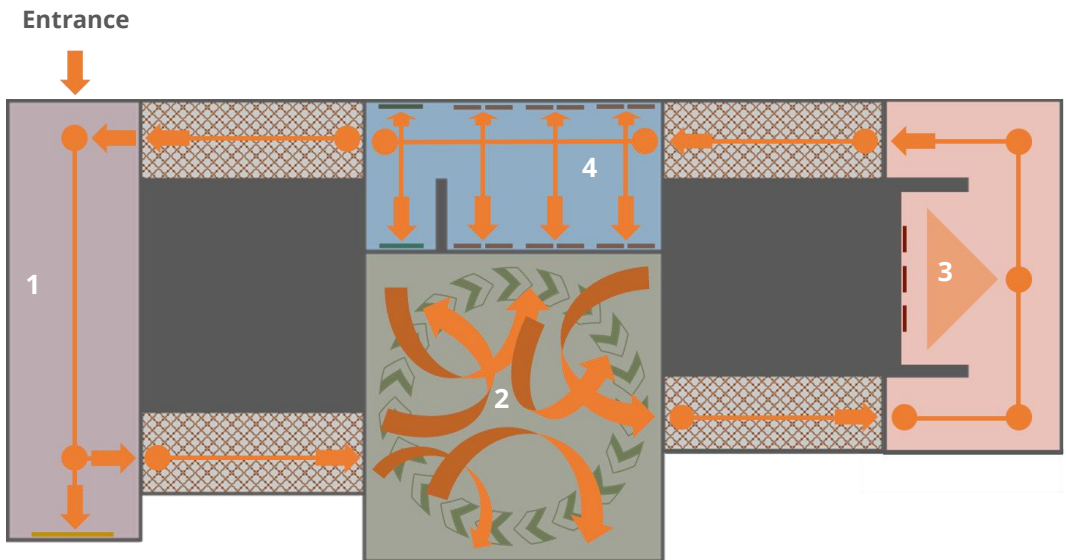


Fig. 7.15a
Journey plan through the exhibition.

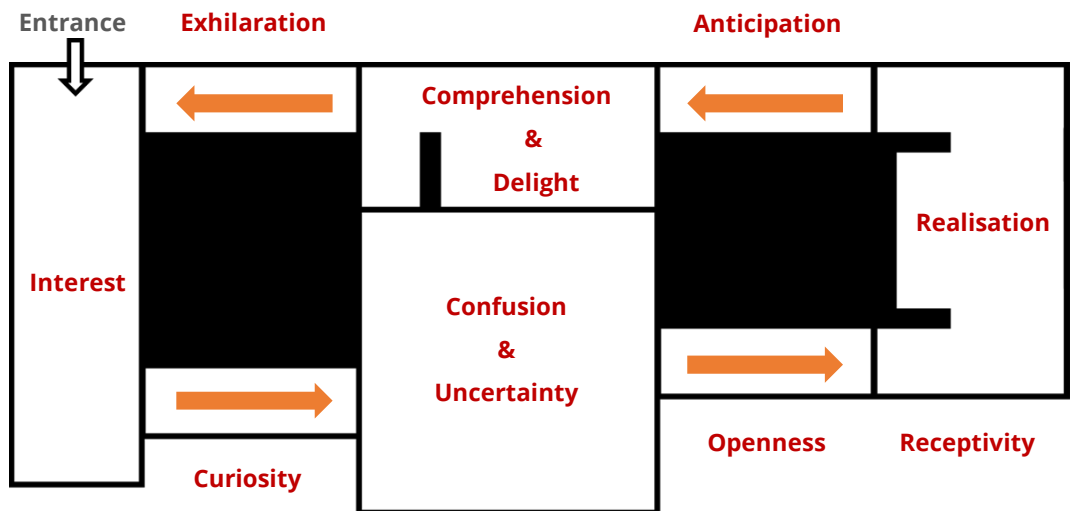


Fig. 7.15b
Sequential intended viewer responses to the exhibition.

To trace this phenomena in more detail, a single object, the Ming Dynasty porcelain bowl (Fig. 7.16) has been isolated from the painting. As the viewer moves through the exhibition, their perception - the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted - of the bowl is altered, moving between the contexts of art, equipment, archaeology, philosophy and others. This analysis through the examination of the 'lives' of the bowl may be equally applied to the silver wine cup and the glass beaker represented within the painting.



Fig. 7.16

The isolation of the Ming Dynasty porcelain bowl from within the painting *The Feast of the Gods*. The bowl is selected to illustrate the journey of an object through the exhibition and how the perception of the artefact by the viewer is altered during that journey.

The bowl is first encountered within Room One of the exhibition and within its original context as a compositional element embedded within the painting *The Feast of the Gods*, where it is used as a container for fruit, positioned on the ground in front of Neptune and Cybele. The complications of meaning become apparent almost immediately as the bowl is first read as a 'bowl' – an object of utility, a container for fruit, a tool to be used. Looking at it through an alternative frame of reference however it is not a bowl, it is a painting of a bowl, an object to be looked at and thought about with its own place in the history of painting and the first known representation of Chinese porcelain in Western art, as an artefact for discussion within critical art theory and associated theoretical constructs, as part of a work of art to be subjected to technical analysis such as x-ray and infra-red spectrometry, as a representation of Italian Renaissance style and fashion and as a catalyst for analysing the complex social relationship between patron (Duke Alfonso I d'Este) and artist (Giovanni Bellini).

There is also contained within the painting itself a phenomenological essence which, according to Heidegger is located within the concepts of 'being and truth'. For example, Heidegger (1935, p. 18) asks '... how are we basing a (comparative) examination on art works if we do not know beforehand what art is?'

In his 1935 essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* and shortly after the above question is raised, Heidegger (1935, p.18) also says that 'In order to discover the nature of art that really prevails in the work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work what and how it is'. The answer to the first question, therefore, appears to lie in the second. The difficulty here for a non-specialist viewer is knowing how to approach a work of art at the outset in order to ask the work what and how it is.

One of the problematic conundrums shared by phenomenology, art and specifically this research, is that 'if excessive information concerning the work of art is provided at an inappropriate time then the genuine phenomenological condition desired within the viewer is reduced. However, if no guidance or information about the work of art is provided at all, the viewer is often simply bewildered and may be inclined to abandon any attempt to engage with the work in a meaningful way'. To consider moving beyond this conundrum, it is necessary to briefly return to Heidegger and *The Origin of the Work of Art*.

When proposing his thinking on *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger (Stulberg 1973, pp. 257-265) says of art that 'at the very least it is a thing' further articulating this by suggesting that the application of theories and explanations to the thing is best avoided in order to simply let the thing 'stand by itself and rest on itself in its thingness'. At this point it is important to understand that this 'thingness' is not intended to be exclusively attributed to physicality. For example: If a painting such as *The Feast of the Gods* is approached as an exclusively physical 'thing' then it becomes lifeless, merely something to hang on the wall, a selection of colours applied to a canvas framed by wood. There is something more, a secondary 'other type of thing' that transforms the combination of colour, canvas and wood into a work of art.

All works of art must include this 'other' thingly quality or they would not exist as art at all. Conceptual art does not necessarily share the same characteristics as material art but it can be said that even intentional thought is a perceptible thing regardless of whether or not there is a physical realisation of that thought.

To focus the question back to and within the parameters of this research - and to avoid a thesis on the origins of art theory - it is necessary to return to *The Feast of the Gods* and in particular, the Ming bowl. If the bowl is to be approached solely as a physical thing, then it may be said that it is a painted pottery bowl. If the secondary layering of analysis including the 'other type of thing' is subsequently added to this initially accurate but overly simplistic observation the bowl becomes authorised to 'make public something other than itself' it manifests something 'other' it is transformed into an allegory - a physical representation of abstract, cultural or spiritual meaning.



Fig. 7.17

The Ming bowl, removed from the painting with trace outlines of fruit remaining intact.

As a comparative example for this research, two contrasting analyses of the Ming bowl may read as:

a) The purely physical description:

'It is a painted pottery bowl'.

b) With the addition of secondary layering:

'It is a Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) porcelain bowl with an everted rim and plain plinth, the bowl decorated with a Lotus Flower design. The Lotus flower has special significance in Chinese culture, represented in both Tao and Buddhist beliefs. Buddha himself is said to have arrived on Earth sitting on top of a floating Lotus and, as he walked, left footprints that became lotus flowers. In Taoism, the Lotus is used on artworks throughout the religion as symbols of beauty, life, and light. The bowl is painted in Persian cobalt pigment - a rare colour traded with the Chinese since the 9th century - and formed part of a hoard found buried outside Damascus which was subsequently presented to Doge of Venice, Agostino Barbarigo who passed it to his successor, Doge Leonardo Loredan at a formal presentation ceremony, in Venice, in the early 16th century.

The ceremony was attended by Giovanni Bellini, a close friend of the Doge who was allowed to borrow the bowl to use as a central element within his painting *The Feast of the Gods* commissioned by Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, for the Camerino d'Alabastro in his private apartments at Castello Estense in Ferrara.

A second Ming bowl was included in the painting, as was a third, deliberately poorly painted example, which was painted with a wooden handle attached to the bowl (these did not exist on Ming dynasty porcelain) intended as a visual joke to entertain the Duke. To reinforce the joke, the bowl was placed on the head of a drunken Satyr (a lustful drunken woodland god). The painting completed a series of allegorical paintings by Titian, Dossi and Bellini exploring the themes of love, marriage and physical pleasure according to a series of writings by Ovid as translated by Mario Equicola, a friend of the sister of Duke Alfonso I. The painting was completed in 1514 (there are records of payment in the d'Este family archives) and is considered to be Bellini's last, great work, described by Vasari (1568) as 'one of the most beautiful works ever created'.

The analysis could continue in even greater detail in search of this 'other thing'. The previous brief introduction, detailed as it is, does not begin to describe the 'other' the Thing that, for example, is able to reveal the kindly but imposing distance in the eyes of Bellini's portrait of his friend, Doge Lorenzo Loredan (Fig. 7.18) who ruled the Venetian Empire from 1501 until his death in 1521. In the portrait, the Doge 'knows he is being looked at but does not return our gaze as to do so would be to treat us as equals' (National Gallery London 2016).



Fig. 7.18
Giovanni Bellini (1501-2)
Doge Leonardo (Lorenzo) Loredan
[Oil on poplar].
The National Gallery, London.

The ability to paint with such intensity and sensitivity is not so much to do with the ability to move pigment around on a wooden panel or stretched canvas, rather it is the result of the ability to access the 'other thing' that the Greeks called *sumballein* – to join – derived from *sumbalon* – a symbol. Heidegger (1935, p.19) described this as 'a thing to which something else adheres'. Heidegger (1935, p. 20) also says that it is only by knowing this 'other' that we can decide 'whether or not the work is something else (a work of art) and not a 'Thing' at all'.

As introduced in the philosophy chapter of this research, a significant obstacle to a phenomenological comprehension of art by a viewer is the viewer's own learned and inherited presuppositions developed as a direct result of individual life experiences leading to an insecurity about the 'correct way' (itself an assumption) to look at a painting.

Iain Thompson, Professor of Philosophy at the University of New Mexico is interested in this often problematic experience that occurs between a viewer and a work of art, a dilemma that he calls the subject/object dichotomy. In an extract from a 2011 paper on Heidegger's Aesthetics, Thompson (2011) says that:

'Following the phenomenological dictum that *we should describe our experience of art in a way that is not distorted by the presuppositions we have inherited from the metaphysical tradition* is easier said than done, however, for at least two reasons. First, the subject/object dichotomy is so deeply entrenched in our self-understanding that it has come to implicitly structure the fundamental aesthetic approach (as we have seen). Second, it is not immediately clear where (let alone how) we should look to discover art in a non-aesthetic way. Indeed, it now seems natural for us to think that what makes our experience of art objects significant is that such experiences allow us human subjects temporarily to transcend the sphere of our own subjectivity by getting in touch with art objects outside ourselves, because these transcendent experiences can profoundly enrich our subjective experience.

We do occasionally experience ourselves as subjects confronting objects such as when we find ourselves standing befuddled before an art object. However, the experience of ourselves as subjects confronting objects is comparatively infrequent and takes place against the background of a more basic experience of ourselves as integrally involved with the world of our practical concerns, an experience of fundamental self/world intertwinement to which we always return'.

The perspective of 'ourselves as subjects confronting objects' is one that is challenged and even reversed by phenomenology where, in Room Three of this exhibition, the objects are allowed to 'show themselves to us'. This way of encountering objects can often amplify confusion and uncertainty when the viewer (ourselves, or in this case, the subject) has to dis-locate all their prior experience and allow the object to direct the experience. In this state, it is the object presenting itself to us, not us bringing ourselves to - and looking at - the object. This world of our 'practical concerns to which we always return' will be revisited in Room Four of the exhibition as part of a wider discussion regarding the re-contextualisation of the work of art, tools and equipment.

The intention of this Room Two of the exhibition refers, in phenomenological terms, to the previously discussed Phenomenological Reduction. The overload of information within this Room is intended to dismantle the 'captivation-in-an-acceptedness' of the viewer in order that the objects are able to effectively reveal themselves in Room Three. To provide an overview of Room Two of the exhibition, a brief synopsis of the nature of the Reduction and how it pertains specifically to this section of the exhibition is included here.

The Reduction is intended to re focus the human direction of perception from a straightforward orientation toward objects to an orientation toward consciousness, including every mode of consciousness, such as intuition, recollection, imagination, and judgment. This, in turn, will allow the viewer to 'view the world as a world of essences, free from any contamination that presuppositions of conceptual framework or psyche might contribute.' To clarify: this focus on consciousness is a focus on the relation in and through which a thing is given, and is therefore a focus on its 'givenness' - the 'how' of a thing's presentation.

Gurwitsch (1966, p. 443) explained that 'Performing the phenomenological reduction means a shift in attitude toward everything normally perceived as a mundane existent in the life world (Lebenswelt). All persons, including the psychologist himself, inasmuch as they perceive themselves as human beings, hence as mundane existents, are transformed into phenomena, and by the same token disclosed as subjects of intentional conscious life'.

A fundamental rationale for the adoption of the reduction within this room of the exhibition is to 'shatter the taken-for-granted-ness of our everyday reality' (Van Manen and Adams 2010, p. 452). In a broader sense and providing a further contextual layer for the research is phenomenological enquiry itself which, as agreed by both Husserl and Heidegger, concerns the possibilities of lived experience.

With this in mind, this section of the exhibition sets out to create a state of uncertainty within the viewer through presenting an overwhelming amount of concentrated and detailed information about the painting and selected objects from within the painting so that all certainties to do with art and the presentation of objects previously retained by the viewer are diminished or shattered. The viewer becomes so overpowered by the scale of reference required to understand the presentation that all questions about viewing art such as 'is there a correct way to look at a painting?' become irrelevant and any attempts to judge what is being presented according to the life experience of the viewer become futile. The viewer is left with no alternative but realise that the references and experiences that support their normal state of being, their 'natural attitude' have become inadequate and that, in the face of such confusion, they are compelled to set aside or bracket their entire systems and constructs of belief. Inevitably, therefore, they are performing the Epoché, the first moment of the Reduction.

At the same time that the Epoché is engaged, bringing with it the comprehension that all certainties previously held in the natural attitude of the viewer have become inadequate, occurs the second moment of the Phenomenological Reduction - The Reduction Proper. This is where the viewer realises that their acceptedness of the world including all affiliated beliefs and constructs governing perception, behavior and experience is an acceptedness and not an absolute condition of reality.

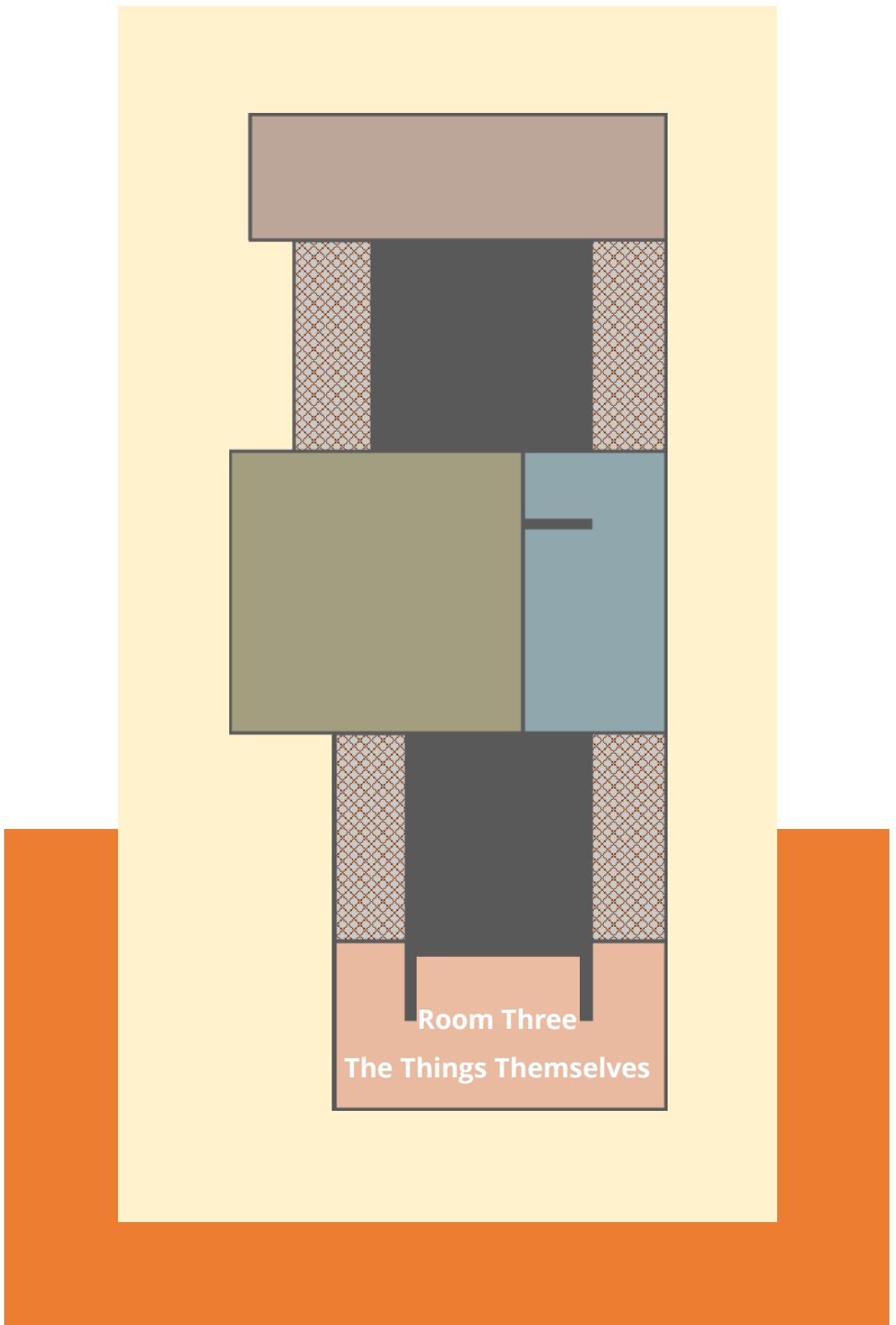
The concept of world (the world of the object as fine art, equipment, artefact, interior design, and so forth) previously introduced within the philosophy chapter and now revisited in detail within Room Two, assumes increasing significance at this stage of the research as it describes and defines the alteration in nuance of the objects selected from the painting. The alteration becomes more apparent as the objects are seen to move between their worlds in response to the astonishing and compelling presentation of the entirety of available contextual information, bringing together the phenomenological insight of both Husserl and Heidegger.

Intentionality, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, and Heidegger's structure of the world of equipment are all of equal importance in the structure of meaning and experience provided by the objects and their place in their worlds. Both Husserl's transcendental approach which requires the setting aside of the natural attitude '*there are those, the objects - here am I, the subject*' and Heidegger's approach of '*authenticity of experience through everyday familiarity of use*' - tools and equipment - may be brought together by asking 'How do things show themselves to me, regardless of the way I am supposed to be looking at them or thinking about them?'

In summary, the initial encounter with Giovanni Bellini's painting *The Feast of the Gods* placed deliberately as an introduction to the exhibition, is complex, demanding and sometimes intentionally (or unintentionally) problematic. The extent of this, heightened by the effect of the reduction in Room Two, is perhaps greater than first anticipated or realised by the viewer who may be more comfortable with their own opinions, experiences and reactions being the focus of attention (providing an anchor) within an art exhibition, even when viewing an acknowledged masterpiece of Italian Renaissance painting.

By overwhelming the viewer with information in order to create an awareness described by Husserl as being a circumstance 'in which their absolute belief in the world is in fact recognised as an acceptedness'. By creating a condition of uncertainty within the natural attitude of the viewer which necessitates a review of how Dasein and objects are perceived and, by drawing on the previously introduced Heideggerian ideas of *Zuhanden* and *Vorhanden* - it becomes possible to 'shatter the taken-for-grantedness of our everyday reality' enabling the viewer to become sufficiently receptive as to allow engagement at a phenomenological level with the objects presented within the following Room Three of the exhibition.

The amplification of uncertainty and astonishment developed within the viewer within Room Two is intended to allow the encounter between the viewer and the objects presented in Room Three to be uncontaminated by any presuppositions originating within the viewer.



7.6: *The Things Themselves*

Within Room Two of the exhibition, the viewer experienced an overwhelming amount of information about the painting, the objects and the phenomenological background to the exhibition. The effect of such an overload of information on the viewer is intended to produce feelings of instability, uncertainty, wonder, astonishment, openness and finally - a setting aside of belief in the world along with an understanding that the acceptedness of the world which informs their own natural attitude *is* an acceptedness and not an absolute condition of reality – an experiencing of the Phenomenological Reduction as defined by Husserl.

Following this experience the viewer is better prepared, as they enter Room Three of the exhibition, to perceive the objects presented *as they show themselves to us*. Significantly, rather than the conventional gallery experience of the viewer being in control of the experience and perceiving the objects according to personal presupposition – here, the viewer is in a state of confusion concerning precisely what is being presented to them and how they are ‘expected’ to perceive such an intentional presentation. A consequence of this confusion and uncertainty is that the objects *for the first time in the exhibition* are allowed to present themselves to the viewer, devoid of context, removed from meaning and free from any contamination imposed by the viewer.

The outcome of this unfamiliar condition is that the viewer, still overloaded with information and unsure how to respond to this unexpectedly calm and almost meditative presentation, is no longer certain that their usually dependable combinations of experience-based thoughts, views and opinions remain important – or indeed relevant. The only logical course of action that will ensure an authentic experience is, therefore, to abdicate such experience-based reason and allow the objects to directly confront the viewer – as Husserl puts it ‘to go back to the things themselves’. Room Three is where all contextual information and external theoretical presumption is either removed or completely hidden in order to exclude any consideration of the causes of experience.

The removal of all external influence causes the focus of the experience to be returned to the essential structure of experience itself rather than the experience of the viewer and, at this juncture, it is appropriate to bring together Husserl and Heidegger by revisiting the discussion concerning Heidegger's concept of Thingness, first introduced in Chapter Six: Philosophy, whilst simultaneously keeping in mind the Husserlian transcendentalism indicated in the previous paragraphs.

Published in 1950 but begun between 1935 and 1937, Heidegger's essay *On the Origin of the Work of Art* is based upon a series of lectures that he delivered in Zurich and Frankfurt discussing two main themes: (1) The essence of Art and (2) The meaning of a Thing. The propositions presented within these essays are particularly pertinent when applied to the presentation of objects in this section of the exhibition, Room Three, as follows:

Within Room Three, the objects have been removed from the painting *The Feast of the Gods* thereby isolating them from both their perceived context of fine art (an important painting by Giovanni Bellini, widely believed to be his masterpiece) *and* their original context as 'equipment' *within and part of* this fine art context (a porcelain stew bowl, a silver wine cup, a Murano glass beaker). As the concept of equipment – in the Heideggerian sense – inevitably locates these three objects within their world prior to their transformation into fine art, the objects occupy a duality positioned *at the same time* within both and between both worlds of fine art and equipment - presenting themselves concurrently to the viewer as fragments of a larger painting and illustrations of tools used for serving, drinking and eating. A third context, that of craft – the evidencing of proficiency in making Things by hand – is also alluded to within this presentation. The objects presenting themselves to the viewer are all entirely made by hand, occurring as examples of highly developed expertise in the areas of making and conceptual development applied to the production and decoration of porcelain, silversmithing and glassmaking.

