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VOLUME XVIII
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Brianna Harlan, Detail from *Black Love Blooms*, 2020, multi-city public art project (see page 311).

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The Date of the *Allegory of Mercy* at the Misericordia in Florence...Again: Some Clarifications Regarding the Historical Setting

William R. Levin



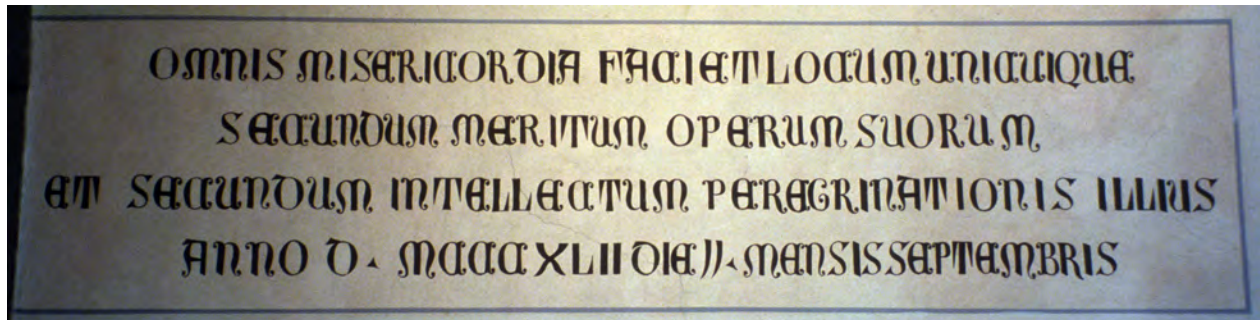
Not long ago, I came upon an article offering several arguments, grounded in close visual inspection, solid research, and historical context, for challenging an aspect of previous scholarship on a late-medieval artwork of

capital importance—namely, its date of execution. Initially, while those arguments might have seemed compelling, upon deeper reflection, they emerge as insufficiently persuasive to alter prevailing opinion. This rebuttal to that article endeavors to set the record straight

Figure 1. Former Headquarters of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia (now the Museo del Bigallo), Florence, 13th-18th centuries. Photo: William R. Levin.



Figure 2. Circle of Bernardo Daddi (ca. 1290-1348), *Allegory of Mercy*, fresco, Museo del Bigallo (former headquarters of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia, Sala dell'Udienza), Florence, 1342. Photo: Museo del Bigallo / HIP / Art Resource, NY.



regarding the frescoed *Allegory of Mercy*, painted by an artist in the circle of Bernardo Daddi, a leading fourteenth-century Florentine master who probably learned his trade from the great Giotto. A second purpose of this study is to offer a template of sorts—guidelines—for why, how, and in what manner one might respond to scholarship that poses new or revised interpretations for works of art that at first appear credible but ultimately prove unconvincing.

The Disputed Date in Earlier Literature

The *Allegory of Mercy*, painstakingly restored from 2012 to 2014, adorns one wall of a ground-floor chamber inside what is now the Museo del Bigallo in Florence, but which originally was the headquarters of the Compagnia di Santa Maria della Misericordia—the Company, or Confraternity, of Saint Mary of Mercy (figs. 1 and 2).¹ Probably founded during the thirteenth century, the Misericordia was a major provider of charitable assistance to individuals affiliated with it and to others in need, a role that continues today in the ambulance service it offers, and in its staffing of medical clinics dispersed throughout the city. Given the building’s central location—across the street from the renowned

baptistry of Florence and diagonally opposite the city’s cathedral and bell tower—the *Allegory* was a fully public work of art until 1777, when, alongside other alterations, a new façade sealed off the edifice’s previously open entryway. Continuously visible from the street up until this point, the fresco thus reminded and instructed not only confraternity members gathered within, but also passers-by outside, about the importance of charity toward others in need, of performing the works of mercy enunciated by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46, as essential to earning one’s place in Heaven through God’s grace.

That spiritually reciprocal arrangement informs the *Allegory*, dominated by a monumental figure labeled “Misericordia Dom[ini]” on her miter, personifying the Lord’s Mercy. Apposite biblical passages inscribed in Latin clarify that message, some of them paired with miniature representations of the works of mercy occupying eight of the roundels that cascade down the front of her mantle. She receives the homage of variously attired male and female supplicants praying at her sides, embodying Florentines from all sectors of society seeking and benefiting from divine favor, among whom are included perhaps persons affiliated with the Misericordia

Figure 3. Circle of Bernardo Daddi (ca. 1290-1348), Inscription below *Allegory of Mercy*, fresco, Museo del Bigallo (former headquarters of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia, Sala dell’Udienza), Florence, 1342. Photo: William R. Levin.