Skill - heightened to the point of genius - is also present in the 'painterliness' of the painting, the way that colour is applied to the canvas. The painting is generally acknowledged to be the masterwork of Giovanni Bellini, signifying a pinnacle of Italian High Renaissance (circa 1450-1550) painting.



Fig. 7.19

This enlarged detail from *The Feast of the Gods* illustrates the level of skill achieved by Bellini when painting light falling onto a gold-banded, Murano turquoise glass in the hand of Jupiter, King of the Gods.

Heidegger (1935, pp. 49-55) proposes that art is the 'becoming of truth' – the 'setting-into-work' or 'unconcealing' of truth'. For Heidegger 'truth' means 'unconcealment' - so the setting-into-work of truth indicates the way a disclosure is made to occur through the work of art where this disclosure is not just of the thing as a piece of equipment, but of the world to which it belongs and ultimately - and most importantly for Heidegger - of being. He also explains that works of art are 'Things' that have a 'Thingly' character and proposes that there are three accepted ideas about what constitutes a Thing as follows:

1: The Greek concept of Thing as 'substance with attached qualities'. For clarity and to use the Ming bowl (Fig. 7.20) as an example – the substance is the bowl to which qualities are attached (it is made of porcelain, it has a Lotus flower design painted on it, it is round etc.).



Fig. 7.20

Ming dynasty porcelain bowl

2: A Thing may also be a collection of sensations in the mind leading to an object of thought such as a glass of wine or a poem.

3: Most importantly for Heidegger is the Thing that consists of 'matter' that has 'form' imposed upon it.

These ways of thinking about a Thing originate (der Ursprung – springing forth from a source) from two recognised worlds comprising:

(a) Objects of use - tools and equipment – 'ready-to-hand' - Zuhanden – the world of practice – fit for purpose.

(b) Objects of perception – an entity to be given as an object to a theoretical gaze – present-at-hand – Vorhanden – the world of thought.

The world of equipment always occurs in a set of relations with other pieces of equipment. Heidegger refers to this state of relativity (a state of dependence in which the existence or significance of one entity is solely dependent on that of another) as a 'referential totality'. 'Referential' because one element refers to another and 'totality' because it occurs fundamentally as a whole from which one then accesses or makes sense of the parts, not the other way around. For example, the screwdriver makes no sense without a screw or without something for it to be screwed into.

The referential totality is essentially 'my' world - the world that is made up of things that exist to me because they have a place in my world. This world makes sense to me because it is structured according to my beliefs, concerns, experiences and aspirations. Things that matter to *me*. Therefore, when we try to see what something '*really is in itself*' as Heidegger describes it, we are only able to understand it through its relativity to other things and its place in the world. The world in this instance is not an objective world but neither is it entirely subjective as it is made up of our past experiences, our future aspirations and our present concerns.

The world is not just a collection of things that are independent of me. It's not entirely subjective because the referential totality is for the most part made up of relations that I did not create myself and which are shared with others just as the relation of the screwdriver to the board is not mine alone and did not spring from my consciousness. It was already out there in the world, shared with others, ready for me to make it my own (as I put up my shelves, to keep my books, so I can read in the evening, enjoying the space... etc). However, when we encounter a particularly challenging work of art or, as in Room Three of this exhibition, fragments of a work of art, such definitions of 'thingness' originating as they do from the world of tools and equipment - the world of the referential totality - become inadequate for the reason that art exists outside of the referential totality.

It is at this point within the exhibition that Husserlian transcendental phenomenology and the Heideggerian phenomenology of Dasein, world, and equipment, converge to reverse the expected gallery experience where the viewer perceives the objects with all their preconceptions and presuppositions intact. Here, the objects now reveal themselves to the viewer, removing any opportunity for 'contamination' by the life experience of the viewer. Taking as an example *The Feast of the Gods* the painting reveals ('unconceals' in Heidegger's terminology) a number of worlds both real and imagined. It is important here to recall that in Heideggerian terms, both real or imagined Things and worlds are equally valid. *The Feast of the Gods*, as a work of art and therefore outside the referential totality, presents both reality and mythology as an equivalent. The viewer believes absolutely that they are looking at an assembled pantheon of existent Gods and Satyrs enjoying a picnic in a Sylvan setting.

The belief in this reality is heightened because the painting is not an invention *of itself*, it is a depiction of a group of beings from antiquity who were, during the time of their original acceptance, believed to be real. It is also an illustration of a previous work of art, a poem by Ovid, created in the 8th century AD and entitled *Fasti* (Latin: *Fastorum Libri Sex*) '*Six Books of the Calendar*'. The sense of reality is further heightened by the inclusion

of a large number of items of domestic equipment such as decanters and carafes, bowls, beakers, glasses and other objects such as tools and equipment, concerned with the unchallenged referential totality associated with eating and drinking. In addition and perhaps most convincingly, the Gods are dressed in (somewhat rusticated) clothing and jewellery of the High Renaissance and wear hairstyles contemporary to the date of the painting.

It is therefore possible to look at the painting as a mirror of aristocratic society in the Italian High Renaissance rather than a pantheon of Gods picnicking in antiquity. Indeed, it has been suggested by some art historians that thinly disguised portraits of Duke Alfonso and his bride, Lucrezia Borgia, are incorporated into the pantheon. The hairstyles, clothing, objects and most of the 'equipment' are 15th century Italian. The world glimpsed within the painting is one of wealth, patronage, education, flirtatiousness, indulgence, sophistication, nobility and taste. There is no hint of the drudgery seen in the world disclosed to the viewer by the previously discussed *A Pair of Shoes* by Van Gogh. In the worlds presented to the viewer by Bellini, the lives of both subject and patron are confident, secure, playful and refined. As Heidegger states in *On The Origin of the Work of Art* - 'Art then is the becoming and happening of truth. We see within the painting, not only the thing, but the whole world that comes with the thing - the world in which the thing belongs and makes sense'.

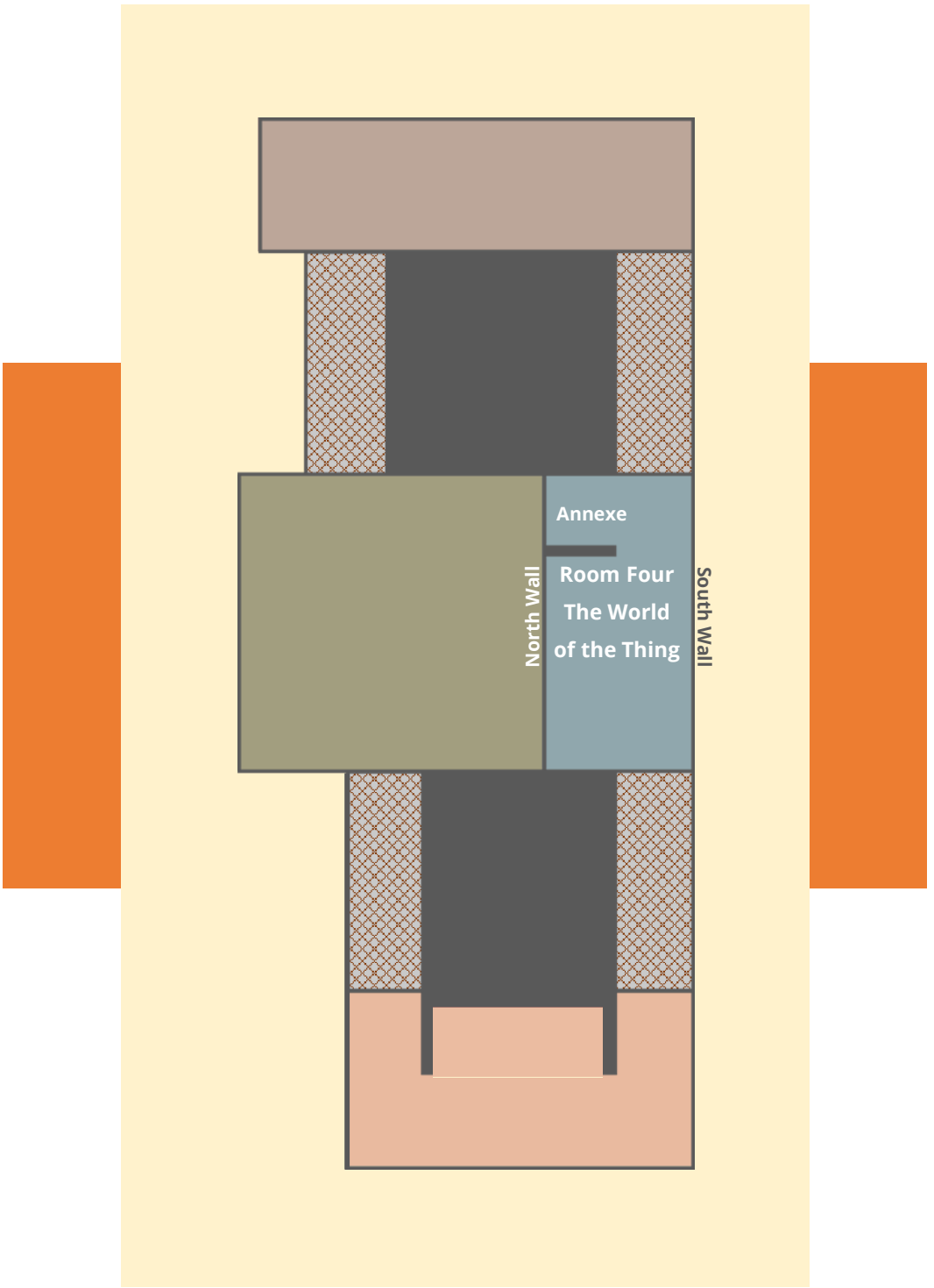
Returning to Room Three - objects, devoid of context or world, are presented to the viewer. The viewer in turn is, from the Heideggerian perspective, always engaged with the world through Dasein - the experience of being that is peculiar to human beings - the condition of being-there. Dasein is always engaged with the world, one definition of Dasein is 'being-in-the-world', therefore within the frame of reference of Dasein the viewer is always 'in favour of practical engagement with one's environment'. For example, a bowl, wine cup or beaker cannot be looked at without incurring thoughts (certainties) to do with use, status, production, context, symbolism, conviviality, or repository.

Following the overload of contextual earth-world considerations presented in Room Two; Room Three allows the objects to show themselves to the viewer without any contamination of the experience caused by the intrusion of such consideration.

Heidegger brings yet another consideration to this 'practical engagement with one's environment' the struggle between Earth and World. In this struggle, Earth represents the materials from which the objects are created such as here with clay, silver or glass. These materials can never be *Zuhanden* or 'ready-to-hand' as Earth, in this context, exists before such a condition occurs. World however is 'disclosed meaning', it is the web of significant relations, the Referential Totality within which both Dasein and Things exists.

When this 'practical engagement with one's environment' is discouraged, or even denied, such as in Room Three where the objects are not provided with a referential totality and the viewer is, following their experience of Room Two, no longer sure of their own place in their world - the reassurance and engagement with the world, normally provided by Dasein, becomes questionable.

When the viewer arrives at Room Three of the exhibition, they have been exposed to such an overload of information that they are in a state of conceptual saturation. The day-to-day certainties provided by the 'web of significant relations' with the objects are no longer able to sustain the clarity and assurance necessary to direct the process of thinking, leaving the viewer bewildered, perplexed and unsure as to how to progress the encounter with the objects. The whole world that comes with the objects - the world in which the objects belong and makes sense - their 'Thingliness' and their referential totality - is now suspended. Thoughts are no longer certain but questioning: What are these objects, are they equipment, are they fine art or are they purely symbolic? Eventually the viewer must abandon such attempts to employ reason and simply - finally - allow the objects to 'show themselves to us'.



7.7: *The World of the Thing*

In Room Three, the porcelain bowl, the silver drinking cup and the glass beaker presented themselves directly to the viewer, devoid of context and isolated from their worlds. The presentation in Room Four provides the objects once again with a series of contextual frameworks whilst simultaneously exploring the objects in terms of their:

- a) Physicality - For example, the Ming bowl is no longer a fruit bowl placed on the ground at a picnic for a pantheon of Gods but is now used as a fruit bowl in a contemporary New York penthouse kitchen.
- b) Philosophical articulation - For example, the phenomenological journey of the bowl between the (Heideggerian) worlds of fine art and equipment has been modified by its placement in a contemporary context. The modification is evidenced by the invigoration and revitalisation of both object and context whereby the bowl, now functioning as a fruit bowl (as in the original context of *The Feast of the Gods*) and placed on the counter top alongside and adding to a collection of contemporary objects within this sophisticated interior. A view of the kitchen counter top prior to the addition of the Ming bowl is shown below, together with another view of the penthouse illustrating the quality of the furniture, art and objects presented throughout the apartment. Interestingly, some of the furniture pieces presented in the apartment are original and rare examples of 20th century Modern Movement, aligning themselves in terms of both cultural importance and financial value directly with the status of the Ming bowl (Fig. 7.21).

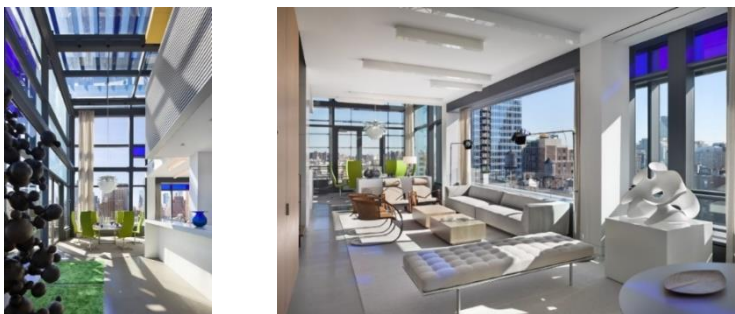


Fig. 7.21

A Shelton Mindel interior within a Jean Nouvel Penthouse, New York City.

Within Room Four itself, six images on each of the North and South walls of the room draw attention to the presentation of art as art (North wall) and art as equipment (South wall). The journey between the worlds of the objects is highlighted by the provision of new contextual frameworks for the objects by placing them within locations and settings that are appropriate and have credibility but which are distanced from the original intentions of Giovanni Bellini by five hundred years of history.

Room Four encourages the development of a dynamic relationship between the viewer, the object and now, significantly, the contextual location in which the viewer and the object have been brought together. This tripartite relationship (Fig. 7.22) directs the viewer to not only examine the effect of context on the perception of the objects but, conversely, to acknowledge the effect of the objects upon the contexts in which they are placed.

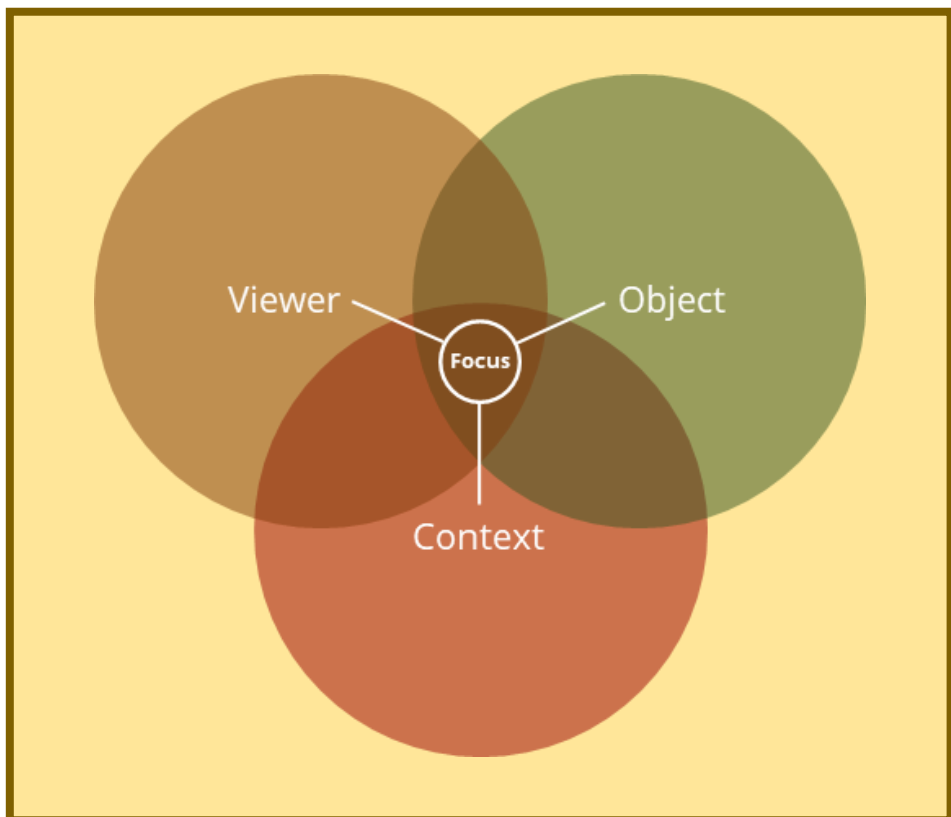


Fig. 7.22
Visualisation of focal area of experience.

For example; in the image (Fig. 7.23) of the previously discussed penthouse apartment containing the Ming bowl, this view of the apartment already presents three major items of importance, the Antony Gormley figure *Standing Matter XVIII* partially visible in the left foreground, the contemporary Venini Murano blue glass vessel on the kitchen counter top, and the Poul Henningsen *Artichoke* pendant light above the dining table. The addition of the Ming dynasty bowl and its placement adjacent to the Venini vessel adds a measure of antiquity, scholarship and complexity to the collection which, with the exception of the bowl, is predominantly comprised of 20th and 21st century art and objects. Additionally, the bowl develops the blue characteristic of the penthouse, first imposed upon the architecture itself by the architect, Jean Nouvel, subsequently picked up by the Venini vessel with other small blue glass objects on the dining table and now introduced in another medium by the Ming porcelain bowl.

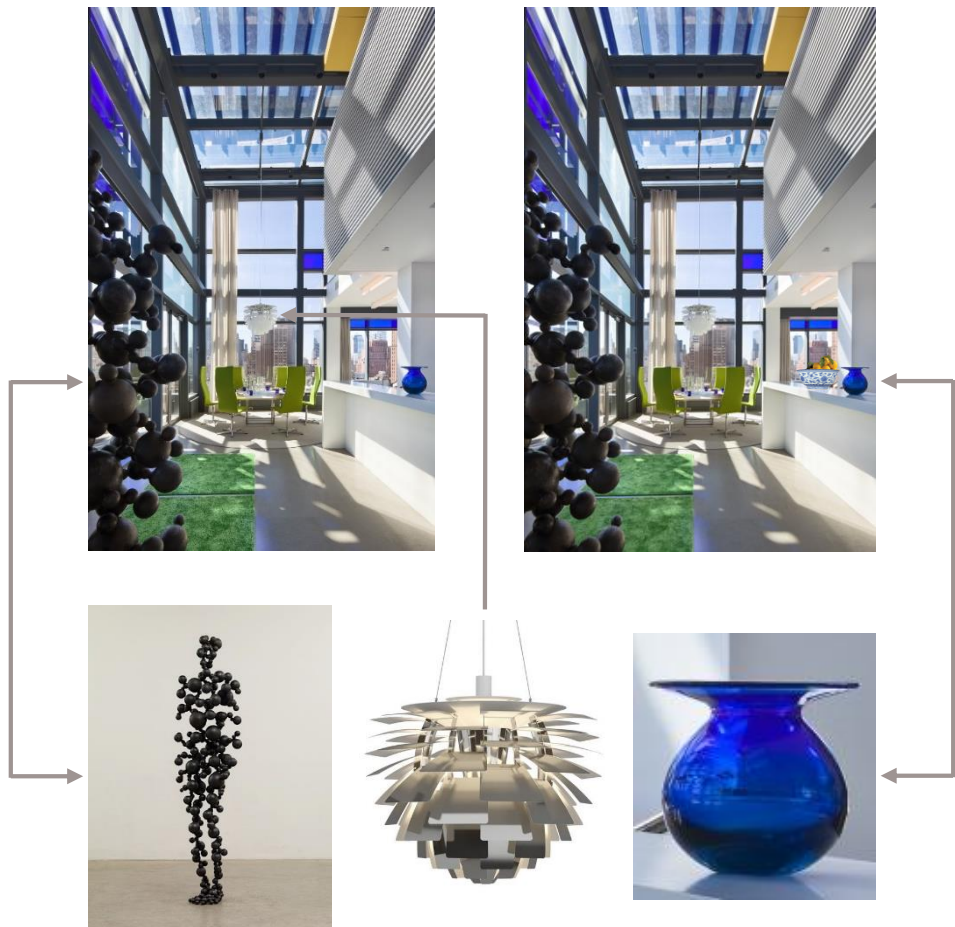


Fig. 7.23

Key existing objects within the penthouse.

The presentation in Room Four is concluded within a small annexe set slightly apart and screened from the main exhibition. Within this annexe, a single image presents the objects exactly as they appear when removed from the painting, unreconstructed and with all the traces of human contact - hand gripping, mouth drinking - remaining as evidence of the perceptual duality of equipment and art present within the objects.

The image presents these objects as an abstraction set against a background taken from the walls of the Wabi Room at Kasteel van s'Gravenwezel (Fig. 7.25) and is intended to remove all connection with the context of *The Feast of the Gods* whilst returning the items of equipment to their original world of fine art even as they are dis-located from the Italian Renaissance of the early 16th century and re-centred within the world of fine art in the 21st century.



Fig. 7.24

Objects removed and replaced by black holes.



Fig. 7.25

Objects isolated, re-presented and abstracted.

Subsequent to the experiential and phenomenological journey of the viewer through the exhibition, the presentation of the objects as an abstraction in Room Four Annexe (Fig. 7.26) is intended to encourage the viewer to perceive these objects as being returned to their acknowledged and appropriate world of art.

The transference of the objects from the world of equipment to the world of fine art is inevitable as, when removed from the painting and unreconstructed, the objects are now seen to be useless within the world of equipment as evidenced by the gaps (holes) in the objects which have been produced by human contact with the object. Ironically, it is this (correct) use of the objects by humans (drinking, holding, containing) that has precipitated the perception by the viewer of the uselessness of the objects and thereby becoming distanced, finally, from the world of equipment whilst simultaneously anticipating their belonging (returning) to the world of art.

The phenomenological now-uselessness of these objects has shifted them from the Heideggerian world of Tools and Equipment, where they were things to be used and located within their own Referential Totality, to be re-located within the world of Fine Art, where they have become things to be considered, thought about and analysed. The objects are no longer attempting to refer to the world of equipment (they have now rescinded the requirement to be objects although they still retain the memory of object-ness) but uncompromisingly locating themselves fully within the world of art.

The phenomenological location of this work (Fig. 7.26) is more closely directed toward the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl. Intentionality, relative to the aesthetic experience, is particularly appropriate as a means of interrogation because for Husserl (1927, p. 171) 'Everything that we experience of the thing, even the form, has reference to the experiencing subject'. The application of Husserlian Intentionality therefore as a method by which to analyse this final work, allows the phenomenological journey undertaken by the viewer throughout this exhibition to reach an informed, unprejudiced, comprehensive and particularly appropriate conclusion.



Fig. 7.26

Room Four Annexe Abstraction

Equipment returning to the world of fine art.

Before continuing the analysis of the Annexe Abstract (Fig.7.26) through Husserlian Intentionality, it is first helpful to mention other factors influencing the work. As has been revealed (unconcealed) by the journey through the exhibition, the research is located at the confluence of:

- Art: Specifically curatorial practice
- Philosophy: Specifically phenomenology
- Interior design: Specifically residential

The residential interior may frequently be designed (intended) to either:

- a) Provide a context for the presentation of art.
- b) Provide an intellectual location for the contemplation of art.

For example and to return to the very beginning of this exhibition section, it was precisely this fusion of context, resources and intellect that provided the catalyst by which *The Feast of the Gods* came to be commissioned by Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio, from Giovanni Bellini, completed in 1514 and which - following later modifications to the background by Titian to improve the hanging arrangement - eventually came to be hung between two further paintings by Titian within the Camerino d'Alabastro in the Castello Estense in Ferrara.