Confraternity who act on their neighbors’ behalf. The protagonist of the fresco hovers protectively over a compressed view of Florence with recognizable landmarks of the late-medieval metropolis. It is one of the earliest surviving semi-realistic cityscapes in Western art. Written on its encircling wall are the words “Civitas Florenti[a]e”—the Commonwealth, or Citizenry, of Florence. In this way, the fresco also expresses another motive for philanthropic action, clearly related to the first but less personal and more fully grounded in the temporal world: to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the entire community.

I have discussed at length the *Allegory of Mercy* and its societal ramifications in several studies beginning in 1983, joined subsequently by other scholars whose writings have enhanced our understanding of the fresco.² One of the issues addressed has been the matter of its date.³ Below the cityscape is a repainted four-line Latin inscription with another biblical verse that, utilizing Roman numerals, concludes with the date 2 September 1342, presumably marking the



Figure 4, above. Circle of Bernardo Daddi (ca. 1290-1348), *Allegory of Mercy* (detail: cityscape), fresco, Museo del Bigallo (former headquarters of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia, Sala dell'Udienza), Florence, 1342. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 5, left. Circle of Bernardo Daddi (ca. 1290-1348), *Allegory of Mercy* (detail: cityscape, featuring Palazzo Vecchio and fortification-wall portal), fresco, Museo del Bigallo (former headquarters of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia, Sala dell'Udienza), Florence, 1342. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

fresco's year of execution (fig. 3).⁴ Yet this date, first cited by Stefano Rosselli in his 1657 register of Florentine tombs and burial markers, anticipates by a decade that of a contradictory report appearing in Ferdinando Leopoldo Del Migliore's 1684 documentary history of Florentine buildings, recording the date as 1352. In 1779, two years after the above-mentioned restructuring project, historian Placido Landini published the fresco's four-line inscription (with minor errors), and he followed Del Migliore, restating the 1352 date. Subsequently, historians from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, beginning with the meticulous Luigi Passerini in 1853, saw and noted the year written on the wall as 1342 yet agreed with Landini's reading—i.e., 1352—speculating that the earlier date resulted from an inaccurate, albeit unrecorded, restoration of the inscription. Certain architectural historians, ignoring implications to the contrary of a seventeenth-century summary of a lost Misericordia document published early in the twentieth century, likewise concurred.⁵

In 1969, however, architectural historian Howard Saalman brought that document to bear in a more discerning manner, affirming that 1342 could have been the year that the *Allegory of Mercy* was painted. Saalman's interpretation of the text reinforced his previous observations regarding the appearance of buildings in the fresco's urban panorama whose construction histories were certain.⁶ Notably, the incomplete cathedral façade and bell tower allowed him to determine that the cityscape shows Florence as it was in the early 1340s (fig. 4).

Agreeing with Saalman's analysis, in 1977, art historian Hanna Kiel's comments on the *Allegory* further supported 1342 as the correct date. She cited earlier research indicating that the long, full robes worn by supplicants flanking the central figure in the painting were popular in Florence prior to the regime, lasting from August 1342 to August 1343, of a certain Walter of Brienne and whose retainers, dependents of the House of Anjou with its close ties to the French monarchy, introduced garments shorter and tighter in cut. Only then—immediately, it seems—did this new style, not in evidence in the painting, begin to supplant the earlier fashion among Florentines.⁷ Kiel also reproduced an engraving of the *Allegory* from 1762 that includes the inscription below it, an image that Landini may have consulted before publishing his transcription. Unlike Landini's 1779 rendition of the text, the engraving presents the date in accord with the actual inscription, as 1342. More recent authors have endorsed the opinion of Saalman and Kiel, agreeing on 1342 as the year of execution for the fresco.⁸

Reconsidering the *Allegory's* Date: Point and Counterpoint

That agreement held until the publication in 2015 of the article alluded to at the beginning of this essay, in which attentive researcher Vittoria Camelliti resurrected the 1352 date for the painting, providing four sensibly posed but eminently debatable arguments.⁹ Focusing mostly on well-chosen details within the *Allegory of Mercy*, her

essay is imbued with reason and logic throughout, but the facts deployed in every case call for additional analysis, each leading to an alternative conclusion. It is convenient, here, to begin with her third point, relating to clothing styles of the era.¹⁰ Chronicler Giovanni Villani (ca. 1276-1348) is the textual source of information on the change in style noted by Kiel, particularly among young Florentines, in the wake of the controversial yearlong, and ultimately despised, administration of Walter of Brienne (ca. 1304-1356). Raised at the court of the House of Anjou in its capital at Naples and married into the Angevin royal family, Brienne was a French nobleman who claimed Duke of Athens as his title for dynastic reasons pertaining to his own family. He came to Florence by invitation in 1342 to arrest the chaos wracking Tuscan state finances in that era, largely the result of the government's military adventurism, subsidies furnished to its alliance partners, and lax policies on taxation and collection of fines.