Returning to the Annexe Abstract; two interiors (Figs. 7.28, 7.29) are instrumental in focusing the convergence of influences resulting in the work as presented in the Room Four Annexe. These are:



Fig. 7.27
The Blue Dining Room
Waddesdon Manor
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England.
Owner: Lord Jacob Rothschild



Fig. 7.27a
The Wabi Room
Kasteel van s'Gravenwezel
Schilde near Antwerp, Belgium.
Owner: Axel Vervoordt



Fig. 7.28
The Blue Dining Room
Waddesdon Manor.

The Blue Dining Room (Fig. 7.28) at Waddesdon Manor is lined with the panelling from a Parisian townhouse of the 1750s. The blue of the François Boucher panelling is its original colour, revealed by paint scrapes in the 1980s. François Boucher was a French painter, draughtsman and etcher, who worked in the Rococo style. Boucher is known for his idyllic and voluptuous paintings, tapestries, book bindings and other decorative art on classical themes, decorative allegories, and pastoral scenes. He was perhaps the most celebrated French painter and decorative artist of the 18th century. His chief Patron was the King's Mistress, Madame de Pompadour. The 1920s console tables are by Gilbert Poillerat who was born in Mer, Loir-et-Cher, France, in 1902. He studied engraving and metal chiselling at the École Boulle, a highly regarded college of fine arts and crafts in Paris, graduating in 1921. Poillerat worked for many high quality wrought-iron experts and artists including Edgar Brandt, Jean Cocteau and André Arbus. Hanging above the table, laid with a unique set of 1770 French silverware commissioned by George III for his private use in Hanover, is Ingo Maurer's *Porca Miseria* chandelier from 1994. Made from cutlery and shards of smashed porcelain, the chandelier weighs over 30 Kg. This is the piece that particularly resonates with the Room Four Annexe Abstraction, in particular the incorporation of 'useless' tableware (bringing to mind the 'useless' tableware presented in the Abstraction) into a work that is problematic to categorise as either art, design, or craft. Ingo Maurer worked at the boundaries of art and design until his death in 2019, producing lighting that combined elegance, poetry, playfulness, irony and functionality at the limits of technological capability.



Fig. 7.29
The Wabi Room.

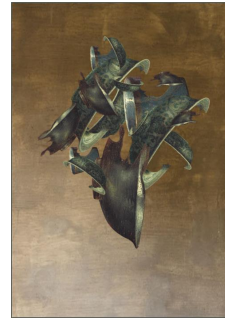
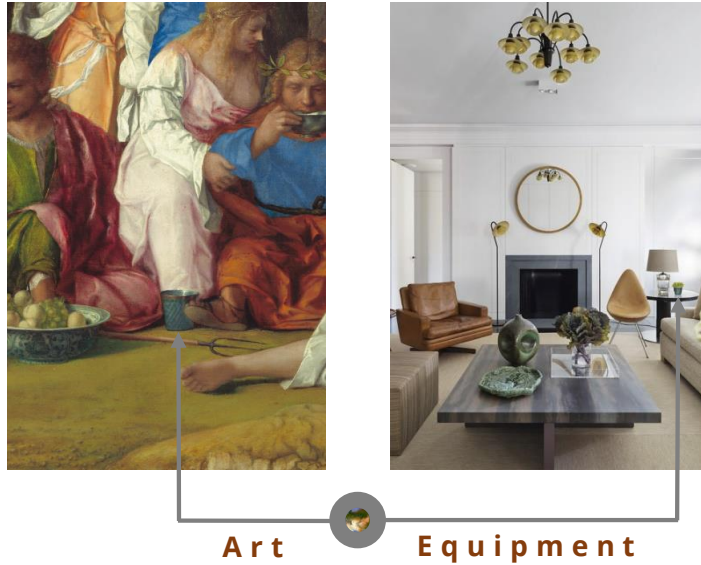


Fig. 7.29a
Abstraction.

The Wabi room of Kasteel van s'Gravenwezel (Fig. 7.29) is a Japanese-inspired retreat within the 13th century Belgian castle comprised of rustic beams, plain wooden floorboards and rough walls. It is where Axel Vervoordt, an art dealer, collector and interior designer, has spent 20 years developing his version of wabi-sabi, defined as beauty in nature, imperfection and humility. The room houses calligraphy by Yu-Ichi Inoue (1916-1985) an acknowledged Master of the genre. In the middle of the 1950s, Inoue's calligraphy was becoming more experimental, using bundled grass as brushes and drawing with enamel. His 'one character writings' depicting words such as 'flower' and 'poverty' are recognised internationally as outstanding masterpieces which question the boundaries of calligraphy and painting echoing Ingo Maurer's questioning of the boundaries of art, design and craft. His work is said by the critic Herbert Read to have inspired Jackson Pollock. The two large floor-standing pots are exceptional examples of Tamba and Shigaraki regional pottery from the 15th and 16th centuries respectively. The walls of the room are coloured by rubbing the earth from around the castle into damp plaster, thereby binding the castle to its landscape. It is a sample of this wall treatment used in the Wabi Room of Kasteel van s'Gravenwezel and also used (with a different clay) in the Room Four Minka (Fig. 7.33) when presenting the Murano glass beaker as it is returned to the world of art, that provides the background to the Room Four Annexe Abstraction (Fig. 7.29a) conceptually anchoring the formerly domestic objects to a residential interior whilst echoing the return to the world of art of the glass beaker through the return to the world of art of all three objects represented in the Abstract.

Wheel-Cut Murano Glass Beaker



7.8: *The South Wall - Art as Equipment*

The first set of images encountered by the viewer on the South wall of Room Four presents the wheel-cut Murano glass beaker located in the left-hand image immediately behind the right foot of Apollo and in front of the right foot of Ceres, Goddess of the growth of food plants. The image is of a 'tool' a piece of equipment that has been 'reassigned' to the world of fine art by way of its inclusion in *The Feast of the Gods* and therefore an object to be thought about as part of the history of painting. This act of inclusion refers not only to the world of fine art (painting) but also to the skill of the Venetian glassmakers with whom Bellini was well acquainted and whose work often refuted the distinction between the world of fine art and the world of equipment.

When the beaker is placed within an accomplished interior as an integral part of the design, the balance of the interior itself is altered. In the image of a contemporary Milanese town house (Fig. 7.30) where the owner evidences prior interest in Venetian glass through the 1940s Murano glass chandelier and floor lamps. On a side table where the beaker contributes to the overall interior design through the refraction of light, the containment of flowers and the balancing of the colours of objects displayed on the low table at centre, it functions as a decorative device within a larger collection. This returns the beaker finally to the world of equipment – it has a function within the context of interior design.



Fig. 7.30

Wheel-cut Murano glass beaker presented as equipment.

Silver Wine Cup



Art



Equipment

The second set of images on the South wall of Room Four calls attention to the silver wine cup used by Apollo, God of Oracles, healing, archery, music and arts, sunlight, knowledge, herds and flocks, and protection of the young. The image on the left presents the God drinking from the cup as part of the pantheon enjoying their picnic in *The Feast of the Gods*. In this detail, Bellini has retained the original, unchanged, context of the cup, as a vessel from which wine is drunk. However, the image is presented as belonging resolutely to the world of fine art, to be thought about, whilst simultaneously originating within the world of equipment, to be used.

The difference here is that not only has the context been altered, in this example, a contemporary Manhattan triplex apartment by Lee F. Mindel (Fig. 7.31) where the wine cup has here been used as a sophisticated container for a small bunch of roses on the low table in the main sitting room, bringing additional elements of history, scholarship, function and decoration to the interior. This act not only returns the bowl to its original world of equipment but also changes the nature of the equipment within that world.



Fig. 7.31
Silver wine cup presented as equipment.

Ming Dynasty Chinese Porcelain Bowl



In this third and final set of images on the South wall of Room Four, the object being addressed is the Ming dynasty porcelain bowl painted in its original context (left) as an element in a work belonging to the world of fine art. In this example *The Feast of the Gods* the bowl is used as a fruit bowl placed at the feet of Pluto, ruler of the Underworld. The use of the bowl as a container for fruit is itself a problematic depiction as a bowl of this type is intended to contain stews or pilafs, thereby originally belonging to the world of equipment before being relocated by Giovanni Bellini to the world of fine art whilst remaining as a depiction of equipment - albeit with a somewhat misleading change of use from stew bowl to container of fruit.

The image on the right (Fig. 7.32) continues the deception initiated by Bellini by retaining the function of the bowl as a container for fruit, but this time placing the bowl unambiguously within the world of equipment. This contextual and phenomenological shift is confirmed by relocating the bowl to that of a kitchen counter, reinforcing the blue accents in the penthouse of a Jean Nouvel designed apartment building located at 100, 11th Avenue in Manhattan.

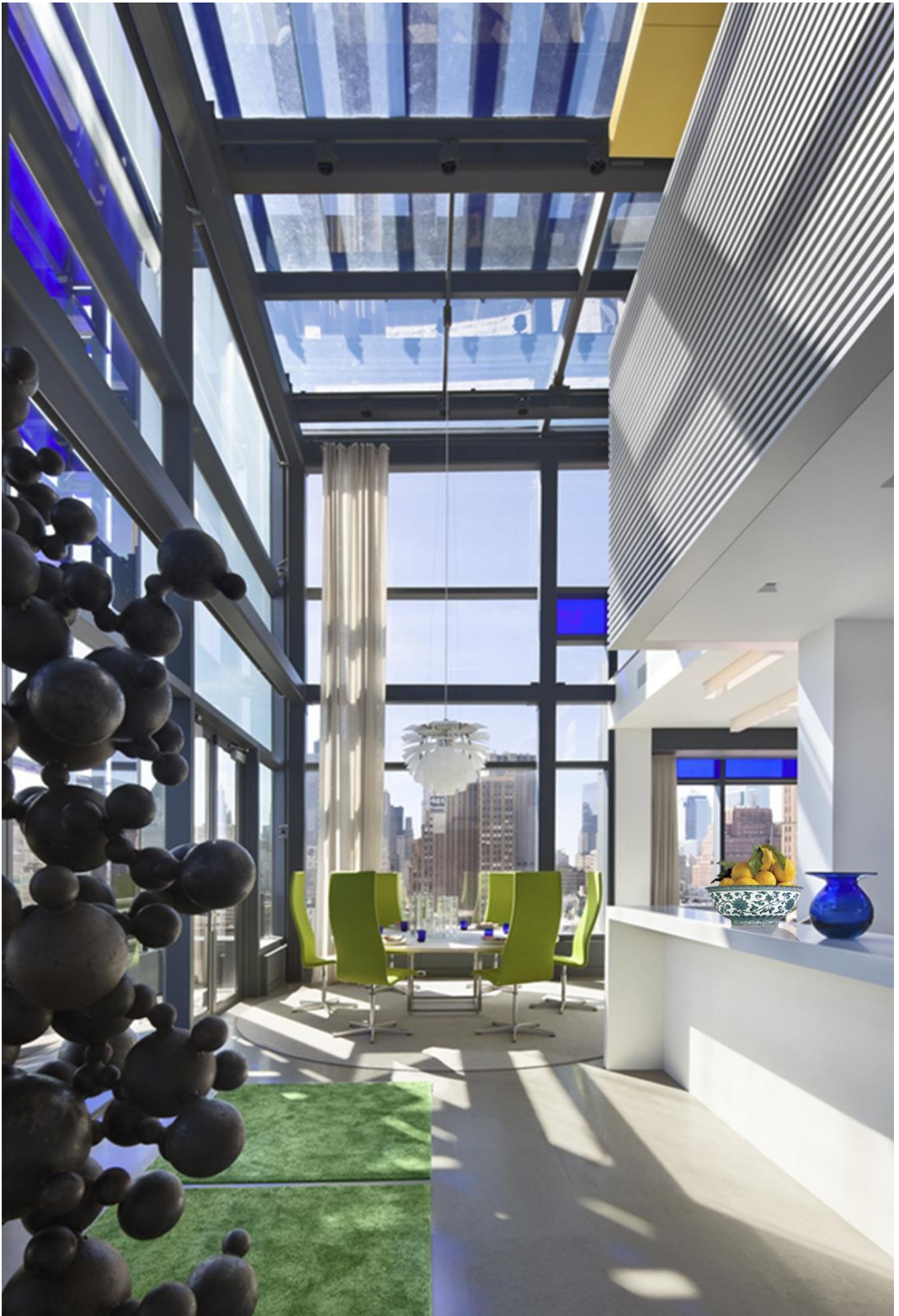
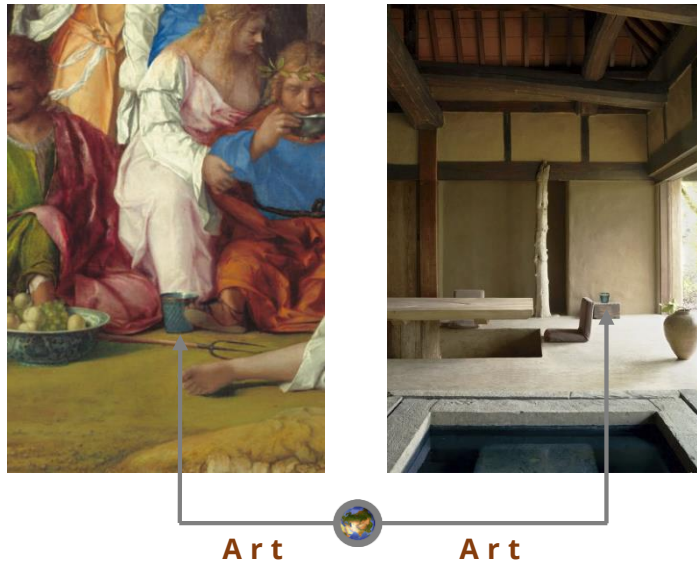


Fig. 7.32

Ming porcelain bowl presented as equipment.

Wheel-Cut Murano Glass Beaker



7.9: *The North Wall - Art as Art*

The three sets of images on the North wall of Room Four are to do with the re-presentation of the objects within their explicit world of art. The same three objects, originally from the world of equipment and subsequently relocated into the world of art by their existence within painting, are here invited to remain within the world of art but encouraged, as intentional objects inhabiting the world of art, to modify their meaning through contextual and phenomenological relocation.

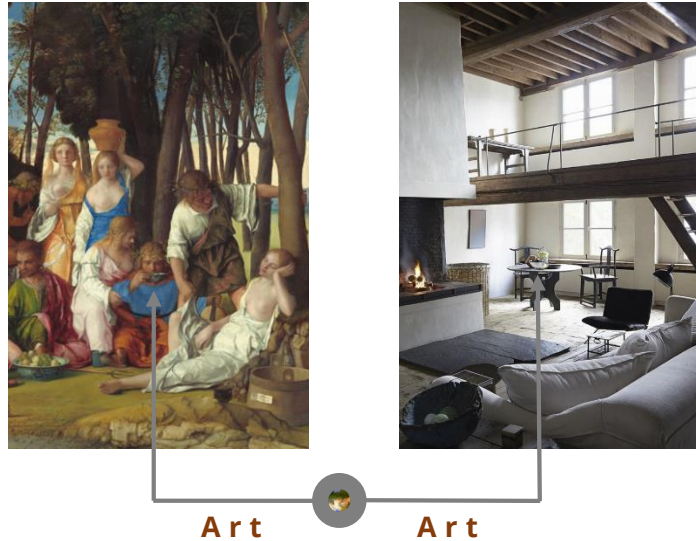
The wheel-cut Murano glass beaker represented as part of a ribald and somewhat enthusiastically chaotic environment at the end of a party in the left-hand image is, in the right-hand image, presented as an object of quiet contemplation. The meditative ambience is enhanced through the immediate context of a traditional Japanese Minka or hand-made farmhouse, which has been dismantled, removed from its original site in Kyoto and rebuilt in the grounds of a Belgian country estate (Fig. 7.33). The inclusion of an Italian High Renaissance glass beaker would be startling if presented in the original context of the Minka in Kyoto whereas, when forming part of an intentional collection of museum-quality objects on this Belgian estate, the beaker appears to sit contentedly within its redefined world of art.



Fig. 7.33

Wheel-cut Murano glass beaker presented as art.

Silver Wine Cup



The God, Apollo drinks from the silver wine cup in this detail (left) from *The Feast of the Gods*. The wine cup has been crafted with exceptional skill and is of admirable quality as can be determined by the reflections on the outside of the cup – lesser objects would bear the coarse marks of the silversmith’s hammer. The cup, whilst belonging to the world of fine art within the Bellini painting, would have been considered part of equipment during the period of its original use in the Italian High Renaissance. If the cup was to be somehow miraculously removed from the painting and returned to its original world of equipment, it would, when viewed in the 21st century continue to be perceived as a work of art. It is to a great extent, the passage of time that transforms such an object from the world of equipment to the world of art.

The right-hand image shows the object placed on a 20th century French slate table in the Antwerp home of an international art dealer and curator (Fig, 7.34). The table is flanked by two Ming dynasty wedding chairs while the house itself is a converted coffee warehouse in the artisan district of Vlaeykensgang. On the table next to the wine cup is a small sculpture by the Greek artist Takis and a wooden polyhedron by Daniel de Belder. The inclusion of the wine cup within this particular home and as part of this particular group confirms its status as belonging to the world of art.



Fig. 7.34

Silver wine cup presented as art.

Ming Dynasty Chinese Porcelain Bowl



The Ming dynasty porcelain bowl painted by Giovanni Bellini in *The Feast of the Gods* (above, left) and therefore unquestionably located within the world of art is placed in a former bread-warming niche (Fig. 7.35) adjacent to a fireplace in this restrained restoration of a Flemish farmhouse dining room belonging to a renowned art collector.

When placed in such a context, the viewer's initial response may be that the arrangement is verifying an assumption that the appropriate world for such a piece is that of equipment. However, as the considered spareness of the interior is fully understood, the presentational arrangement of the art objects being displayed at one end of the room becomes intentional. With the absence of any other distraction, the eye of the viewer is directed towards the objects with the same intensity as if they were being presented in a gallery.

The inclusion of the Ming bowl within this arrangement and within this particular interior leaves the viewer in no doubt that the definitive world within which the bowl should be located remains the world of art.



Fig. 7.35
Ming porcelain bowl presented as art.



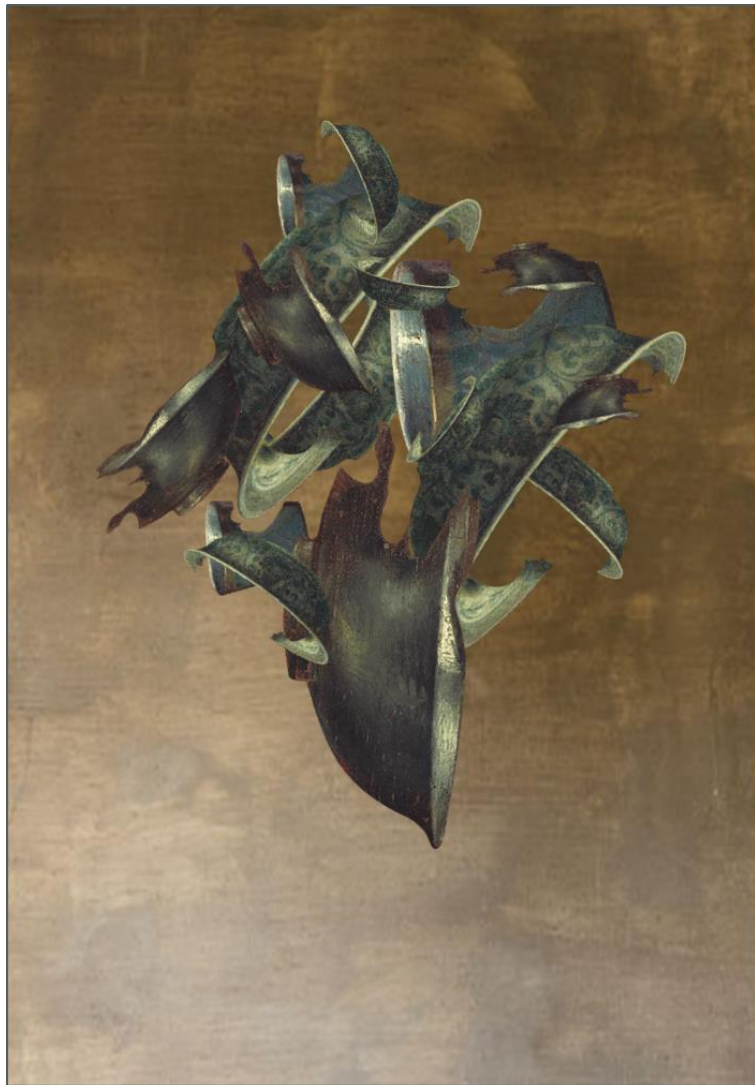
Fig. 7.36

Room Four Annexe Abstract

Equipment returning to the world of fine art.

7.10: The Annexe

This image presents the selected objects as an abstraction (Fig. 7.36) intended to remove all connection with the original painting whilst acknowledging that the 'true' context for these items of equipment is the world of fine art even as they are dis-located from the Italian Renaissance of the early 16th century and re-centred within the world of fine art in the 21st century. This image closes the exhibition by finally returning the objects taken from The World of Art back to the World of Art.



7.11: The Viewer Experience

Room One: Intentionality

Introduced at the very beginning of the exhibition through the lighting, music, wall panels, painted ceiling and other decoration, the painting *The Feast of the Gods* is unmistakably the focus of the room because it is hung 'front and centre'. It introduces the painter(s) the context and the subject matter, allowing the viewer to begin to relate to the painting without external influence. Phenomenologically, the viewer is also becoming, albeit subliminally, aware of the 'worlds' contained within the painting - the blue and white bowls (one with a wooden handle) the drinking vessels in glass or silver, the pheasant in the tree, or the drape of a particular piece of cloth. Questions begin to form, who commissioned this work, who painted it and when? What are these people doing? Are they people at all? Why are Satyrs roaming the landscape?

Intentionality has directed the consciousness of the viewer to the object and therefore, as consciousness is always consciousness of something, the viewer is already in relation to (i) things (the painting) (ii) a world (what is going on in the painting - the feasting Gods perceived by the viewer as once being real, being alive, but they have never existed) (iii) the increasingly blurred meaning of things as we find ourselves becoming involved in the world of the painting (these are beautiful objects but they are being used almost carelessly, as banal objects, from which to eat or drink). Phenomenologically, the worlds of the objects become confusing by their simultaneous presentation - are they art or equipment? This dilemma, again felt subliminally, forces the viewer to reassess previously held certainties as they become connected to worlds they don't fully understand. The answer may lie outside accepted curatorial ways of appraising and therefore outside the experience of the viewer who is used to looking at and deciding about - or used to being guided towards, looking at and deciding about - art in a certain way. Clearly there is more to be discovered within Room Two.

Room Two: The Phenomenological Reduction

The antechamber between Rooms One and Two provides just enough time to become composed before curiosity is piqued by awareness of the flicker of images, music playing and information being spoken. Room Two (Fig. 7.37) is where Husserl shows that adopting the Reduction to suspend the natural attitude is a step towards exposing the meaning deeply embedded in our experience. However, it is only a first step here, because rather than being given explanations, the viewer finds that nothing is stable, all is discontinuity - not chaos - as salient points of information are being identified, but not complete either. Everything connected with the painting is shown, even the source of the blue glaze used to paint the bowl - supplied to the Chinese by the Mamluk Sultans. Every person who has ever owned this painting is shown. The viewer is overloaded to the point where their expectations are washed away in a sea of information and associations. Eventually, they may become almost pliant, meditative.

Not through emptiness, as Axel Vervoordt strives for in his exhibitions, where he explores '*Volledig*' or the 'fullness of emptiness' or through the calm educational labelling of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, but through saturation. Eventually the viewer begins to make some sense of what is being promulgated and begins to drop their acquired habitual resistance, gradually becoming 'free from any contamination or influence that presuppositions of conceptual frameworks or psyche might contribute'. In fact, the overload of information is saturating the ability of the viewer to impose any presuppositions at all, allowing them to experience the world through astonishment. They are experiencing the Epoché, the first moment of the phenomenological Reduction where the viewer realises that they must set aside their natural attitude, their 'normal' way of interacting with their world, and simply *be*. Simultaneously, the second moment of the Reduction, the Reduction proper, encourages the viewer to realise that all that they have accepted as reality *is* only an acceptedness. At this point the doors set into the West wall of Room Two open and the viewer moves into a calm, quiet, evenly lit space with, at first glance, nothing at all on view.