Camelliti averred that the modest, loose-fitting robes seen in the *Allegory of Mercy*, traditional in style and favored by Villani, suit the fresco's solemnly religious and moralizing content (fig. 2). Indeed, while acknowledging that a newer, more opulent style, including ostentatious elements decried by Villani, emerged with regularity in Florentine art only in the mid-1350s, Camelliti emphasized that when such attire occasionally did appear earlier, during the 1340s and early 1350s, it seemingly possessed negative connotations that in the *Allegory* would have been inappropriate. As

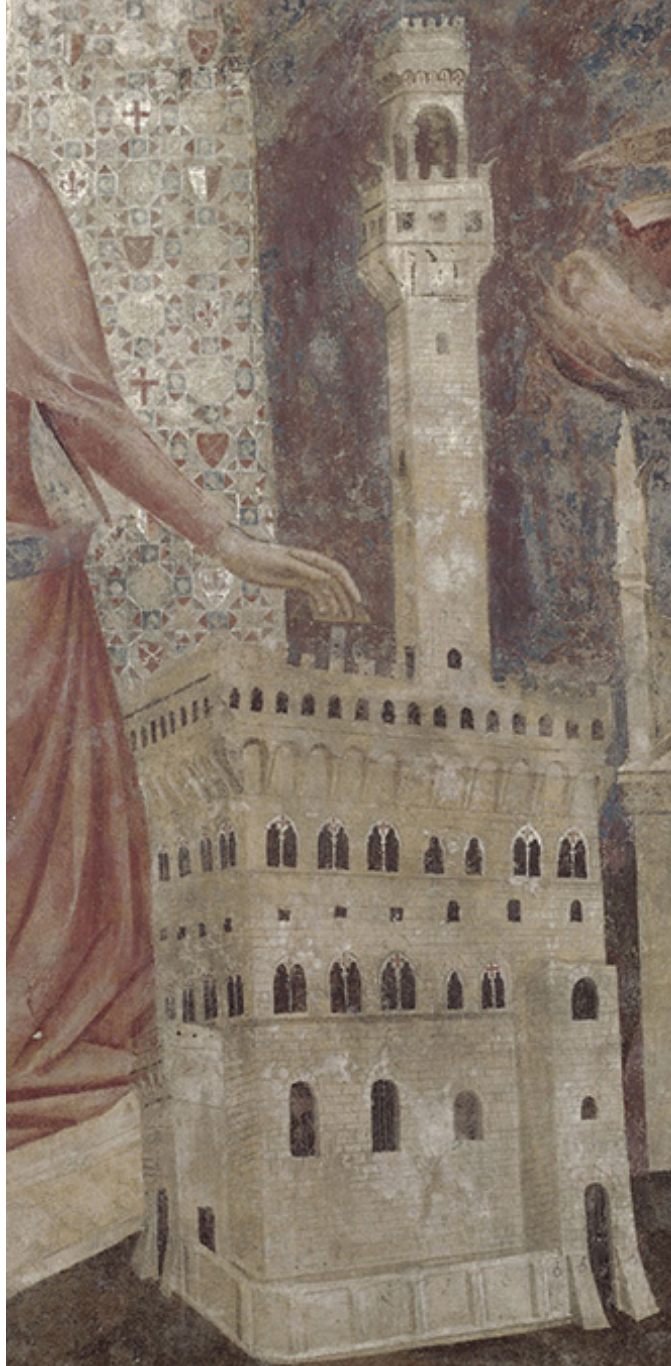
for the few tentatively innovative clothing details and ornate decorative patterns that do occur in the fresco, none of them especially conspicuous, she noted their presence in Tuscan art already in the second half of the 1330s, in nearby Siena and Poppi, and then in Pisa. Thus, whereas her remarks concerning dress may be sound in themselves, none of them precludes the possibility of dating the fresco prior to 1352.