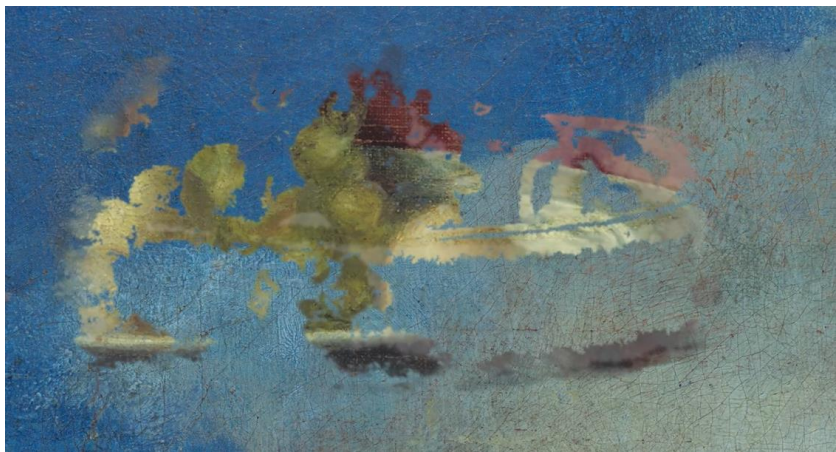
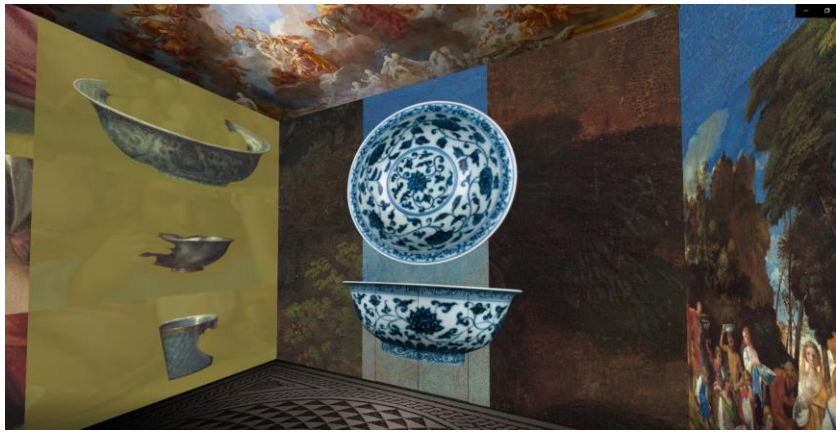


Fig. 7.37
Anthony Rayworth
Three views of Room Two of the PhD exhibition.

Room Three: The Things Themselves

Moving through the calm space of Room Three, all contextual information has been left behind. There are no anchor points to allow a relation to form between the viewer and the object. Turning into the room proper, the only things on display are the three objects selected from the painting first seen in Room One - the silver wine cup, the wheel-cut Murano glass beaker and the Ming porcelain bowl.

There are no labels, no information, no explanations. This is where all contextual information is removed or completely hidden in order to 'let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself' and which brings the objects and the viewer together in a phenomenological experience where the objects are at last allowed to 'show themselves to us'.

Both Husserl (through a transcendental approach, concerned with the essential and intuitive basis of knowledge and consciousness, both independent of and leading to, experience) and Heidegger (through an examination of both the viewer and the artefact's relationship with 'world' and 'equipment') concludes that we always and only experience what is meaningful - although in different ways.

Room Four: The World of the Thing

Here, objects are presented within either new worlds of equipment, as objects of use, or as objects of contemplation remaining within the world of fine art but within a world of fine art altered by time and contextual location.

Each image presents the objects within contexts that become somewhat problematic and that may only be resolved through the application of phenomenology, illustrated here by the Heideggerian concepts of world and equipment. Things have meaning by virtue of the worlds to which they belong, and as things are transposed between worlds they give rise to new connections, new associations, and we experience them and the worlds differently (Fig. 7.38).

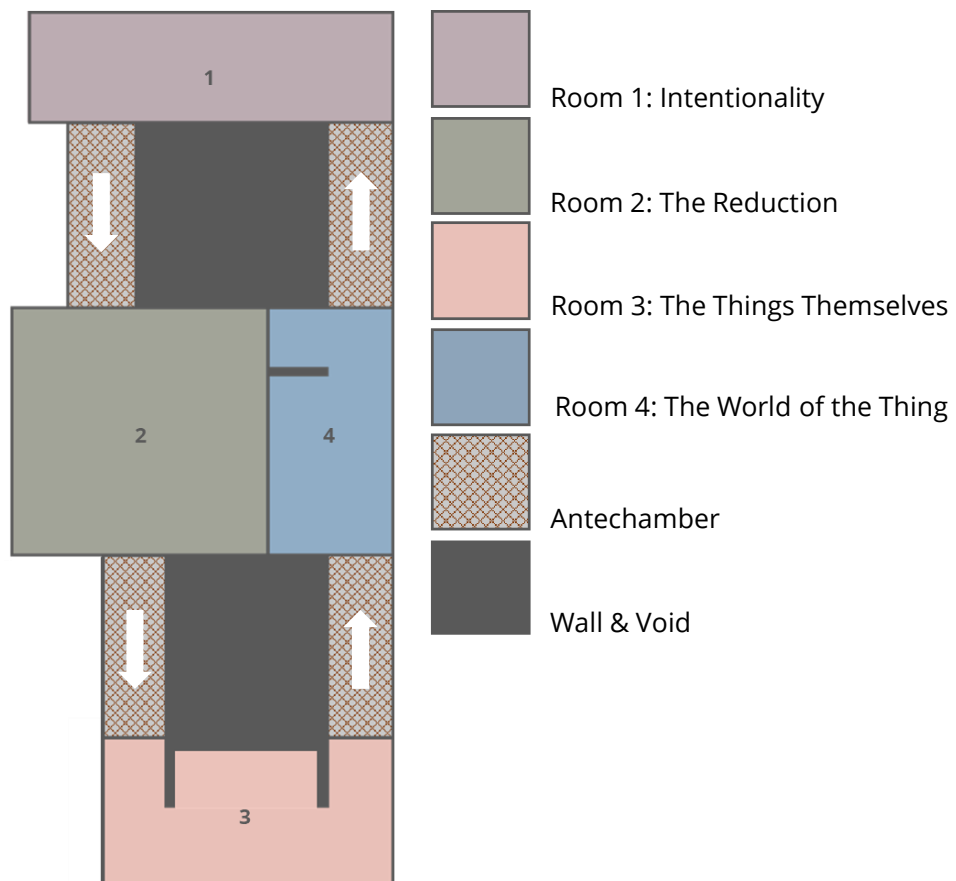


Fig. 7.38

Plan View of Exhibition.

Following the encounter with the abstraction of the objects presented in the annexe, the viewer is returned to the beginning of the exhibition where they again encounter the original painting. This encounter however is very different from the initial viewing of the painting. The viewer is now 'untainted' by their previously held certainties and worldly suppositions, experiencing the painting as if through fresh eyes, meeting the objects, once more returned to their original context, with understanding and a deepened sense of connection to them. The viewer is left with a sense of wonder at the scale of 'knowable experience' contained within such a painting, a sense of wonder only able to be precipitated by their shared phenomenological journey through the exhibition.



Room Four Annexe: The Return to Fine Art

The annexe is separated from Room Four by a partition wall shielding the final work from view in order to preserve the phenomenological experience taking place in Room Four. As the viewer moves into the annexe, they encounter an abstraction comprised of the three objects 'removed' from *The Feast of the Gods* and with the traces of physical contact left unrestored. The imprints of fruit, hands and lips remain, the objects are shown exactly as they were intended by Bellini in 1514 but in a way that Bellini could never have foreseen.

The objects have left behind all trace of utility, they no longer function as bowls or drinking vessels, presenting themselves against the complex and somewhat perplexing backdrop of the traditional earth wall of the Japanese Minka - originally of the same date as the painting but from the other side of the world and belonging to a different culture. The 'wall' indeed the entire farmhouse was dismantled and moved to Belgium where it was reassembled and a part of that wall is used as a background to the fragments of formerly practical objects of equipment, now returned as objects of contemplation to their original world of fine art, albeit in the twenty-first century rather than the sixteenth.

The viewer, through exposure to a phenomenological experience, is now able to follow these connections, reading the worlds contained within this concluding image. This would not have been possible without the use of phenomenology adopted as a curatorial approach with which to extend the experience of the viewer.

8.0: Conclusion

8.1: Summary of the Thesis

This research was undertaken in the field of design, philosophy and creative practice - specifically at the precise point where experience, interior design, selected areas of phenomenology, and curatorial practice converge. The research question that developed from this theoretical origination was:

'Whether, within the context of an exhibition of multiple artefacts, it is possible to precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information encroaching on such an experience.'

To address this question, the research turned first of all to phenomenology and its injunction that we should return to the things themselves. Through a reading of Heidegger's notions of 'equipment' and 'world' it became clear that things show themselves from within a world understood here as a referential totality of significance, that is, for a thing to have meaning is for it to be placed in a coherent and familiar relational context. This idea led to a two-fold approach. First, the familiar practice of providing information about an exhibited object and its world could be suspended, so that the viewer cannot rely on what they have been told about an object. Second, objects could be transposed between worlds to create new opportunities for viewers to find meaning in them. Unusual juxtapositions of objects can suggest previously unfamiliar worlds, worlds which may not even exist outside the curated space, all of which prevents viewers from taking the objects for granted and passing over them. The virtual exhibition is a working out of these ideas in practice. As already noted, the painting *The Feast of the Gods* provides a useful starting point in that it depicts a series of objects that have already been brought together from different worlds. To move the viewer beyond an experience shaped by prior knowledge and expectations, the exhibition deluges them with more information about the painting and the objects in it than can easily be processed and then draws the objects out from the work before placing them in quite different worlds.

The aim here is to focus less on the object than on the way it is experienced, and the way it can become meaningful for a viewer – but without dictating to the viewer what that meaning should be, or where the object itself necessarily belongs. The object no longer recedes into the background of a familiar world, but at the same time it is not isolated from the relations with other things, and with other possible worlds, through which it can be experienced as having meaning.

Through the presentation of objects within the context of an exhibition intended to provoke a phenomenological experience whereby symbolism, history, or interpretation by the viewer were considered to be either unnecessary or indeed actively discouraged; the objects became liberated and able to present themselves to the viewer *as they are themselves* unfettered by any requirement of understanding by the viewer.

The painting and objects isolated from the painting that formed the basis of the research exhibition, were identified as potential catalysts which may bring the viewer not only to a new experience of objects but to a phenomenological experience of art and objects, achieved by the direction of the viewer on their journey through the exhibition where objects are disengaged from the context of the painting prior to being presented within a series of their own phenomenological ‘worlds’.

Initial planning and design of the exhibition occurred before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and was originally intended to be produced as a physical exhibition within the Uniqube gallery space at Staffordshire University. The gallery had been measured, the dates had been reserved, the exhibition design completed and plans were in production when the country went into Lockdown due to the outbreak of the pandemic.

As discussed within Chapter 3, *Background to the Virtual Exhibition*; prior to lockdown, the decision to hold a physical exhibition was in question even before all possibility of creating a physical exhibition was removed due to COVID-19 restrictions. One beneficial effect of COVID restrictions was the removal of the logistical challenges associated with a physical installation but there were a number of other benefits arising from the move from a physical to a virtual presentation.

The creation of a virtual environment allowed total control over the sequencing, spatial dimensions, 'materials' selection, interior design and decoration, lighting, and certain elements of viewer experience such as pacing, pausing, complexity of image perception and multi-layered information delivery. In short, it was now possible to create a contextual location that presented the intention of the exhibition to a far greater extent than would be possible within a physical exhibition, given the physical, financial and other resource restrictions in place at that time. For example, the objects under investigation within the exhibition included: a world-class painting by Giovanni Bellini; a thirteenth century Chinese bowl, a fifteenth century silver wine cup, and a fourteenth century Murano glass beaker. Presenting the original objects rather than reproductions or representations, therefore, was not a realistic logistical option.

The four core areas of phenomenology discussed within this research - Intentionality, The Phenomenological Reduction, the Husserlian notion of objects presenting as The Things Themselves and the Heideggerian concept of 'World' - each contributed to the development of a method prompted by the domestic objects, bowls, cups, vessels and so on depicted within the 1514 painting by Giovanni Bellini being dis-located from the painting.

The objects were then allowed to 'show themselves as themselves' before being subsequently re-presented to the viewer within a range of contexts connected by their belonging to the worlds of either art or equipment and altering the perception of the viewer relative to themselves, the objects and the context. (Fig. 8.1) This condition responds directly to the research question by *precipitating an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information encroaching on such an experience.*

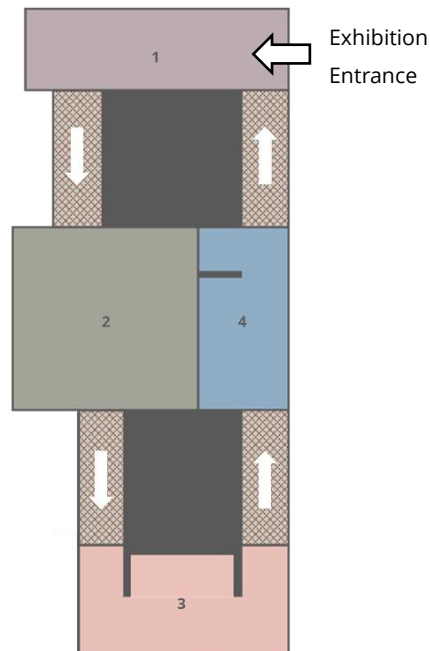


Fig. 8.1

The plan view of the exhibition illustrates the route through the exhibition (shown in white) together with the phenomenological focus with each room.

Room 1: Intentionality. *The Feast of the Gods* is presented in isolation and in context, providing a frame of reference and contextual location for the research.

Room 2: The Reduction. An expansive, encircling and immersive presentation of information relative to the painting and the objects selected from the painting.

Room 3: The Things Themselves. The three objects selected from the painting, 'as they show themselves to us' devoid of context, analysis or judgement.

Room 4: World. Contrasting with the previous context-less experience within Room Three, this room demonstrates that objects can take on new meaning in new worlds, and that a juxtaposition of objects in unfamiliar worlds encourages viewers to find new meaning in those objects for themselves.

8.2: Fulfilment of the Research Objectives

The objectives were developed as a means by which to structure the methodology of the research. Each of the objectives addressed a particular area of interrogation.

Objective 1

The development of a theoretical foundation leading to the deployment of ideas in Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, particularly those of intentionality, the phenomenological reduction, the things themselves, and world.

The interaction and integration of practice and theory began at the very beginning of the research when areas of phenomenological enquiry were identified as having direct bearing on the requirements of the research question as addressed within Objective 1. Questions began to arise as I worked through the phenomenological contexture which, as my understanding of the writings of Husserl and Heidegger developed, channelled my thinking towards what could be the most appropriate visualisation of the perception of Intentionality, of World, and, perhaps most perplexing of all, how to visually represent the Phenomenological Reduction within an exhibition context.

Thinking about making the exhibition fed directly back into developing the phenomenological foundation of the exhibition as well as developing within myself the critical ability to engage with such phenomenological notions as World and the Reduction and place them in sequence within the exhibition. The theoretical framework and the design content of the exhibition were therefore able to be advanced simultaneously, as a direct result of this concurrent, bipartite development.

Objective 2

Identifying and isolating specific objects depicted within a painting and formulating their journey as they move between the worlds of fine art and equipment within the exhibition.

It was important that the exhibition provide an accessible engagement with the phenomenological ideas of Husserl and Heidegger without requiring the viewer to digest a substantial body of theoretical work. Tracing the journey of objects as they move between worlds makes this possible.

I continued the development of a visual research-based exhibition model with these reflections in mind. The decision to use a traditional – rather than abstract – painting, presenting recognisable domestic objects to ‘precipitate an experiential intensity in the viewer without curatorial guidance or educational information’ was adopted as having a strong possibility of success. The painting finally selected as the vehicle for this research *The Feast of the Gods* is used to introduce the Husserlian notion of Intentionality as a starting point within the exhibition as well as providing three objects of note for isolation and detailed study that also evidence the Heideggerian notion of world and the nature of the worlds of the objects. Additionally, they facilitate changes in the phenomenological experience of the viewer as the objects move between their worlds and as the viewer moves through the exhibition.

Objective 3

Designing an exhibition space to reflect and enhance both the intention of the presentation of the exhibits and the experience of the viewer as they move through the exhibition.

My ongoing reflection on how, within an exhibition to design and present a model for the visualisation of phenomenological concepts developed by Husserl and Heidegger, helped clarify my thinking about these concepts which, in turn prompted reflection and modification of the presentation and so on. Again, I had in mind Schön and his 'reflection on action' approach where 'Stimulated by surprise, [practitioners] turn thought back on action and on the knowing which is implicit in action. They may ask themselves, for example 'What features do I notice when I recognize this thing? What are the criteria by which I make this judgment? What procedures am I enacting when I perform this skill? How am I framing the problem that I am trying to solve?' (Schön 1983, p. 50).

The enforced refocusing of my thinking about the exhibition due to the COVID-19 pandemic, allowed me to more fully integrate theory and practice through the composition of the interiors within a virtual environment. The virtual creation of a series of four rooms enabled the design of each room to visually represent a distinct phenomenological tenet through an integrated context of interior and object unconstrained by financial or physical limitations. Accordingly, the rooms could more fully represent the visual research and, through the development of such a considered contextual location for the exhibition, greatly reduce or remove the necessity for 'facts and information' - a fundamental aim of the research which could potentially diminish experiential interaction with the viewer. Additionally, the virtual nature of the construction allowed the decoration to be precisely aligned with the intention of each room, further concentrating the theoretical phenomenological focus represented by the interior.

Objective 4

Presenting the objects within alternative and unexpected contexts within the worlds of art and equipment to elicit new experiences in the viewer.

As the objects move between the worlds of fine art and equipment the viewer encounters objects that are presented within a recognisable context (Italian High Renaissance painting) transposed into unexpected contemporary contexts thereby introducing the viewer to possibilities of extemporary thought.

This model of visual practice reflecting on phenomenological tenets and leading back to an understanding of phenomenology, in the style of both Schön's model of Reflective Practise, and the Hermeneutic Circle, has led me to a clearer understanding of what could be achieved with phenomenology in the context of a curated presentation of objects intended to enable the viewer to have a distinctive experience. As stated earlier in this document, the contemporary interior now includes elements of *curated scholarship* and the placement of intangibles and the development of a curatorial model drawing on principles presented within this research may serve to enhance this practice.

8.3: Dissemination and Limitations of the Research

Opportunities for the dissemination of the research were affected by the restrictions and lockdown associated with the COVID-19 pandemic which occurred just as my research was reaching its mature stage. As a result, there was little opportunity to effect the plans that I had to talk to gallery owners, designers and potential collaborators outlined in 8.6: 'Future Work.

The limitations to the research were as follows:

For the reasons previously discussed within the thesis, I was unable to produce a physical exhibition where I could observe the interaction of viewers and their experience of the exhibition within a live context.

This restriction did however lead to some positives such as the possibility of designing the exhibition space precisely as I intended in order to produce the effect required at each stage of the exhibition journey.

I was introduced to Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) late into the research and recognised the possibility within OOO for the support and extension of the phenomenological perspectives adopted within the thesis as it places objects (things) at the centre of a philosophical study of the nature and relation of these to each other and to humans. I didn't have an opportunity to explore the possibilities of OOO for this research.

The virtual model could be developed to extend the experience of digital gallery guides, using augmented reality (AR) to enhance and develop narrative and experience in ways that would be impossible through purely physical means. Global sharing of material to form an exhibition from networked institutions being one possibility. The adoption of phenomenology as an element of AR is potentially challenging and will require further research.

8.5: Contribution to Knowledge

Theoretical contributions:

The research brings together a number of perspectives on phenomenology, interior design, fine and decorative art, and curatorial practice through the interrogation of selected phenomenological propositions of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in order to examine and develop new methods for the selection, presentation and perception of objects.

Practical contributions

This study contributes practically through the development of a virtual exhibition model and the capability of a virtual exhibition space to contribute to an experience at the intersection of phenomenology, interior design, and curatorial practice.

The research proposes a method to elicit new experiences beyond the traditional museum experience. It shows how such experiences may be curated without instructing the viewer on the meaning of the objects and how they should be understood.

The research contributes to new knowledge by engaging audiences with an immersive environment that reflects a phenomenological approach to the examination of experiential interaction with a selected group of objects as they move through their 'worlds'.

8.6: Future Work

This section provides indications for researchers who desire to conduct further research into the relation between phenomenology, curatorial practice and interior, experience, or exhibition design. Curatorial adoption of this research model could result in increased accessibility for viewers of fine art presented in public or semi-public contexts. By presenting the world(s) of the artefact through phenomenological engagement, informational and experiential intensity may be increased.

Further investigation into Object-Oriented Ontology may extend such phenomenological investigation, prompting further questions with regard to the relation between humans and objects as well as objects and objects. As OOO rejects the idea of human specialness, investigating the presentation of worlds 'not as manifest to humans' (Harman 2018), developing an exhibition with a curatorial team exploring the position of human experience in contrast with the autonomy of objects could be a consequential project.

Looking into potential locations for an exhibition within which the ideas discussed throughout this thesis could be disseminated to a wider public would be significant in presented future planned collaborations. These could be collaborative – with curators, practitioners or critical thinkers – and take place within unexpected or challenging locations such as a country house or deconsecrated church. The involvement of the Crafts Council or Arts Council may add an interesting point of view regarding visitor experience.

Curators of architecture and design, traditionally on the parameters of the contemporary discourse of curating could, through the adoption and development of this research, involve phenomenologists within the conceptual development of their practice, thereby strengthening critical foundation. For the future exploration of this research area, I plan to collaborate with future-focused artists and studios such as Ferdi Alici of Ouchhh (Fig. 8.2) with whom I am already in contact.

Alici is concerned with discovering the boundaries of art by investigating research relationships between architecture, art, science, technology, new media arts, neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Adding a reflective level of phenomenology to such a mix could, as Alici says, 'Question the truth behind the observation of the intersection of multidimensional worlds as a hybrid environment that redefines the future of art'.

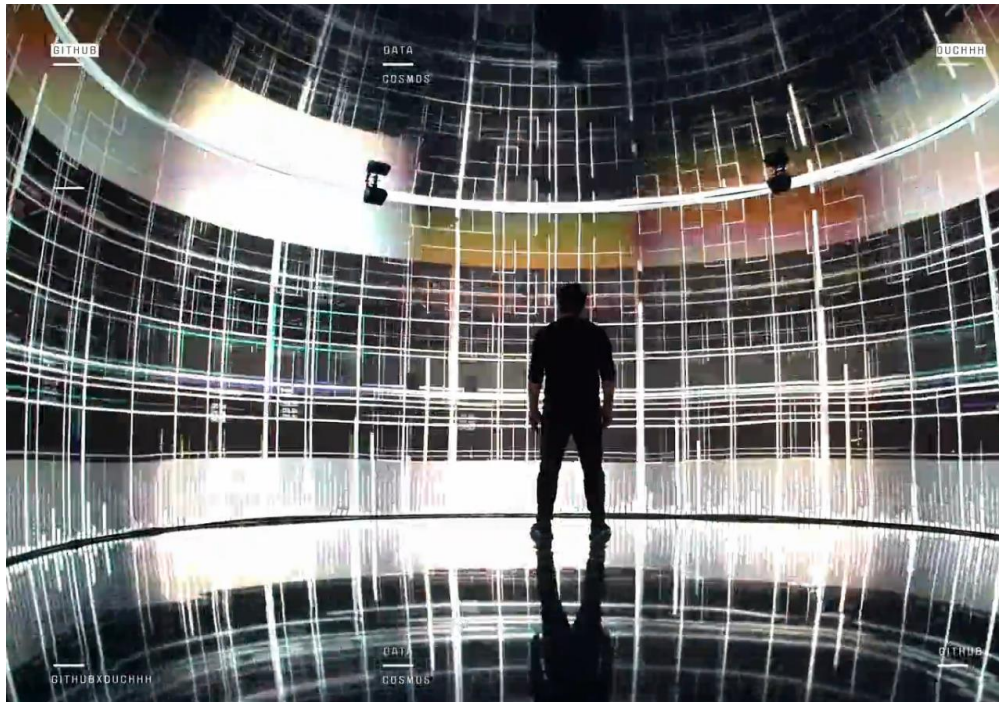


Fig. 8.2

Ferdi Alici/Ouchhh Studios (2021)

GitHub DataCosmos

Kraftwerk

Berlin.

<https://ouchhh.tv>

By presenting the research as a set of possibilities rather than a product, the adopter may adapt and apply the model in a number of possible ways such as modifying the model presented within this research using other examples from traditional or contemporary art as a focus from which to develop an installation or presentation.

Conversely, a contemporary craft or design object or a fragment from antiquity could be used as a catalyst with which to present the world of an object within an exhibition to increase depth of understanding through direct experience of such a presentation. Further research may extend this model within the context of archaeology where the world(s) of objects and humans could be presented to viewers of such exhibitions - adding a phenomenological level where information is absorbed directly through the experience of viewing.

The research will be of interest to creative practitioners whose work is motivated by intention, narrative, context, or site – directing attention away from the development of artefacts themselves and toward deeper consideration of the design of relationships and uses initiated by the artefacts.

Appendix I

Room Two

The Feast of the Gods Context and Provenance

The following Appendices set out the contextual and other information informing the presentation within Room Two of the exhibition and which is intended to:

- a) Make explicit to the viewer, the worlds inhabited by the objects and the unanticipated journey made by the objects as they move between and across their worlds. The perception by the viewer of both the objects and their worlds is altered by the progression of the viewer through the exhibition. Such a perceptual alteration directly introduces the possibility of the epoché or the 'bracketing' of the world and the suspension of belief in the world.

- b) Expose the viewer to a potentially overwhelming amount of information to do with the history, production, provenance and context of the painting itself and the objects selected from the painting. This is intended to lead to a realisation by the viewer that all certainties sustained by their belief that formerly held presuppositions are absolute, are now indefensible. This uncertainty about all previously held understanding, identifies directly with the Reduction proper - the realisation that the acceptedness of the world *is* an acceptedness and not an absolute condition of reality.

The d'Este Family

The Renaissance in Italy, broadly identified as the late 14th to mid 16th centuries, is accepted as bridging the divide between the Middle Ages and Modernity. Beginning in Tuscany and centred within Florence, the period established Italy as a major centre of European cultural revival.

The focal painting of the exhibition, *The Feast of the Gods* was created in 1514–29. Completed by Giovanni Bellini in 1514, with additions and amendments by Titian in 1529, the dates correspond almost exactly to the height of the Italian Renaissance. The later alterations were added in order to enhance the overall composition of the hanging within the room, placed as it was between two other great works by Titian. The painting is a product of its age and embodies the culture that created it within the Court of Alfonso 1st d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio. Duke Alfonso 1st d'Este was born on the 21 July 1476 and ruled from 1505 until his death on 31 October 1534.

The bloodline of the "Marquesses of Este" ("Marchesi d'Este") originated with Albert Azzo II, Margrave of Milan; the name "Este" refers to the city where the family originated. The family was founded by Adalbert the Margrave, who might have been the true first Margrave of Milan of this family. The title 'Margrave' indicates a Knight Commander of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1209 Azzo VI is named the first "Marquess of Ferrara", the title subsequently passed to his descendants and Este Marquisate's were delegated to a cadet (male-line descendants of the younger son) branch of the family. The Marquisates of Modena and Reggio were created later with the Duchy of Modena-Ferrara-Reggio being created in 1471.



Fig. A1.1
Alfonso 1st d'Este
Titian, 1530.



Fig. A1.2
Alfonso 1st d'Este
Dossi, 1530.

Family History of Alfonso 1st d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena & Reggio

Alberto Azzo II

(997-1097)

Founder of the House of Este

Married

Kunigunde of Altdorf

Garsende of Maine



Obizzo II d'Este

(1247-1293)

Married

Giacoma del Fieschi

Costanza di Alberto



Aldobrandino II

(died 1326)

Married

Alda Rangoni



Obizzo III

(1294-1352)

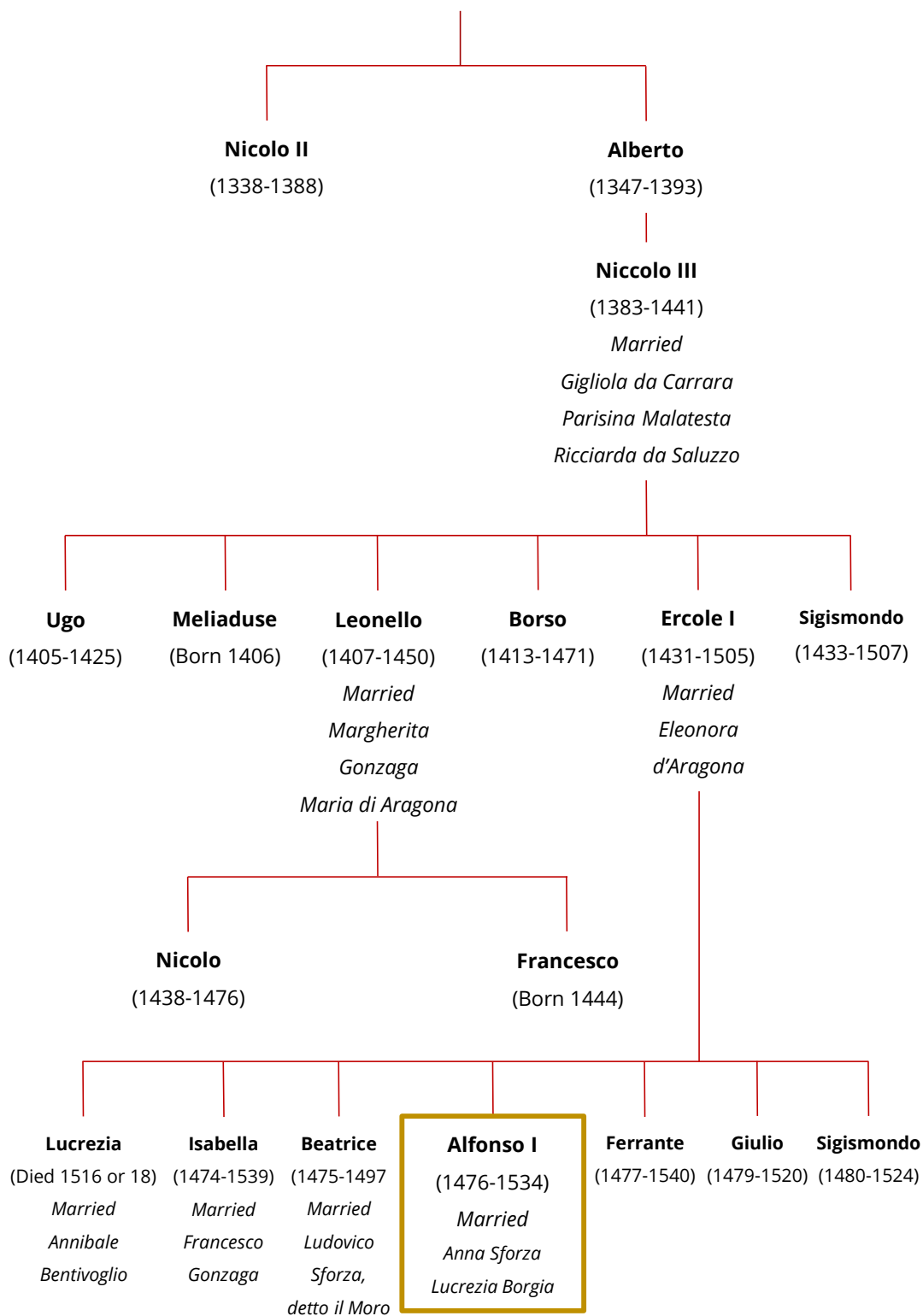
Married

Giacoma di Romeo Pepoli

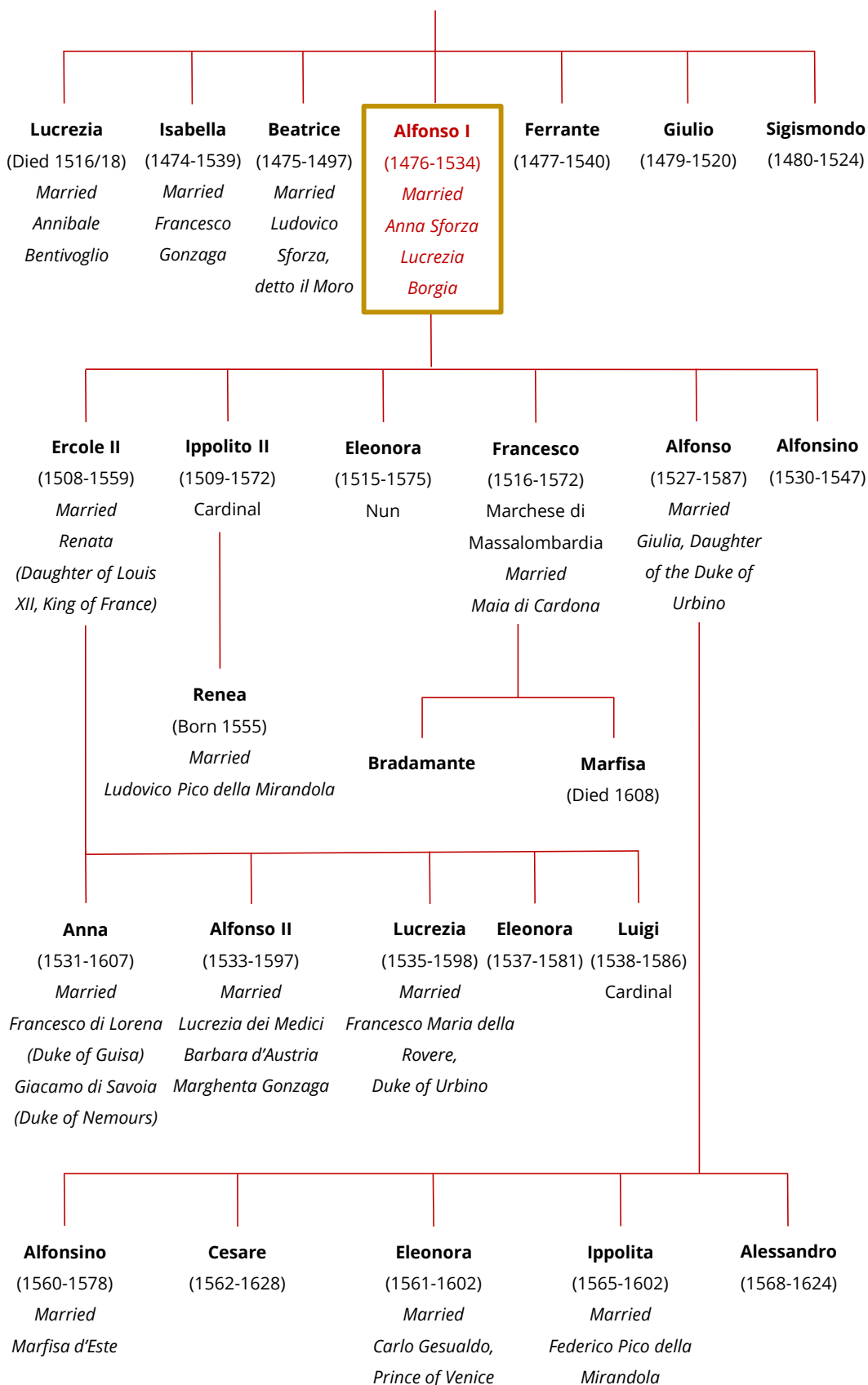
Lippa Anosti

NB: The clarity of the Este line becomes muddled between 1097 and 1247. Fulco I d'Este is generally acknowledged to be the founder of the Italian line of the House of Este. Fulco died in 1128 leaving six children. Clarity of lineage begins again with the birth of Obizzo II d'Este in 1247 - he was head of the family from 1264 until his death in 1293.

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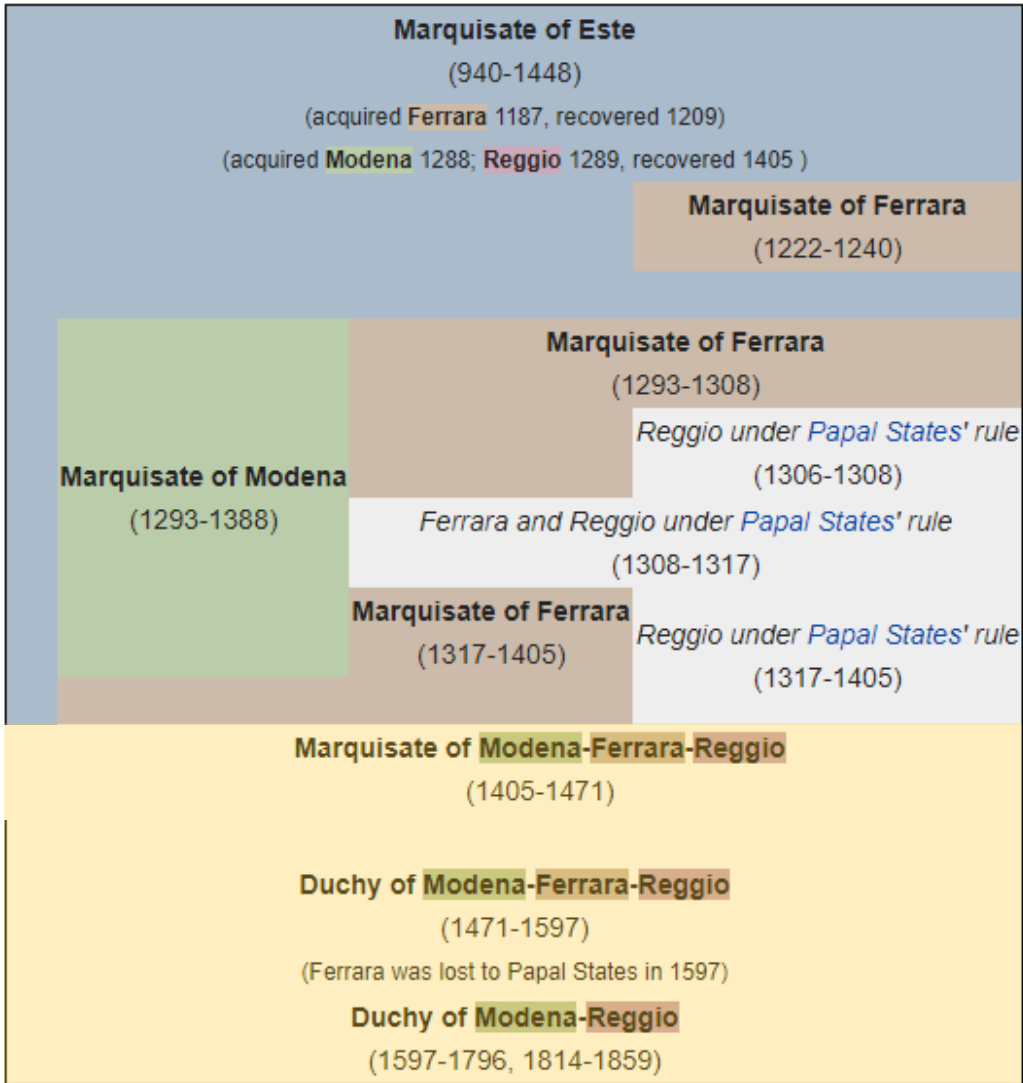


Fig. A1.3
Partitions of Modena-Ferrara-Reggio under Este rule.

Duke Alfonso 1st was married at least twice and possibly three times. The first in 1491 to Anna Maria Sforza and then, in 1502, to Lucrezia Borgia. His succession was assured not only through his legitimate children but also through the children of his lover and possible future wife, Laura 'Eustochia' Dianti, from whom were derived the future dukes of Modena and Reggio. Following the death of Lucrezia Borgia, it is widely believed that Laura Dianti became the Duke's third wife, legitimising their son Alfonso.



Fig. A1.4
 The Duchy of Modena (dark purple) and of Ferrara (light purple) in the context of 15th century Italy. Both of these belonged to Duke Alfonso 1st.



Fig. A1.5
 Coat of Arms of the House of Este 1534.

Duke Alfonso's first marriage was to Anna Maria Sforza who was the daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan and his second wife, Bona of Savoy, Duchess of Milan and daughter of the Duke of Savoy. The marriage was not a success and Anna died in childbirth in 1497 aged 21 after only six years of marriage.

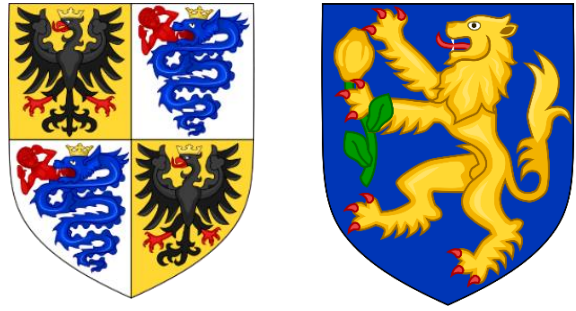


A1.7
 Anna Maria Sforza
 Leonardo da Vinci
 1490-9.



Fig. A1.8
 Castello Sforza, Milan
 Birthplace of Anna Sforza.

Fig. A1.9
Arms of the House of Sforza.



Above Left: This coat of arms combines the imperial eagle with a depiction of a basilisk (commonly referred to as a 'serpent') devouring a child (which was the Visconti arms) after Francesco Sforza married Bianca Maria Visconti - the last female heir of the main branch of the House of Visconti.

Above Right: Primitive coat of arms of the house Sforza, continued by the non Milanese lines of the family.

Below: Three variations displayed on the outer walls of the Sforza castle, Milan.



Fig. A1.10
Galeazzo Maria Sforza 1471
Father of Anna Sforza
Piero del Pollaiuolo (Benci).



Fig. A1.11
Bianca Maria Sforza 1460
Mother of Anna Sforza
Bonifacio Bembo.

In 1502 Duke Alfonso married Lucrezia Borgia, the daughter of Pope Alexander VI, originally a Spanish nobleman Rodrigo de Borja of Aragon, and Vannozza dei Cattanei – a former courtesan and landlady of several inns in Rome. They had six children together and Lucrezia was an accomplished, famously beautiful and successful Duchess. The marriage was happy even though neither party was faithful. She died on 24 June 1519, two days after the birth of her seventh child.



Fig. A1.12
Lucrezia Borgia
Dosso Dossi, 1486.



Fig. A1.13
Subiaco, Rome
Birthplace of Lucrezia Borgia.

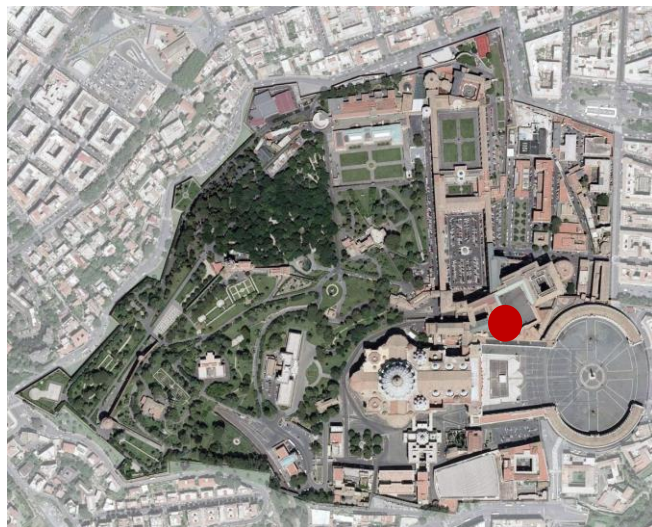
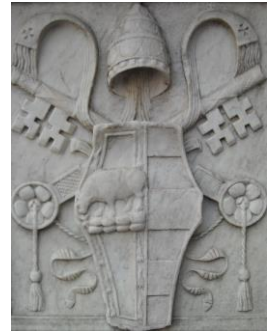


Fig. A1.14
Vatican City, Rome. Residence of Pope Alexander VI,
Father of Lucrezia Borgia. The location of the Borgia
apartments is shown in red.

Fig. A1.15

Right

Coat of Arms of Pope Alexander VI
The second Borgia Pope, 1492-1503.
Two keys saltire and a tiara.



Far Right

Variation in relief on the walls
of Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome.



Fig. A1.16

Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome

Fortress of the Popes since the 14th century.



Fig. A1.17

Pope Alexander VI

Father of Lucrezia Borgia
Cristofano dell'Altissimo.
1490



Fig. A1.18

Vannozza Cattanei

Mother of Lucrezia Borgia
Pietro Francucci da Imola.
1480



Fig. A1.19

Laura Dianti

Lover and possible third
wife of Duke Alfonso 1st
Titian.
1520-25

Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara was the son of Ercole I d'Este and Eleanora d'Aragon, daughter of King Ferdinand I of Naples. His father was educated at the Neapolitan court from 1445 until 1460 where he studied military arts, chivalry, Classical architecture, and fine art. The depth and complexity of his education provided him with the ability to become one of the most significant patrons of the Renaissance. A role continued very successfully by his son, Alfonso.



Fig. A1.20
Ercole I d'Este
Father of Duke Alfonso I
Dosso Dossi.
Posthumous portrait 1524



Fig. A1.21
Eleonora d'Aragon (Naples)
Mother of Duke Alfonso I
Cosimo Tura.
1473 or 1478-9

Duke Alfonso ruled from 1505-1534. He had been in power for less than six months when he uncovered a plot to kill him and his brother Ippolito, instigated by his brother Ferrante and his half-brother Giulio d'Este. The instigators were tried in Ferrara in 1506 and sentenced to death by hanging. As they were on the gallows, the Duke commuted their sentence to life imprisonment and were led to two cells in the Torre dei Leoni. Ferrante died in his cell after 34 years of imprisonment, Giulio was pardoned and released in 1559 after 53 years of imprisonment. He was released wearing the same clothes as when he was imprisoned and as he was paraded through the streets of Ferrara he was ridiculed and jeered at for wearing such outdated clothes. Giulio d'Este died in 1561.

Duke Alfonso, like his father before him and like his brother Ippolito, was recognised as one of the great patrons of art of his age - commissioning works by Giovanni Bellini, Titian and the Dossi Brothers as well as manuscripts by Equicola. His Camerino d'Alabastro, where these important works of art were displayed against the marble walls, became famous throughout Italy for housing one of the most advanced collections of art and literature of the age.



Fig. A1.22
Flag of the Duchy of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio.
1450 - 1597

Castello Estense

The moated and heavily fortified Castello Estense or Este Castle (Fig. A1.23) within which was located the Camerino 'd'Alabastro, is located in the centre of Ferrara, a walled city in the north of Italy in the region of Emilio-Romagna. Ferrara was the artistic and administrative centre of the Este court from 1385 until 1598 (Fig. A1.24).



Fig. A1.23

Castello Estense, Ferrara

Residence of Alfonso 1st d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio

Location of the Camerino d'Alabastro

Construction began in 1385.



Fig. A1.24

Location of Ferrara in Italy.

The Castello Estense was built in response to a particularly fierce and bloody uprising in 1385 by the people of Ferrara in protest against the serious (and entirely avoidable) famine that was decimating Ferrara. The people blamed the ruling class for the mismanagement of the land and rose against them with such force that in response, Nicolo II d'Este embarked on a vast building project to strengthen the defences of the castle and ensure permanent subjugation of the people. On completion, the castle was so immense that it quickly became a symbol of the absolute power and control over the people of Ferrara by the house of Este.

When Nicolo died in 1388, his brother Alberto governed until his death in 1393. Alberto was a very different character than his older brother. Interested in the arts, literature and philosophy, Alberto's lasting contribution to the culture of Ferrara, and indeed Italy, was the founding of the University of Ferrara in 1391. Rather than a symbol of oppression, the Castello Estense now became a seat of culture and open enquiry. This was further established by the succession of Albert's son, Nicolo III who consolidated the approach of his father and strengthened it through his strong political ability and combined with leadership and statesmanship. Nicolo was succeeded by his three sons:

- 1) Leonello, an art lover and philosopher whose close circle of friends included the great humanist, architect and principal initiator of Renaissance art theory, Leon Batista Alberti.
- 2) Borso, an outstanding soldier, engineer and statesman, earned the title of Duke for his family in 1471, increasing the stability of the economy and reclaiming the swamp surrounding Ferrara. He used the reclaimed land to grow crops and graze cattle, further increasing the local economy whilst ensuring that the populace were well fed. He then used the increase in wealth to increase his support for the university, commissioning books and papers for the already renowned library located there.