A second argument by Camelliti favoring 1352 as the date for the *Allegory of Mercy* addressed a detail within the cityscape: the bell suspended inside the opening atop the tower of Palazzo Vecchio, the principal seat of the Florentine government designed in 1299 by Arnolfo di Cambio (figs. 4 and 5).¹¹ Villani and, later in the century, the chronicler Marchionne di Coppo Stefani (1336-1385), wrote that the actual bell was hoisted into place in December 1344, ostensibly bolstering Camelliti's dating. Previously, it had hung below, among the crenellations enclosing the rooftop terrace of the building where, upon its relocation, a second bell intended as a municipal fire alarm, transferred from the Castello di Vernia in the countryside, quickly replaced it. A covering of some sort shielded both bells in their turn, erected or restored in 1332 according to a contemporary source referred to by Camelliti, and indeed, an open, domical canopy left of center at terrace-level protecting the second (alarm) bell is visible, now barely so, in the *Allegory*. Admittedly, the fresco has suffered here, yet Camelliti was oddly silent regarding this canopy and, it seems, the two people standing before it.



Figure 6, left. Circle of Andrea Orcagna (ca. 1308-1368), *Expulsion of the Duke of Athens*, fresco, Palazzo Vecchio (from the Stinche Prison), Florence, ca. 1345. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Figure 7, below. Circle of Andrea Orcagna (ca. 1308-1368), *Expulsion of the Duke of Athens* (detail: Palazzo Vecchio and drapery), fresco, Palazzo Vecchio (from the Stinche Prison), Florence, ca. 1345. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.



Certainly, construction of Palazzo Vecchio's tower projected by Arnolfo di Cambio proceeded with the idea of accommodating a bell at its summit. Camelliti cited documents of 1304 and 1318 establishing that the first bell formerly had been atop the older "Torre della Vacca," the Foraboschi family tower whose substructure Arnolfo incorporated into his loftier construction. Possibly, Camelliti observed, extrapolating from another passage in Villani's chronicle, that bell was lowered to the terrace in 1322 to allow Arnolfo's design to advance. There it remained until December 1344, when Arnolfo's tower for Palazzo Vecchio was finished and the bell could return to the elevated position that it had once occupied, though now at a height even farther off the ground. Camelliti's facts are correct yet lend themselves to a different interpretation. With a bell atop the tower of Palazzo Vecchio a foregone conclusion, the bell pictured there in the *Allegory of Mercy* was likely included at the time of the fresco's execution—presumably, that is, in

1342—in anticipation of the actual bell’s relocation to the tower in late 1344. Alternatively, that detail may be an addition painted *a secco* after completion of the fresco in 1342 once the first bell and, likewise, the second bell beneath the canopy at terrace-level, were in place two years and three months later.¹²

Camelliti’s claim concerning the bell in the tower and its implications for the date of the Misericordia fresco went further, introducing into her discussion a well-known fragmentary painting emanating from the circle of Andrea Orcagna, a younger contemporary of Bernardo Daddi. Though silent regarding the domical canopy in the *Allegory*, in the case of the Orcagnesque *Expulsion of the Duke of Athens*, she posited that the wooden hut with a broad sloping roof rising above the terrace-level battlements of Palazzo Vecchio represents the shelter mentioned in 1332 that, for perhaps more than two decades, ca. 1322-44, covered the first bell (figs. 6 and 7). Like the canopy in the *Allegory of Mercy*, this structure appears to the left of the axis of the building, as pictured in the *Expulsion*, its roof partially obscured by the outstretched left hand of the enthroned figure of Saint Anne. Having perceived no bell in the tower of the building, Camelliti dated this fresco, originally located in Florence’s infamous Stinche Prison, and now lodged in Palazzo Vecchio itself, to 1343-44—prior, that is, to December 1344.

Conceivably, her chronology may be correct, with the (unmentioned) canopy pictured in the Misericordia painting replacing the hut with pitched roof seen in the *Expulsion* in or soon after December 1344, when

the second bell was substituted for the first. Yet reversing that chronology, it is equally possible that, dating the *Allegory* instead to 1342, the *Expulsion*’s hut replaced the *Allegory*’s domical canopy, likewise in December 1344. Dating the *Expulsion* slightly later, to ca. 1345, as recently proposed by art historian George Bent, increases the plausibility of the latter interpretation, an explanation further enhanced by the fact that, disputing Camelliti’s assertion, there does appear to be, or to have been, something in the tower opening in the *Expulsion*.¹³ Most likely, it is, or was, a bell, although this remains uncertain due to damage to the fresco in that spot.