- 3) Ercole I, who was the father of Duke Alfonso I d'Este and held power from 1471 until 1505. He defeated an attempt by his nephew (son of Leonello) to seize his power and control of Ferrara. During Ercole's Dukedom, a programme of significant alteration, decoration and extension was carried out to both the inside and outside of the castle. The most significant of which was the construction of a passage that runs from the old palace to the rooms near the Torre dei Leoni (Fig. A1.25).



Fig. A1.25

The passageway or covered walkway ('Via Coperta') constructed by Duke Ercole I, leading from the Torre dei Leoni of the Castello Estense to the old Palazzo d'Este, now the Palazzo Municipale.

The programme of works initiated by Duke Ercole and designed by the architect Biagio Rossetti, a former military engineer and close friend of the Duke, extended across the city walls. The extension was of such a scale that it became known as the *Addizione Erculea* or Herculean Addition. Following Ercole's death in 1505, Rossetti served Cardinal Ippolito I d'Este, Bishop of five separate diocese and chief negotiator with the Pope on behalf of the Este family. During his career, Rossetti built a great many palazzi and churches for Cardinal Ippolito I. Duke Ercole I d'Este was succeeded by his son, Alfonso I who consolidated his power through two fortuitous marriages - to Anna Sforza the daughter of a Duke, this wedding ceremony was orchestrated by Leonardo da Vinci - and to Lucrezia Borgia, the daughter of a Pope. Alongside his astute political intuition, Alfonso also had two interestingly contradictory passions:

1. Improving the techniques for the casting of cannon which turned Ferrara into a strong military power.
2. An ability to discuss, patronise and participate knowledgably in the spheres of arts, culture and philosophy, commissioning a collection of painting and sculpture that would become famous and admired throughout Europe. One of these was *The Feast of the Gods* - the final great work of Giovanni Bellini with later additions by Dosso Dossi and Titian as well as by the Duke himself who, at the invitation of Titian, was invited to paint the pheasant shown within the painting.

Duke Alfonso I strengthened his Dukedom through a programme of military, cultural and political development that was impressive even by Renaissance standards. He fought and negotiated a treaty with Venice in 1505 and, almost continuously, battled against Pope Julius' (the Warrior Pope) army. His lasting cultural contribution however, is the extremely high quality collection of art displayed within his 'Golden Study' that Alfonso built for himself above the Via Coperta.

The Camerino d'Alabastro

The *Camerino d'Alabastro* or 'Alabaster Study' - also known as the 'Golden Study' - was one of the most important modernisation projects of Duke Alfonso I. The project was an extension and reworking of a set of rooms, first built in 1471, that belonged to his father on the top floor of the covered walkway (Fig. A1.26) linking the Castello Estense to the Palazzo d'Este (now Municipale) known as the Via Coperta.



Fig. A1.26
Via Coperta, Ferrara.



Fig. A1.27

Via Coperta, Ferrara.

The Ducal apartments.

The building was constructed in several phases and closes off Piazza Savonarola, joining the Castello Estense with Palazzo Municipale. The modern appearance is of an enlarged covered bridge with five spans. From the time the castle was built, some connecting structure had to exist to allow the Este family to escape in the event of a rebellion. From the early years of the 16th Century, when Duke Alfonso I modernised the aerial bridge that linked the castle to the Palazzo Ducale (Fig. A1.27) the decoration of these famous Camerini (rooms) was centred around the highly prestigious works of such artists as: Bellini, Tiziano (Titian), Dosso Dossi, and Antonio Lombardo. In 1598, with the dispersal of treasures that followed the Devolving of Ferrara to the Holy See, the castle was stripped of much of its art, this wing in particular.

Finally completed in 1529, the study attracted attention from artists and philosophers across Europe including the poet Aristo - who inherited the post of court poet from his father - and the founder of the Venetian School of Music, Adrian Willaert, who held a permanent post as Master of Music at the court chapel of Duke Alfonso I.

One of the Renaissance's most admired Classical scholars at this time was Mario Equicola (1470-1525) (Fig. A1.28) who, in 1511 wrote to Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua that he had accepted an invitation from her brother Duke Alfonso I (Figs.A1.29 & A1.30) who had asked him to stay at Ferrara and prepare a series of fables or allegories from which a series of (erotic) painted mythologies would be created to decorate the private study of the Duke, the Camerino d'Alabastro.

These paintings, including *The Feast of the Gods* were completed by Giovanni Bellini and Titian. Equicola combined extensive sources of both classical and contemporary literature to create the fables. He also included an allegory of the marriage of Duke Alfonso and Lucrezia Borgia. In 1501.



Fig. A1.28

Mario Equicola: Humanist, neolatin author, bibliophile and courtier to Isabella d'Este and Federico II Gonzaga, was commissioned by Duke Alfonso to write the allegories that informed the series of paintings to be hung in the Camerino d'Alabastro in the Via Coperta.



Figs. A1.29 & A1.30

Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, sister of Duke Alfonso I and friend of Mario Equicola, drawn by Leonardo da Vinci in 1499 and her husband Federico II Gonzaga painted by Titian in 1529. The Camerino d'Alabastro of Duke Alfonso I was created in direct competition with his sister's *studiolo* in the Corte Vecchi apartments of her husband's Ducal Palace in Mantua.

The fables and allegories were based on the *ekphrases*, provided by Philostratus the Elder, of works he encountered in the third century. Philostratus was a Sophist, born in 170 AD in Lemnos, a Greek Island in the Northern part of the Aegean Sea. His book, *Eikones (Imagines)* circa early 3rd century AD, describes 65 works of art he saw in a Neapolitan villa. His full name was Lucius Flavius Philostratus, a tripartite name implying that he also held Roman citizenship. The word *ekphrasis*, or *ecphrasis*, comes from the Greek and has been considered generally to be a rhetorical device whereby one medium of art tries to relate to another by defining and describing its essence and form in order to relate more directly to the audience. Below is the opening paragraph from *Eikones* as an example of Philostratus' ability to bring together painting, poetry, reason and philosophy. The translation is by Arthur Fairbanks who was appointed Professor of Greek and Greek archaeology in the University of Michigan and Curator of Classical art at the Boston Museum of Fine arts in 1906 and 1907 respectively.

'Whosoever scorns painting is unjust to truth, and he is also unjust to all the wisdom that has been bestowed upon poets – for poets and painters make equal contribution to our knowledge of the deeds and the looks of heroes – and he withholds his praise from symmetry of proportion, whereby art partakes of reason. For one who wishes a clever theory, the invention of painting belongs to the gods – witness on earth all the designs with which the Seasons paint the meadows, and the manifestations we see in the heavens – but for one who is merely seeking the origin of art, imitation is an invention most ancient and most akin to nature, and wise men invented it, calling it - now painting, now plastic art'.

Ekphrasis was a very popular approach to deepening understanding of the relationship between diverse disciplines of the arts during the Renaissance. It is recognised that the approach was particularly employed by the most influential artists, and understood by their patrons (shown in brackets) including: Botticelli (Medici), Mantegna (Gonzaga), Masaccio (Brancacci), Raphael (Pope Julius II), Titian (Duke Alfonso I d'Este and later, The City of Venice).

Art, Artists and the Camerino d'Alabastro

Overview

Titian is known to have painted two portraits of Duke Alfonso I, the first of these was widely acclaimed and publicly praised by Michelangelo, eventually being coerced as a diplomatic gift by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Titian painted three more paintings for the camerino: *The Worship of Venus* (Museo del Prado, Madrid), *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* (Museo del Prado, Madrid), and *Bacchus and Ariadne* (National Gallery, London). Dosso Dossi produced another large bacchanal for the camerino (now lost) also contributing ceiling decorations and a painted frieze for the Duke's bedroom depicting scenes from the *Aeneid* - which caused controversy by showing the heroes in contemporary dress. Giovanni Bellini produced his final painting *The Feast of the Gods* for the Duke in 1514. All the bacchanals in the Camerino d'Alabastro refer in some way to love, eroticism and marriage.

After the Este family lost control of Ferrara to Pope Julius III in 1598, the Alabaster Chamber's paintings and sculpture were dispersed. There remains, sadly, no trace of the original appearance of the Camerini. It is also indicative, or even appropriate, that even the name of the set of rooms within the Via Coperta (Fig. A1.31) remains a source of debate and confusion. In Italian, the word 'camerino' is used to describe a single room, whilst 'camerini' is the plural, referring to the entire five rooms of the apartment. The true reason for this confusion remains unknown with some believing that it is the result of an error by the Papal secretary during the transcribing of the inventory following its devolving to the Holy See in 1598.

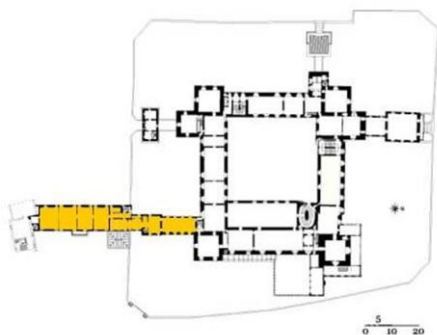


Fig A1.31
Plan of Castello d'Estense in Ferrara.
Via Coperta shown in yellow.

The private study of Duke Alfonso I, the Camerino d'Alabastro, contained four of the supreme masterpieces of Venetian Painting:



Fig. A1.32
The Feast of the Gods
Giovanni Bellini 1514.
Additions by Dosso Dossi (1514) & Titian (1529)



Fig. A1.33
The Worship of Venus
Titian.
1518-19



Fig. A1.34
The Bacchanal of the Andrians
Titian.
1523-26



Fig. A1.35
Bacchus and Ariadne
Titian.
1520-23



Fig. A1.36
Bacchanal
Dosso and Battista Dossi.
1520-30

The fifth bacchanal in Duke Alfonso's camerino was identified as Dossi's *Bacchanal of Men* now lost. This substitute Bacchanal (above) was previously identified as the fifth canvas and is now known to be incorrect. Unlike the other paintings in the camerino, this Bacchanal tells no story identifiable with mythology.

In addition, the absence of the very expensive and rare - at the time of painting - pigment, ultramarine blue, which features consistently in the paintings for the camerino, makes it highly unlikely that this painting would have hung among them, as has sometimes been suggested. The blue pigment in the sky of this painting is the more readily available and less expensive azurite.

Documentary proof that the three paintings by Titian (Tiziano) and *The Feast of the Gods* by Bellini hung together in the camerino is evidenced by the following passage from a letter published in *The Burlington Magazine* in November 1971 by the art historian, Charles Hope, former Director of the Warburg Institute and specialist in 15th and 16th century Venetian painting. The letter, dated 1st December 1598, refers to the dispersion of the paintings hung in the Camerino. It is written by Annibale Roncaglia to Cesare d'Este informing him that the paintings had just been taken away by Pope Clement VIII, Ippolito Aldobrandini, Bishop of Rome.

- 1.0 Nell'entrata a mano stanca una pittura in quadro di mano di Tiziano dove era dipinto Lacoonte.
- 2.0 Contiguo a detta pittura un'altra di mano del detto Tiziano dove era dipinta una donna nuda, che giaceva con un bambino, che gli pisciava su ipiedi, et altre figure.
- 3.0 Un altro quadro di mano di Giovanni Bellini Veneto dove era dipinto un puttino che tire vino da una mastellino con altre figure, et un paese fatto di mano di Tiziano.
- 4.0 In capo del detto camerino un'altra pittura di puttini nudi di mano di Tiziano.
- 5.0 Contiguo al detto quadro un'altra pittura con figure d'huomini et di donne di mano delli dossi.'

The translation of this is as follows:

- 1.0 In the entrance a framed picture by Tiziano depicting Lacoonte.
- 2.0 Next to this picture, another by Tiziano depicting a nude woman lying with a child pissing on her feet and another figure.
- 3.0 Another framed one by Giovanni Bellini Veneto depicting a child pouring wine from a small tub with another figure, and a landscape by Tiziano.
- 4.0 At the head of the camerino another picture of a naked child by Tiziano.
- 5.0 Next to that another picture with figures of men and women by Dossi.

As previously mentioned, Duke Alfonso's bedroom and study were private areas within his set of rooms of the Via Coperta. The other three rooms were semi-public and would have been used for confidential and/or important meetings – the equivalent of our parliamentary cabinet.

In the Duke's bedroom there were nine ceiling paintings and a frieze comprising sixteen landscapes, all painted by Dosso and Battista Dossi who also painted a large ceiling tondo (circular painting or relief) in the balcony room.

The Camerino d'Alabastro, the Duke's private study adjoining his bedroom which contained his favourite and most important books, manuscripts and works of art, measured approximately 9 metres in length and was approximately 8.5 metres wide. It should also be noted that Room Three, which had a balcony, was located at the precise centre of the Via Coperta with the balcony located in turn at the precise centre of the exterior wall of that room.



Fig. A1.37

Although the precise decoration of the Camerino d'Alabastro has been lost, the complex inlay of alabasters and rare marbles at the Palazzo of his sister, Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua and wife of Francesco II Gonzaga, provide an indication. Duke Alfonso was known to have particularly admired this hallway in San Giorgio castle where his sister had her own *studiolo* or private study.

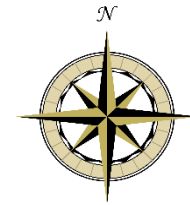
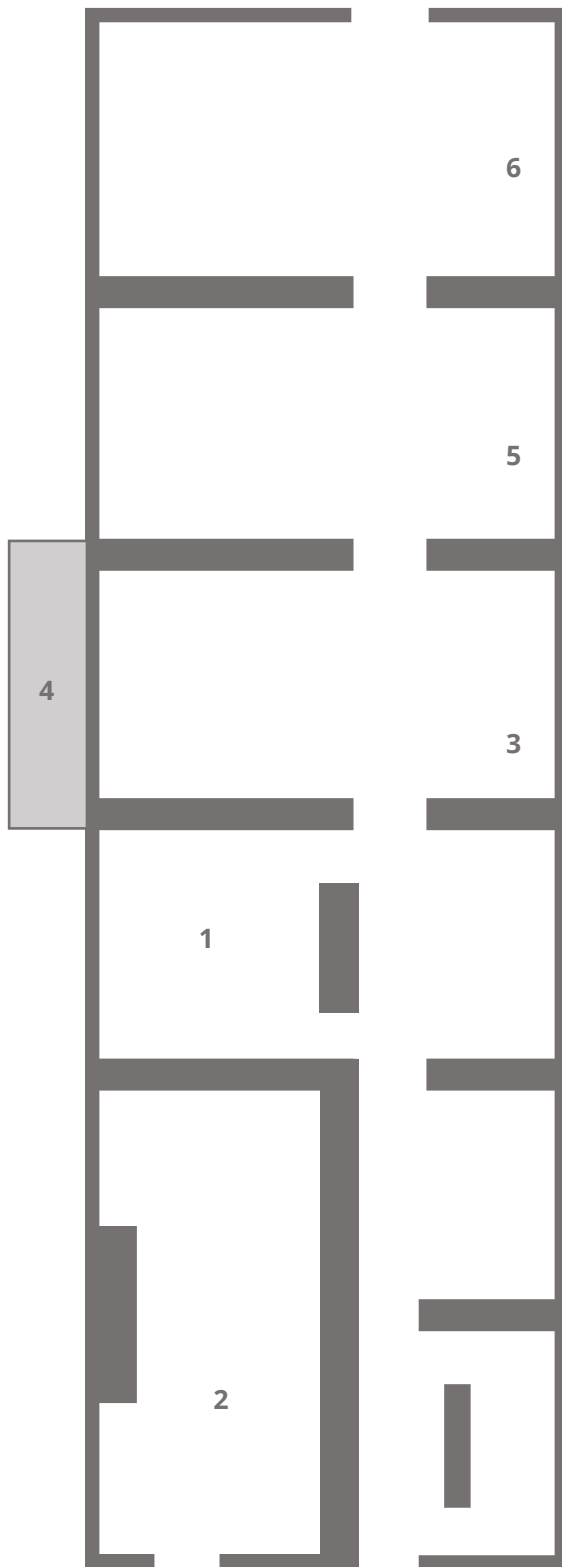


Fig. A1.38 (not to scale)

Plan of the private rooms of Alfonso I d'Este' in Via Coperta, Ferrara, also known as the Camerini d'Alabastro. When the term is used in the singular, camerino, it only applies to the Duke's study (2).

- 1, Bedroom
- 2. Camerino d'Alabastro
- 3. Camerino del Poggiolo
- 4. Balcony
- 5. Public reception (Resting Room)
- 6. Public reception (First Salon)

Overall dimensions 35 x 8.5 mtrs



Bacchus and Ariadne
Titian
1520-23



The Bacchanal of the Andrians
Titian
1523-26



The Feast of the Gods
Giovanni Bellini
1514
(This painting was the Duke's favourite and central to the overall hanging)



The Worship of Venus
Titian
1518-19

Bacchanal of Men
Dosso Dossi
c1520
Now Lost

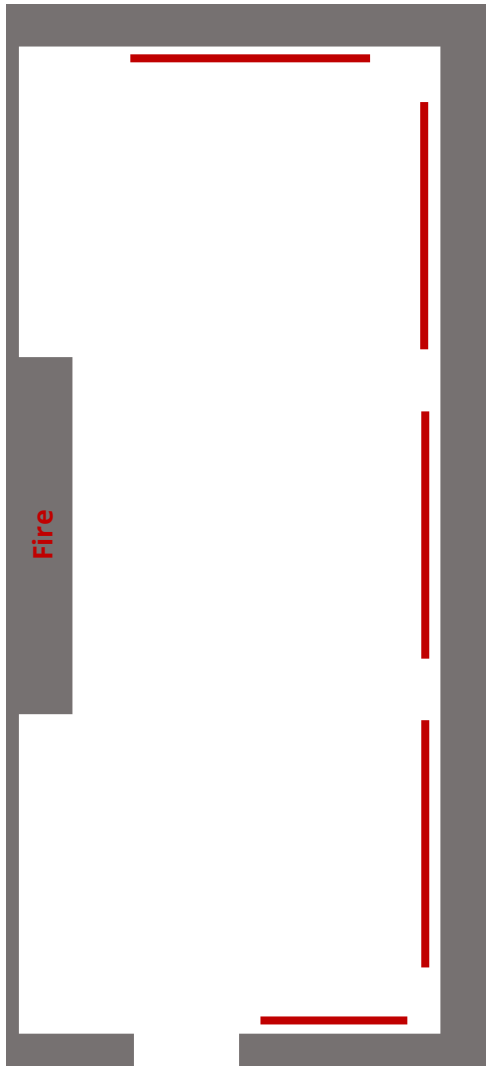


Fig. A1.39
Plan of the Camerino d'Alabastro
Arrangement of pictures.

Decisions and events leading to the final arrangement of paintings

The final arrangement of paintings within the Duke's camerino (Fig. A1.39) was by no means the only proposed arrangement. Nor was it the only selection and grouping of paintings proposed for the room. There were many factors and events which directly affected both the selection and display of the pictures including death, overpainting, age and replacement.

The somewhat confused and haphazard initial compilation of such an important group of paintings was not helped by the fact that Duke Alfonso I, whilst being a true Renaissance man, interested and capable in many varied subjects from war to poetry, was not an intellectual. Accordingly, he did not have a considered overview or 'curatorial' approach to the commissioning and presentation of works of art. He bought the best and he had an excellent 'eye' for quality but he was also influenced by who and what was fashionable. He was also influenced to some degree by his sister, Isabella, D'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, whose studiolo (private study) within the Corte Vecchi apartments in the Ducal Palace in Mantua was becoming known and discussed within influential circles. She moved the studiolo to the Castello di San Giorgio (another part of the Ducal Palace) in 1522. Her *salons* were recognised as a powerhouse of: thought, poetry, theatre, intellectual debate, philosophy and the art of swordsmanship, in fact, all the attributes necessary to being a successful courtier.

Baldassare Castiglione in his *The Book of the Courtier* (Castiglione, 1967) provides a factual account of a *salon* held at the court of the Duke of Urbino over four consecutive evenings in March 1507 in the Palace of Urbino.

The subjects under discussion within *The Book of the Courtier* provide great insight into intellectual thought at that time. Although not directly applicable to the courts of Este and Gonzaga, the book includes many guests who were also known to both Duke Alfonso I and his sister Isabella of Mantua and is highly acclaimed as an accurate account of courtly life during the Italian Renaissance.

The closeness of the Duke of Urbino to the Este family is underlined by the marriage of the son of Duke Alfonso I, also named Alfonso, in 1549 to Giulia Feltria della Rovere, daughter of Francesco Maria II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. The couple eventually became parents of Cesare d'Este, the future Duke of Modena.

An excellent video reconstruction of Giulia's studiolo is available here:

[The Virtual Studiolo – IDEA Art/e \(unc.edu\)](#)



Fig. A1.40

Virtual view of the studiolo of Isabella d'Este at Mantua.

Paintings by Mantegna, Correggio and Perugino



Fig. A1.41

Detail of the ceiling of the studiolo at the Castello di San Giorgio.

The circumstances surrounding the commissioning of the paintings presented within the camerino are both obscure and complex. That *The Feast of the Gods* was not originally intended for this room is understood as the painting was completed by Giovanni Bellini 1514, whereas building work on extending the camerino was not begun until 1518. It is widely supposed that the intentions for the decoration of the camerino were finalised in 1517 as two pictures were commissioned in that year specifically for the room.

One of these was the *Worship of Venus*, the commission for which was originally given to Fra Bartolommeo, a well known Florentine painter of religious subjects. but he died on 31 October 1517. He had, however, begun work on a drawing for the *Worship of Venus*, the preliminary sketches for which he had shown Duke Alfonso during a visit to Ferrara in 1516 as evidenced in an unpublished letter in the Modena Archivio Estense, Libri Camerali Diversi 253, (Libro delle Partite 1515-16) (Golzio 1971).

Following the death of Fra Bartolommeo, the commission for *The Worship of Venus* passed to Titian, it is assumed that Titian was aware of the drawing by Fra Bartolommeo but there are no records as to his actions towards incorporation of Fra Bartolommeo's ideas.

In March 1517, Raphael was commissioned to produce *The Triumph of Bacchus* and sent a sketch of the initial composition to Ferrara in August 1517. This is documented in a 1971 publication by V. Golzio. The original drawing has been lost but there is a facsimile - often thought to be the 'lost' original composition - in a publication held in the British Museum entitled: *Imitations of Ancient and Modern drawings from the restoration of the arts in Italy to the present time together with a chronological account of the artists and strictures of their works* and dated 1789.

(British Museum 1855,0609.812-978).

Raphael died on 6 April 1520 without ever beginning work on Duke Alfonso's picture. Students from his workshop offered to fulfil the commission but the Duke said that he would prefer to find another artist and demanded the return of his original advance of fifty ducats (£5,250 in modern currency 1 ducat = £105).

Titian delivered his *Worship of Venus* in October 1519, the same time as the court painter, Dosso Dossi delivered his (now lost) *Bacchanal of Men* – intended to hang near the entrance to the camerino. Titian was not commissioned to paint *Bacchus and Ariadne* for the camerino until the following June. The delay is explained by concluding that Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* was to replace Raphael's *The Triumph of Bacchus*. Titian's *The Battle of the Andrians* was only begun in 1523 and, when completed in 1526, hung to the left of *The Feast of the Gods* thereby completing the decoration of the camerino.

However, the space finally occupied by Titian's third painting for the room, *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* in 1526, could not have been left vacant for such a length of time (evidenced by Duke Alfonso's expressed impatience in his correspondence with Venice and Rome) therefore the space must have been occupied by another painting which was identified by the art historian Cecil Hilton Monk Gould FRSA in 1969 as being *The Triumph of Bacchus* by Pellegrino Aretusi 1460-1523 (known as Pellegrino). Pellegrino was born in Modena and assisted Raphael in the Vatican paintings (Davidson 1970). He was murdered on 20 November 1523 by relatives of a youth killed by his son.

Pellegrini's *The Triumph of Bacchus* also explains the then obscure subject of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* as the two works, when hung close to each other present successive episodes from the same story.

The Pellegrini however, hanging in such close proximity to two Titian's and a Bellini, must have looked, in the words of the historian Charles Hope '... decidedly second-rate.' which was quite possibly another reason for its replacement by a third Titian.

Finally, therefore, in 1529 the Camerino d'Alabastro appears to be finished (Fig. A1.39). There is Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* facing the entrance to the camerino, on the main wall, opposite the fireplace is Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* flanked by Titian's two masterpieces, *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* and *The Worship of Venus*. (Fig. A1.42) Finally and sadly now lost, *Bacchanal of Men* by the Duke's court painter Dosso Dossi. An extraordinary collection of Venetian art and testament to the vision, wealth, tenacity and powers of negotiation of Alfonso 1st d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio.



Fig. A1.42

The final hanging of *The Feast of the Gods* flanked by Titian's two masterpieces *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* and *The Worship of Venus*.

The Original text in Ovid's *Fasti*; the inspiration for *The Feast of the Gods*

'A young ass too is sacrificed to the erect rural guardian,
Priapus, the reason's shameful, but appropriate to the god.
Greece, you held a festival of ivy-berried Bacchus,
That used to recur at the appointed time, every third winter.
There too came the divinities who worshipped him as Lyaeus,
And whoever else was not averse to jesting,
The Pans and the young Satyrs prone to lust,
And the goddesses of rivers and lonely haunts.
And old Silenus came on a hollow-backed ass,
And crimson Priapus scaring the timid birds with his rod.
Finding a grove suited to sweet entertainment,
They lay down on beds of grass covered with cloths.
Liber offered wine, each had brought a garland,
A stream supplied ample water for the mixing.
There were Naiads too, some with uncombed flowing hair,
Others with their tresses artfully bound.
One attends with tunic tucked high above the knee,
Another shows her breast through her loosened robe:
One bares her shoulder: another trails her hem in the grass,
Their tender feet are not encumbered with shoes.
So some create amorous passion in the Satyrs,
Some in you, Pan, brows wreathed in pine.
You too Silenus, are on fire, insatiable lecher:
Wickedness alone prevents you growing old.
But crimson Priapus, guardian and glory of gardens,
Of them all, was captivated by Lotis:
He desires, and prays, and sighs for her alone,
He signals to her, by nodding, woos her with signs.
But the lovely are disdainful, pride waits on beauty:
She laughed at him, and scorned him with a look.
It was night, and drowsy from the wine,

They lay here and there, overcome by sleep.
Tired from play, Lotis rested on the grassy earth,
Furthest away, under the maple branches.
Her lover stood, and holding his breath, stole
Furtively and silently towards her on tiptoe.
Reaching the snow-white nymph's secluded bed,
He took care lest the sound of his breath escaped.
Now he balanced on his toes on the grass nearby:
But she was still completely full of sleep.
He rejoiced, and drawing the cover from her feet,
He happily began to have his way with her.
Suddenly Silenus' ass braying raucously,
Gave an untimely bellow from its jaws.
Terrified the nymph rose, pushed Priapus away,
And, fleeing, gave the alarm to the whole grove.
But the over-expectant god with his rigid member,
Was laughed at by them all, in the moonlight.
The creator of that ruckus paid with his life,
And he's the sacrifice dear to the Hellespontine god'.

Ovid (2004)



Fig: A1.43

X-radiograph and IR reflectogram reveal compositional changes and underdrawings respectively.

One of the most puzzling particularities of *The Feast of the Gods* is that there are two other completed landscapes underneath the present visible one (Fig. A1.43) against which the gods are enjoying their picnic. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, NGA (2016, Overview) describe the additions in outline as follows:

The *Feast* was the first in a series of mythologies, or bacchanals, commissioned by Duke Alfonso I d'Este to decorate the Camerino d'Alabastro (alabaster study) of his castle in Ferrara. Bellini completed it in 1514 two years before his death. Years later, the Duke commissioned two reworkings of portions of Bellini's canvas. Dosso Dossi made an initial alteration to the landscape at left and added the pheasant and bright green foliage to the tree at upper right. Most famously, Bellini's student, Titian, made a second set of alterations, painting out Dosso's landscape with the dramatic, mountainous backdrop now seen, leaving only Dosso's pheasant intact.

(AR, Note: This fact is now open to question as the style of the pheasant differs somewhat from Dossi's other bird paintings. It has been suggested that Duke Alfonso himself painted the pheasant under guidance from Titian).

It is possible that Titian wished to harmonize *The Feast of the Gods* with the other, later paintings he also created for the camerino at the Duke's behest. The figures and elements of the bacchanal were untouched by the later artists and remain Bellini's own. The original tonalities and intensity of the colours have recently been restored, and the painting has regained its sense of depth and spaciousness'.

Bellini completed the painting in 1514, the painting was signed and dated by Bellini himself. There is no doubt that the signature and date are authentic as they were recorded (and possibly witnessed) by Vasari at the time of completion. This was discovered during the first major investigation of the painting in 1956 by the American curator John Walker III who was also the second Director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington (Fig. A1.51) from 1956 until his retirement in 1969. He was a recognised authority on both Bellini and Titian, evidenced by his scholarly work *Bellini and Titian at the Court of Ferrara* (Phaidon, 1956).

The 1956 investigation of *The Feast of the Gods* by x-ray photography carried out by The National Gallery of Art, Washington, discovered that the picture had been overpainted, possibly more than once. The x-rays showed a previously hidden Bellini landscape (Fig. A1.43) behind the visible Titian landscape but they also found an extra hidden landscape in addition to other unexpected changes. The 1956 X-Rays revealed a screen of trees extending the entire width of the painting, echoing the composition of the visible forest on the right of the picture (Fig. A1.44).

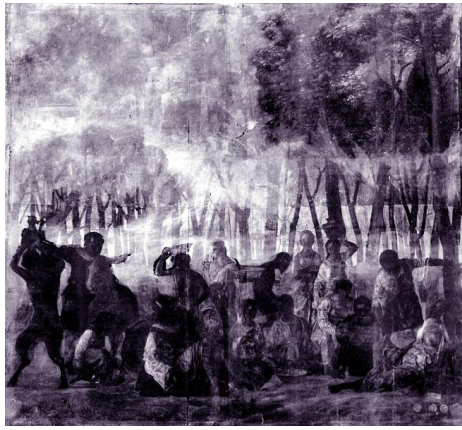


Fig. A1.44
X-Ray image of the underpainted landscape painted by Bellini in 1514.



Fig. A1.45
The existing painting showing the replacement landscape on the left-hand side painted by Titian in 1529.

In 1985, a further thorough cleaning and conservation procedure by David Bull and Joyce Plesters was applied to *The Feast of the Gods* using a range of technologies including infrared reflectology, cross-sections and infrared photography. Both methods penetrate the paint layers of a painting by degrees of nanometres, eventually reaching, and revealing, the underdrawing layer. The process is highly accurate with whole spectrum electromagnetic radiation allowing degrees of penetration of the painted layers from 700 nm up to 4000 nm (As an indication of the sensitivity of this measurement: One nanometre (nm) = one billionth of a metre).

In the course of this substantial investigation, Bull and Plesters discovered that alterations to figures within the painting, identified by Walker (Fig. A1.46) in 1956 as being painted by Titian, were in fact amendments by Bellini himself. The amendments included the 'undressing' of some of the nymphs and goddesses, lowering the necklines of their robes to expose their breasts.

Bull and Plesters also discovered an intermediate or third landscape in between those painted by Bellini and Titian. This third landscape was identified as being painted by Dosso Dossi and comprised a mountain with architectural ruins.

Bull also substantiated claims that Dossi had painted the pheasant in the tree by finding some parallels in painting style. It remains a possibility that Duke Alfonso I painted at least some of the pheasant himself as there are also discrepancies in some of the brushwork.

Returning to the Bellini alterations, it was proven by Bull and Plesters that the foreground landscape and the figures in the foreground have not been altered and can be seen in the present version of the painting exactly as Bellini painted them.

It is documented that, following an intermediate presentation of the painting by Bellini to Duke Alfonso, Bellini himself changed the composition to eroticise the female figures. For example - the blue dress of the nymph with the jar on her head was originally placed high on her chest, Bellini then overpainted it so that her right breast is exposed in the present version. There remains some controversy about this alteration with some critics and historians remaining convinced that the 1936 x-rays were misunderstood and that the figures are exactly as Bellini originally intended. The original less erotic version can however be clearly seen in the detail of the X-radiograph (Fig. A1.46 a & b).



Fig. A1.46 a & b

- a) The original nymph with her robe shown as having a high neck.
- b) The overpainted, eroticised nymph with lowered neckline and exposed breast.

One explanation, provided by Charles Hope in 1971, for the alteration of the landscape on the left hand side only of the painting concerns the balance and composition of hanging in the Camerino d'Alabastro. *The Feast of the Gods* was hanging in the centre of the main long wall, the most important position in the room. On the right hand side is Titian's *The Worship of Venus* and, interestingly, the landscape on the left side of this is similar to the unchanged section on the right of Bellini's composition (Fig. A1.47).

It is unknown whether Titian redesigned his landscape at Duke Alfonso's request or on his own initiative but he would certainly have seen *The Feast of the Gods* both in Ferrara during his visit in 1516 and, as he and Bellini were friends, at Bellini's studio.



Fig. A1.47

Detail of the hanging in the Camerino d'Alabastro, highlighting the continuity of the landscape on the right hand side of *The Feast of the Gods* and the left hand side of *The Worship of Venus*. Particularly interesting is the full-height group of trees immediately behind the figures in the foreground of both paintings as well as the continuity of the slope of the landscape under the trees. Even separated by their substantial frames and a narrow strip of wall, the composition of the hanging of these two paintings would have been satisfactory and harmonious.

To the left of *The Feast of the Gods* there was originally *The Triumph of Bacchus* by Pellegrino da San Daniele, based on a design by Raphael. Neither of these painters had seen Bellini's picture, therefore there was no

attempt made to relate the composition of *The Triumph of Bacchus* to *The Feast of the Gods* as Titian had with his *Worship of Venus*. Duke Alfonso I had the choice of either changing the centrepiece, a world-class painting by Bellini - the acknowledged Master of Italian painting and Founder of the Venetian School - or replace an initial design by Raphael.

Duke Alfonso's decision to replace the Raphael was mainly based on practical considerations as it would have been exceptionally difficult to change the Raphael design of a close, intertwined group of figures without losing the integrity of the painting. Dosso Dossi therefore was commissioned to produce the (now intermediate) alteration to the left hand side of Bellini's painting in the hope that it would then relate more closely to the Pellegrino hanging immediately to its left. Duke Alfonso, however, remained unconvinced and began to look for a replacement for the Pellegrino which, to him, was not of the same quality as the Titians and Bellini.

In 1523, Titian was commissioned to paint *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* to replace *The Triumph of Bacchus*, he returned to Ferrara in 1529 to install the painting and to overpaint the landscape on the right-hand side of *The Feast of the Gods*, at the request of Duke Alfonso, to harmonise the composition of the three paintings hanging together.

The Bacchanal of the Andrians was another allegory, elaborated by Mario Equicola, originating in the 'Imagines' portfolio by the Roman writer Philostratus. The painting illustrates the visit of Bacchus and his entourage of satyrs and bacchantes to the island of Andros. There, the natives (Andrians) were blessed by the presence of a river of wine.



Fig. A1.48

Detail of the hanging in the Camerino d'Alabastro, highlighting the continuity of the landscape on the left hand side of *The Feast of the Gods* and the right hand side of *The Bacchanal of the Andrians*. The landscape continues to rise and continue into the hills at the left hand of *The Feast of the Gods*.



Fig. A1.49

The final hanging of the three paintings in the Camerino d'Alabastro. The success of overpainting the landscape of *The Feast of the Gods* to ensure continuity of composition reflects the integrity of Titian as an artist as well as his affinity with and respect for the work of his former tutor, Giovanni Bellini.



Fig. A1.50

The National Gallery of Art, Washington



Fig. A1.51

John Walker III (1906-1995)

Expert on Titian & Bellini

Director of the NGA 1956-69

Ordered the first full survey of *The Feast of the Gods* in 1956.

The Pigments

During the 1985 investigation, an extensive pigment analysis was undertaken during the cleaning and conservation programme of work on *The Feast of the Gods*. All three painters, Bellini, Dossi and Titian employed the pigments available in that time including:



Natural ultramarine. A deep blue pigment originally produced by grinding lapis lazuli into a powder.



Lead-tin-yellow was produced by heating a powder mixture of lead oxide and tin oxide to about 900 °C.



Malachite often results from the weathering of copper ores, and is often found with azurite goethite, and calcite.



Vermilion is a brilliant red or scarlet pigment, originally made from the powdered mineral cinnabar.



Orpiment is a very rare deep-coloured, orange yellow arsenic sulphide mineral. It is found in volcanic fumaroles.



Realgar, is an arsenic sulphide mineral also known as Ruby Sulphur or Ruby of Arsenic.

The Feast of Gods is one of the few examples of the use of the extremely poisonous pigments - orpiment and realgar - in Italian Renaissance oil painting. These pigments were considered to be too dangerous to be sold to artists unless they were proven masters of pigment handling and use.

Appendix II

The Objects

Object 1: Ming porcelain serving bowl

For clarification, a bowl is an approximately hemispherical vessel used for serving or presenting food whilst a dish is an approximately flat vessel with a depression in the centre. The Ming vessels depicted within *The Feast of the Gods* are therefore bowls.

The Feast of the Gods includes at first glance, three Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) porcelain serving bowls. This first impression is not, however, correct. There are only two original Ming bowls depicted, the third one – shown being carried on a Satyr's head is a deliberate fake. The bowls are identified in Fig. A2.1 below:



Fig. A2.1

The imitation Ming bowl is carried on the drunken Satyr's head.



Fig. A2.2

The Ming porcelain bowl, Murano glass wine beaker and the silver drinking cup are the three objects being discussed within this section.



Fig. A2.3

The Ming Dynasty porcelain bowl with an everted rim provides the focus for this section of the research.

The genuine bowls were produced in a style developed in China in the 1490s through to the early 1500s for export to the Persian and Islamic markets. They were normally available in two styles, one with a plain rim and one with an everted (outward-turned) rim. Both are shown in the painting.

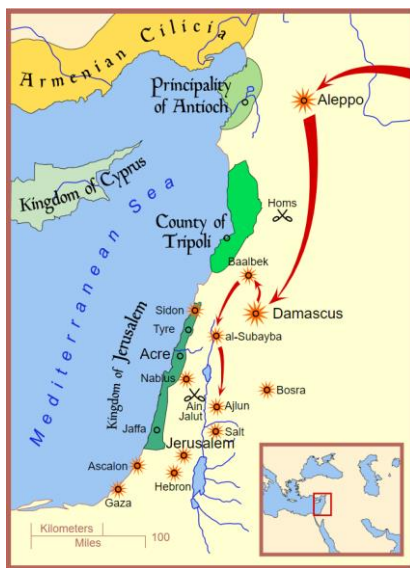


Fig. A2.4

Map showing the 1260 Mongol offensives in the Levant. The early successful attacks on Aleppo and Damascus led to smaller attacks on secondary targets such as Baalbek, Al-Subayba and Ajlun, as well as raids against other Palestine towns, perhaps including Jerusalem. Smaller raiding parties reached as far south as Gaza.

The design of the bowl is based upon a design developed in the 1300s following the Mongol occupation of Syria, Levant and Anatolia.

The Mongols remained in this area long enough to adopt some of the regional customs, in particular, the sophisticated cuisine and dining styles. The large bowls depicted in *The Feast of the Gods* were suitable for serving spicy and fragrant Arab stews and pilafs served to large gatherings seated on mats on the ground. This was completely different from the small plate Chinese style dining that the Mongols would have previously experienced.



Fig. A2.5
Nomadic Mongol family
eating from large serving
bowls on low tables.



Fig. A2.6
Chinese small-plate dining.

The original blue and white bowls were painted with a rare glaze using cobalt traded to China from Persia. Persians were quick to adopt the free trade culture developed by the Mongols and it was the Persians who first traded cobalt with China via Jingdezhen, a city in the north-east which later became known as 'the porcelain capital'.

The Hongwu Emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, Emperor Taizu of the Ming Dynasty (reign 1368-1398) (Fig. A2.7) abolished free trade, expelled foreign merchants and established a state-controlled barter system as well as developing a network of approved diplomatic trade missions whereby merchants from Persia submitted tribute and received Chinese goods in return. Large bowls decorated with naturalistic designs using the Persian cobalt traded with the Mongols, began to become very popular throughout the Middle East, becoming status symbols and evidence of a sophisticated, international approach to life. The bowls were also suited



Fig. A2.7
Zhu Yuanzhang,
Emperor Taizu of
the Ming Dynasty.



Fig. A2.8
Wanli Emperor,
14th Emperor of
the Ming Dynasty.

to the eating style and cuisine of the Middle East as they were stable, appropriate to the style of cooking, easy to pack up and transport and ideal for placing on the ground - as evidenced in *The Feast of the Gods*.

Elegant and standardised decoration began to be applied in China as the demand for the blue and white bowls increased. Between 1405 and 1437 the idea of scalability began to stabilise and commercialise the production of blue and white porcelain. Kilns became more reliable, guilds were formed, wholesale orders began to take precedence over private commissions and a fully fledged export market supplying the Persians and the Middle East began to trade on carts stacked up to thirty feet high with ceramics.

Further, during the Xuande period (Fig. A2.9) of the Ming Dynasty, a technique for stabilising the cobalt glaze was introduced. Prior to this the cobalt had a tendency to 'bleed' during firing, after the breakthrough, crisp, delicate brushwork was possible.



Fig. A2.9

Emperor Zhu Zhanji (1399-1435) Known as Emperor Xuanzong of the Ming Dynasty, Xuanzong gave the name Xuande to his reign. The Xuande period in blue and white ceramics is considered to be the most sophisticated in the history of Chinese ceramics. The Emperor was a highly accomplished artist. Robert D. Mowry, the curator of Chinese art at the Arthur M Sackler Museum describes him as as 'The only Ming Emperor who displayed genuine artistic talent and interest'.

From 1490 -1530 *Lotus Flower* and *Lotus and Peony* decoration became so popular that, probably as a result of overproduction, some of the glazes began to become 'muddy' and the drawing a little less precise – in some examples as described by Rosamond Mack of the National Gallery of Art in Washington '... even downright sloppy'. The (two genuine) bowls depicted in *The Feast of the Gods* were found buried in a hoard of particularly exquisite pieces outside Damascus. It is believed that the hoard belonged to The Caliphate of the Mamluk Sultans who ruled Egypt, the Levant and Hejaz from 1250 until the Ottoman conquest of 1517 (Fig. A2.10). The Mamluk Sultans occasionally sent their very finest pieces to Venice as diplomatic gifts (bribes) to promote a safe passage and preserve (mutually) profitable export routes.



Fig. A2.10
Sultan
Selim I in Egypt
 Gloya Borski
 1517



Fig. A2.11
Doge
Agostino Barbarigo
 Marco Basaiti
 In office 1486-1501



Fig. A2.12
Doge
Leonardo Loredan
 Giovanni Bellini
 1501-1521

The very finest pieces were given directly to the Doges of Venice, with documented gifts of fourteen bowls presented to Doge Agostino Barbarigo in 1498 (Fig. A2.11) and twenty-five more presented to Doge Leonardo Loredan in 1503 (Fig. A2.12). It is generally accepted that these two large gifts would certainly have included the two bowls that Bellini used as models for his bowls in *The Feast of the Gods*. Such gifts were customarily exhibited to an invited audience and selected public figures, Bellini, being a friend of both Doges, would have had private access to the two pieces used in the painting.

The bowl on the Satyr's head is imitation, produced in Islamic porcelain and decorated to look like Ming. The painting is so imprecise that it could only have been intentional on the part of Bellini in order to exaggerate the contrast between the two originals and this obvious fake.

Bellini included a number of visual jokes and conundrums within his painting that were intended to amuse or puzzle Duke Alfonso. One of these is that the Gods use the genuine pieces whilst the drunken Satyr is left with the imitation which is obviously of low quality and uncertain identity.

The d'Este's of Ferrara were not known to collect genuine Chinese porcelain. Duke Alfonso's father, Duke Ercole, purchased seven bowls of 'porcellane contraffazione' or 'counterfeit porcelain' during a visit to Venice in 1504. Such pieces were normally high quality Italian-made imitations, definitely not used by Bellini as the models for the genuine bowls in *The Feast of the Gods*. It is one of the many contradictions of the Este family that, whilst perfectly happy to accept and purchase imitation Ming porcelain, Duke Alfonso I is also well-known and admired for being the first in Italy to furnish his dining table with porcelain rather than silver.

Object 2: Murano glass wine beaker

The honeycomb pattern of the decoration on the Murano glass wine beaker shown at the feet of Ceres in *The Feast of the Gods* recalls the traditional wheel-cut decoration on 6th -12th century Sasanian (Sicilian) medieval Islamic or Iranian glass (Fig. A2.13) normally available in blue, blue-green or various tones of green, from khaki to deep olive.



Fig. A2.13
Murano glass wine beaker with wheel-cut pattern (detail from *The Feast of the Gods*).

From the late sixteenth century, Italian society tended to prefer drinking from fluted or stemmed glassware (Fig. A2.13). Earlier than this, flat-bottomed glassware was used and indeed continued to be used for picnics or al-fresco dining as the flat bottom provided greater stability (Fig. A2.14). Flat bottomed glassware continued to be popular for many years across the Alps.



Fig. A2.13
Opalescent finely cut,
stemmed and fluted wine
glass. Murano, c1600.

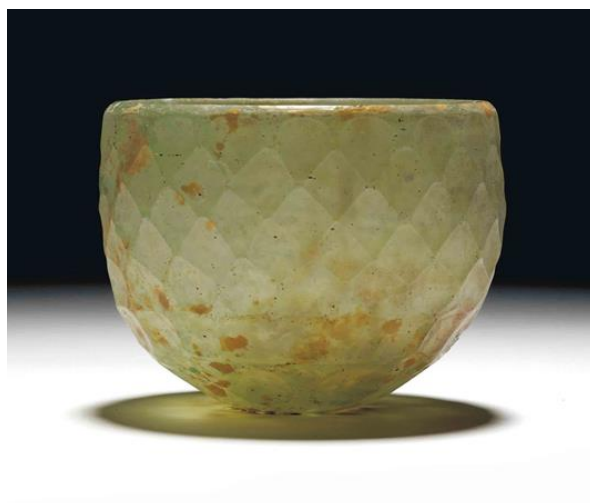


Fig. A2.14
7th century Iranian wheel-cut
glass beaker (Christies).

The Murano beaker depicted in *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. A2.13) illustrates the colour and shape popular in Italy at around 1500. The most popular colour was cobalt blue whilst the most rare colour (as shown in the painting) is a dark turquoise green, even more rare is the difficult to achieve opacity of the glass, imitating wheel-cut hardstone.

Gold bands were relatively popular around Venetian drinking glasses at this time. The bands were usually delicately patterned, always narrow and always set below the area of the rim touched by the lips. The solid rim on Bellini's glass appears to be of his own invention. It has been suggested that he could be referencing the translucent oil-filled glass held by St Lucy in Antonello da Messina's *San Cassiano Altarpiece* (Fig. A2.15).



Fig. A2.15

San Cressiano Altarpiece

Antonello da Messina

1475-6

The solid gold rim of the vessel held by St Lucy is of particular interest.

Antonello da Messina was actively painting in Venice at the same time as Bellini, the two painters were friends and creatively inspiring each other. It was accepted practice for painters at that time to take a theme or object from another's painting and 'extend' or enhance it in their own pictures, often using it in a different context such as in this example whereby the gold rim appearing on an oil-filled religious lamp of great symbolic meaning in Antonello da Messina's Altarpiece, is subsequently used by Bellini on the rim of a wine beaker in a decidedly drunken, lascivious and pagan, picnic setting.

Bellini is deliberately presenting the origins of his beaker as questionable - possibly even non-Venetian - unlike Antonello da Messina's vessel, whilst simultaneously contriving a highly exotic finish with which to better complement the porcelain. This gesture was, like the bowl on the Satyr's head, calculated to puzzle and amuse his patron, Duke Alfonso I, who always used Murano glassware on his table and would have understood the 'accepted' subtleties of pattern, ornament and decoration. None of which applied to the glass in this painting.

Object 3: Silver drinking cup

Duke Alfonso I was already familiar with the work of the acknowledged master silversmith, Benvenuto Cellini (Fig. A2.17) through his second son, Ippolito, who was to become Archbishop of Milan and who, in 1548, was created Cardinal of Santa Maria in Aquiro by Pope Paul III.

Cellini was renowned for creating complex and highly detailed silver and gold objects, the most famous of which is his salt cellar or *Saliera* (Fig. A2.18). It was completed in 1543 for Francis I of France, from models that had been prepared many years earlier for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este (Fig. A2.16). *The Saliera* is the only remaining work of precious metal which can be reliably attributed to Cellini.



Fig. A2.16

Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, second son of Duke Alfonso I d'Este. Ippolito became a great patron of Cellini. Cellini created a silver cup for the Cardinal in gratitude for securing his release from a false charge of embezzling the gems from the Pope's tiara.

Cellini was responsible for elevating the art of the silversmith to an equal level as painting and sculpture. The quality of work evidenced in Apollo's wine cup while Cellini was a guest at Castello Estense, Ferrara, directly contributed to Cellini's interest in fine precious metalwork.



Fig. A2.17
Self-Portrait
Benvenuto Cellini.
1540-43



Fig. A2.18
The Saliera
Apart-enamelled gold salt cellar
Benvenuto Cellini. 1543

Comparable to the bowl used to baptise Christ in Bellini's painting of 1500-02 (Fig. A2.21) which itself references and critiques Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano's 1493 painting of the same subject (Fig. A2.20) hanging in San Giovanni in Venice, the wine cup (Fig. A2.19) is another example of his taking an object from an intensely religious context and placing it into a resolutely contrasting context.



Fig. A2.19

Apollo's wine cup highlights the reflective qualities of silver over any decoration. The quality of the silversmith's work illustrated within *The Feast of the Gods* is perfect, as evidenced by the reflections, shadows and highlights in Apollo's cup.



Fig. A2.20

The Baptism of Christ

Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano.

1493



Fig. A2.21

The Baptism of Christ

Giovanni Bellini.

1500-02



Fig. A2.22

Bellini, G. (1514) Later additions by Dossi, D. and Titian (1529)

The Feast of the Gods

[Oil on canvas].

National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Source: NGA Visual Services, reproduced with permission.



Fig. A2.23

The three objects selected for analysis circled in white, with details.



Fig. A2.24
Detail of Lotus Flower Pattern.





Fig. A2.25
Silver wine cup and contemporary equivalents.



Fig. A2.26

Wheel-cut Murano glass beaker (top) with other examples of wheel-cut glass.

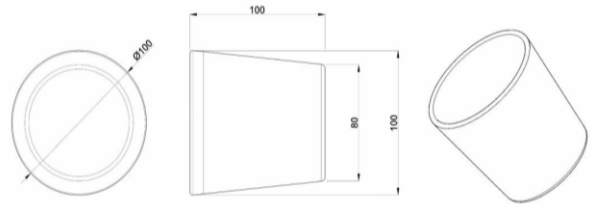
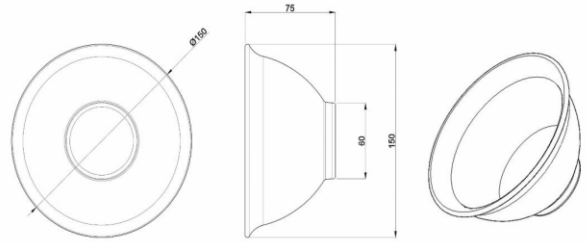
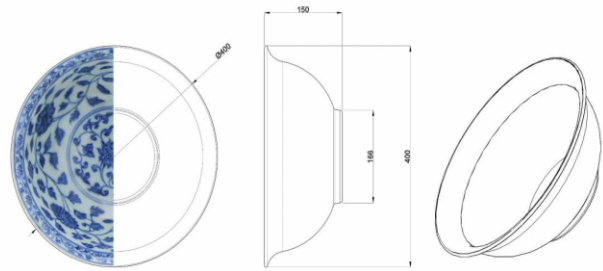


Fig. A2.27

Overview with drawings of the selected objects.

Dimensions are as an indication of scale only

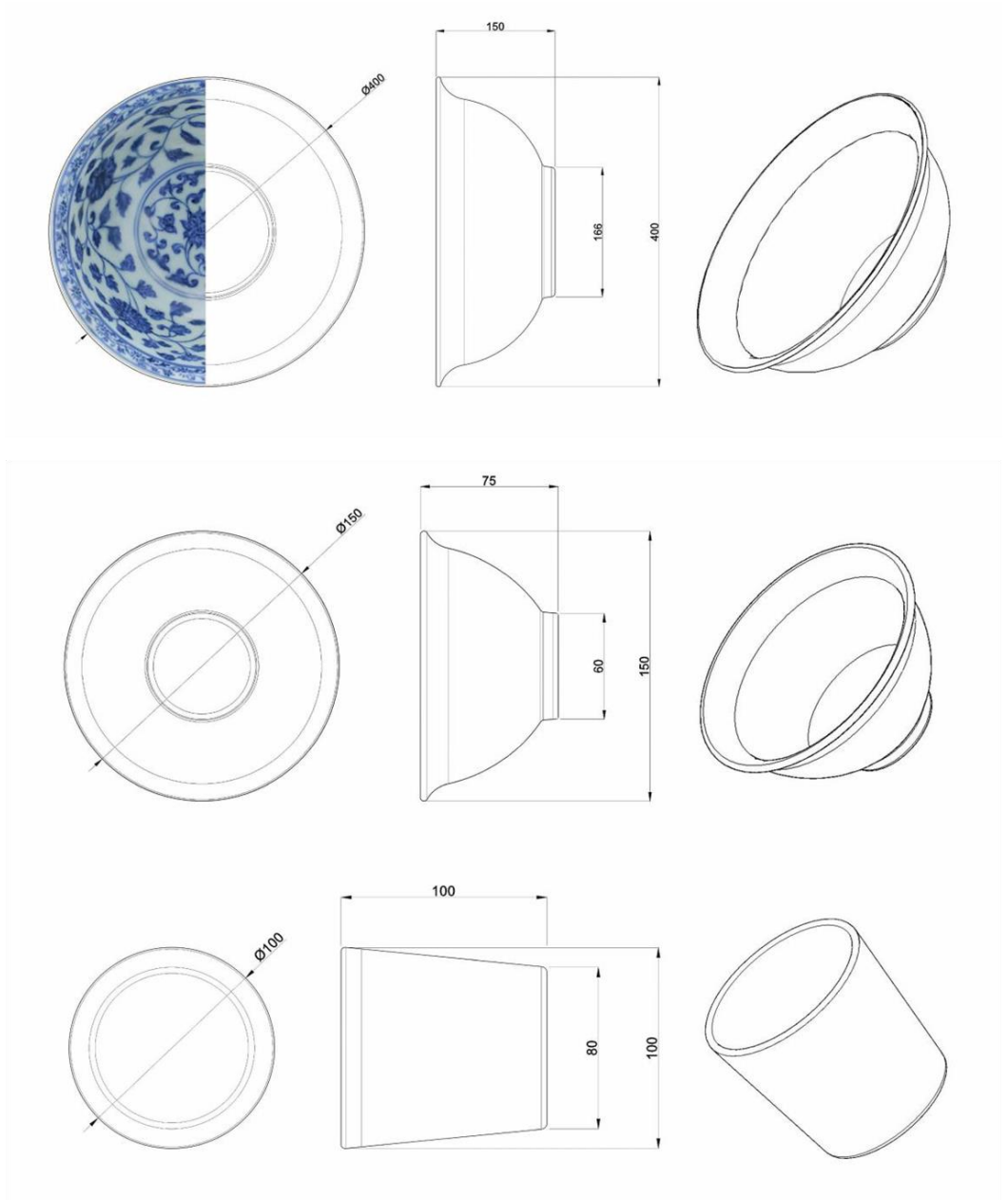


Fig. A2.28

Dimensioned drawings of the selected objects.
Enlarged drawings on following pages.

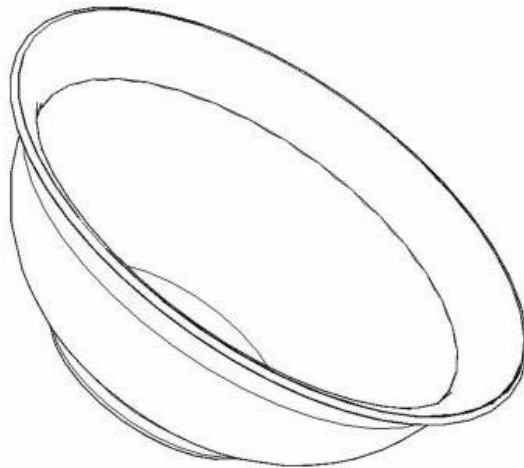
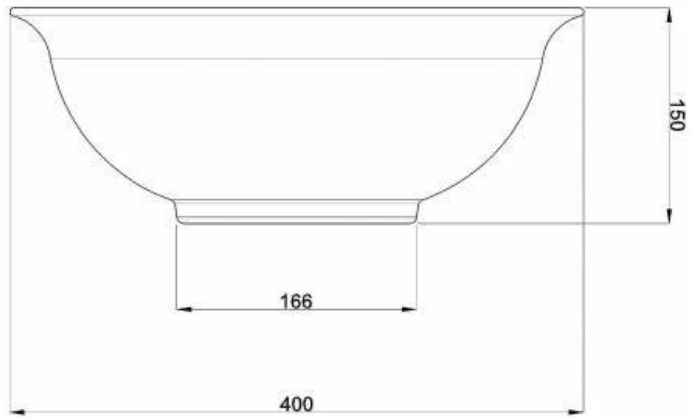


Fig. A2.29
The Porcelain Ming Bowl.

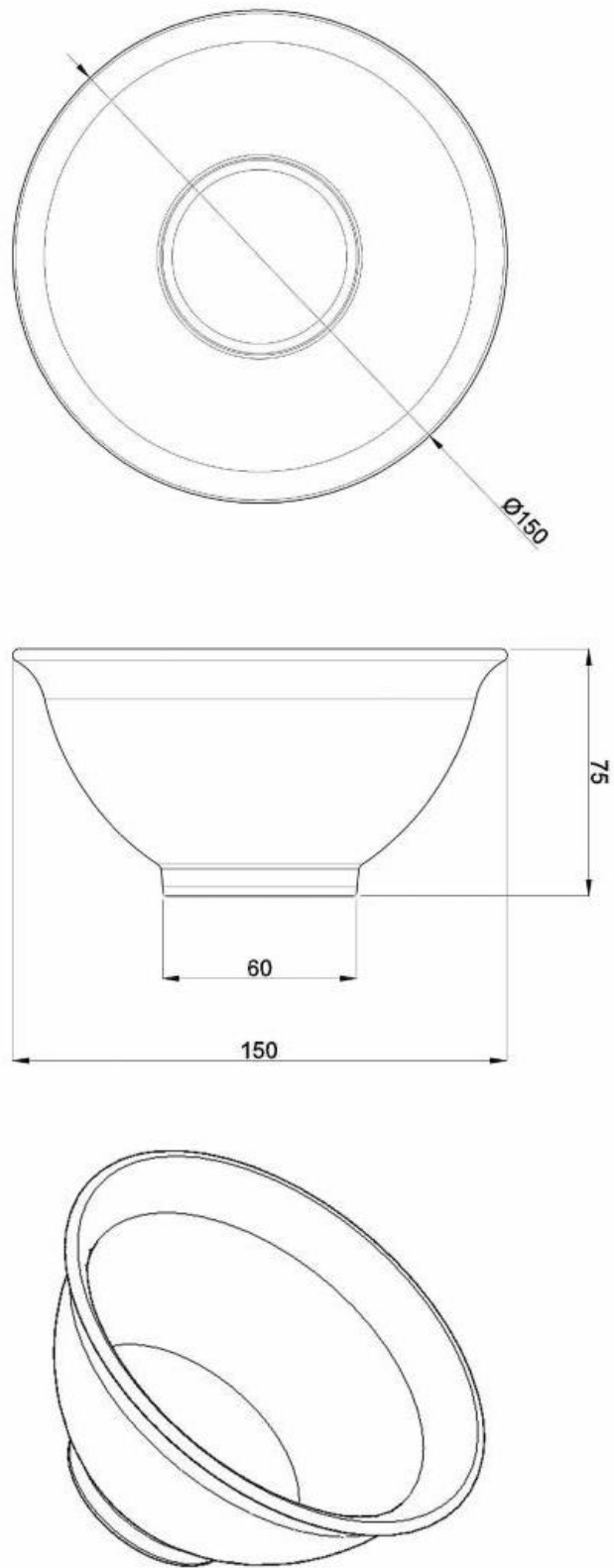


Fig. A2.30
The Silver Wine Cup.

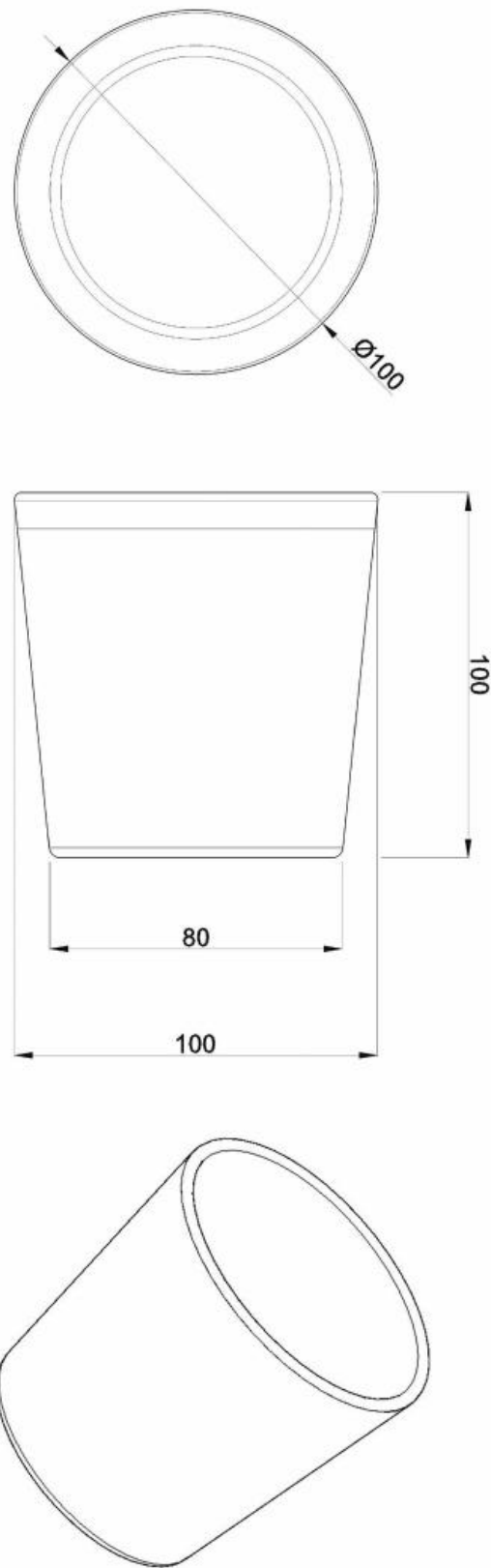


Fig. A2.31
The Wheel-cut Murano Glass Beaker.



Fig. A2.32 a, b & c

- a) *The Feast of the Gods* with selected objects removed.
- b) Detail of removed objects (shown in black).
- c) The removed objects before reconstruction.

The Perception of an Object



Mapping the Perception of an Object: Art or Equipment?

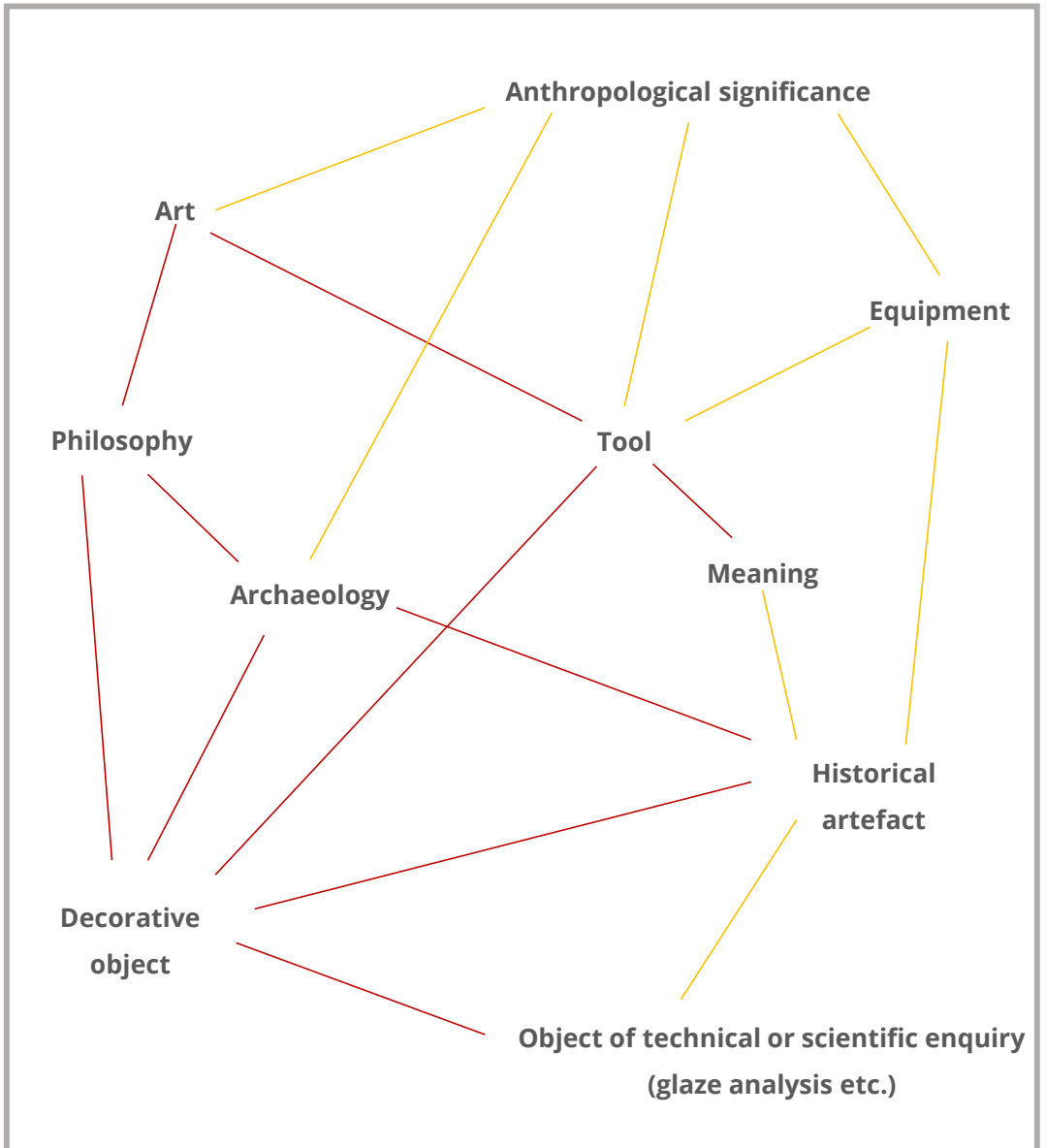


Fig. A2.33

Map of possible categories and relationships between perceived contexts.

The Perception of an Object: Summary

As the viewer moves through the exhibition, a dynamic relationship is developed between the painting, the objects within the painting, the viewer and the exhibition context (Fig. A2.33). By directing and controlling the journey of the viewer through the four sections of the exhibition, specific responses may be engendered within the viewer.

There is a potential irony in controlling the journey of the viewer so carefully in order to allow them to experience the objects without 'presuppositions'. By being so prescriptive, it could perhaps be argued that the presuppositions of the viewer are simply being exchanged for those of my own, this, of course, is not the case. The carefully planned sequential experience of the exhibition creates within the viewer specific responses that combine and build according to that sequence. These include in order of experience: Interest, curiosity, confusion, uncertainty, openness, receptivity, realisation, anticipation, comprehension, delight, and exhilaration.

At the end of the exhibition, the viewer is returned to the original starting point where they again encounter *The Feast of the Gods*. The response of the viewer to this second encounter with the painting will have been transformed as a result of their journey through the exhibition. If their journey had followed a haphazard or arbitrary and non-sequential progression, the response would have been either considerably diminished or completely invalidated.

Glossary of Key Terms

Definitions not attributed are my own work.

Act

An act of consciousness, a conscious experience (Moran 2000).

Bracketing

The method or technique of turning our attention from the objects of our consciousness to our consciousness of those objects, thereby engaging in phenomenological reflection, Husserl's proposed method for the practice of phenomenology, also called epoché (Woodruff-Smith 2007).

Content

The content of an act of consciousness, that is 'what' I experience as it is experienced or intended, an act's real content, or noesis, is a temporal part (moment) of the act, whereas an act's ideal content, or noema, is an ideal, nontemporal sense carried in the act by the noesis (Woodruff-Smith 2007).

Context

The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood (OED).

Curation

The act of selection and arranging (but also refining, reducing, displaying, simplifying, presenting and explaining) through the application of expert knowledge.

Design Phenomenology

A new emerging discourse on how design objects relate to experience. (Folkmann 2015).

Dasein

A being that is capable of comprehending physical, mental and ideal facts about its own Being.

'(Being-in) is the formal existential expression of the being of Dasein which has the essential constitution of being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 2010).

Epoché

To enact the epoché is to 'suspend' or 'put out of play' the natural attitude, our naive assurance that the world and its objects exists. It is accordingly a modification in our attitude toward the world: instead of positing that the world exists, or that it does not exist, one is to abstain from taking a position on such questions. Instead of taking the world as something that is (or is not), we regard it as 'only something that claims being'.

The epoché is part of a larger movement called the phenomenological or transcendental reduction. Here one reduces one's descriptions to what is immanent to the transcendental ego and its acts leaving aside all descriptions and explanations that come from everyday life, the positive sciences, and our historical/cultural surrounding (Levine 2010).

Equipment

In our everyday existence, we encounter equipment of numerous sorts for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement, etc. Heidegger defines equipment as, essentially, 'something in-order-to', only becoming truly visible as equipment through its use (Munday 2009).

Hermeneutic

That which explains or interprets.

Intentionality

The directedness of consciousness toward an object, an act of consciousness is a consciousness of something, and in that sense it is intentional (Woodruff-Smith 2007).

A property, typically attributed to mental states, whereby those states are directed toward or about something (Golob 2021).

Natural Attitude

Our normal state of being-in-the-world, our accepted framework of reference.

Object-Oriented Ontology

A philosophy committed to the autonomous existence of objects apart from their various relations (Harman 2019).

Ontology

The philosophical study of existence, of being, of what is there or what there is.

Palimpsest

Something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form.

Phenomenology

The theory or study of consciousness as lived or experienced from the first-person perspective (Woodruff-Smith).

The description of things just as they are, in the manner in which they appear (Moran 2000).

Phenomenological research employs a qualitative method that seeks to understand the lived meaning of events or phenomena which people experience in particular situations (Moss and Keen 1989).

Phenomenological Reduction

The Phenomenological Reduction (the reduction) is, by way of introduction, a rigorous two-part technique (the Epoché - Greek for 'abstention' - and the Reduction proper) which directs an individual towards a way of experiencing the world through the clarity of astonishment, thereby liberating the individual from all previously held convictions and perceptions.

Referential Totality

'Referential' because one element refers to another, and 'Totality' because it occurs fundamentally as a whole from which one then accesses or makes sense of the parts, not the other way around. E.g. the screwdriver makes no sense without a screw, without something to be screwed in etc.

Transcendental

Concerned with the theory and knowledge of Being.

World

The various, increasingly comprehensive equipmental contexts, along with the equipment they make possible, are situated within, and thus made possible by, the all-encompassing equipmental whole. This overarching set of references wherein all available entities have their defining equipmental roles is what Heidegger calls 'World' (Tanzer 2021).

Terminologically 'worldly' means a kind of being of Dasein, never a kind of something objectively present 'in' the world. We shall call the latter something 'belonging' to the world or 'innerworldly' (Heidegger 1996).

For example: A tool is only ready-to-hand (functional) when it fits into a pre-existing network of expectation, practice and function, in other words, the 'world' of the hammer.

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