In dating the *Allegory of Mercy* to 1352, Camelliti’s initial point began by calling attention to the four tiny heraldic shields on the fortification-wall portal of the cityscape that she correctly identified, if a bit too succinctly (figs. 4 and 5).¹⁴ Left to right, they symbolize: the Florentine people by a red cross on a silver field; Florence itself guided by the Guelph Party as a red lily—the city’s famous *giglio*, though actually a flamboyantly blooming iris, *giaggiolo* in Italian—silhouetted against a silver ground; the Guelph-aligned Church and papacy as two silver keys crossed on a red field; and the long-ago-unified communities of Florence and Fiesole by red and silver fields divided vertically. While neglecting the Guelph political component in this listing, Camelliti did note the presence of the same four *scudi* on the drapery behind the enthroned Saint Anne in the *Expulsion of the Duke of Athens* (figs. 6 and 7). In the case of both works, she remarked

on the lack of a crest signifying the House of Anjou. This omission, she asserted, furnished proof that the *Allegory* must postdate the banishment from Florence of Walter of Brienne—metaphorically visualized in the *Expulsion*—in the summer of 1343 after a year of despotic rule, and consequently as evidence of an ostensible rupture with the city’s by-then traditional south-Italian ally in Angevin Naples, the sovereign polity that Brienne represented. Again, Camelliti’s discussion made no mention of that dynasty’s Guelph partisanship, whose other major players were the Church and Florence itself.

To validate her conclusion, however, the scholar cited the nine shields decorating a Florentine gateway pictured in one illumination of the celebrated Biadaiolo Manuscript, preserved in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, and generally dated by historians to the early 1330s, when the Florentine-Angevin alliance was indisputably intact (fig. 8). There, amid differing numbers of three of the four devices seen in the *Allegory of Mercy*, a trio of coats of arms identified with the House of Anjou also appears. Two of these display a single gold *fleur-de-lys* (i.e., a lily, simpler in profile than the Florentine *giglio*) on a blue field, symbolizing the Capetian royal house of France from which the House of Anjou—a cadet line—descended. The largest one bears several *fleurs-de-lys*, with a three-pronged red “rake” label (*rastrello* in Italian) added along its upper edge. This latter feature, specific to the Angevins, is what differentiates their heraldry from that of their “senior” relatives within the House of Capet. Yet Camelliti failed to



Figure 8, left. Anonymous miniaturist, *Food Distribution in Time of Famine*, Libro del Biadaio, fol. 58, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, ca. 1330-35. Height: 385 mm. (15.15 in.); width: 270 mm. (10.62 in.). Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Figure 9, below. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, western façade and bell tower, 1299-1344. Photo: William R. Levin.



explain the curious absence, in the miniature, of the fourth *scudo* found in the Misericordia fresco, the papal crest, denoting a principal—and truly the pivotal—member of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Guelph alliance in Italy, that is, the Church. Conceivably, simply the limited space available for such emblems may have determined which ones to introduce into any given situation, including the *Allegory*, alongside a certain lack of consistency in the choice and number of which insignia germane to that setting “should” be present. Or perhaps the Misericordia Company wished to pare the focus, stressing the relevance of the fresco—the principal visual expression of the group’s charitable mission—to Florence proper, the community that it served. Here again, too, it is possible that the four



shields in the *Allegory*, or any one of them, are additions or modifications made *a secco* sometime following completion of the fresco.³⁵

More pointedly belying Camelliti's conclusion in this regard, the main (western) façade of the actual Palazzo Vecchio features a parade of twenty escutcheons within squares beneath the protruding arches, or machicolations, supporting the

aforementioned terrace, all painted in 1343 just after the fall of Brienne, and restored in 1792. Nine crests line up left to right, then repeat in the same order, and end with the opening pair appearing a third time (figs. 9 and 10). The first four emblems are the same, in slightly different sequence, as those in the *Allegory*'s cityscape. Three others within each succession of

Figure 10. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, detail of upper western façade displaying coats of arms, 1343. Photo: William R. Levin.

the nine shields further proclaim Florence's Guelph sympathies while announcing its alliance with the House of Anjou. They are as follows: the sixth shows a red eagle clutching a green dragon on a silver ground, with a gold (originally red?) lily

above its beak; the eighth presents gold *fleurs-de-lys* scattered on a blue field, with a four-pronged red “rake” label across the top; and the ninth displays black (originally red?) and gold horizontal stripes, separated vertically from a blue field sprinkled with gold *fleurs-de-lys*. Specifically, the sixth and eighth blazons signal the Guelph partisanship and French lineage, respectively, of King Charles I of Naples (r. 1266-1285), the Count of Anjou and younger brother of the sainted King Louis IX of France who established Angevin rule in the south of Italy. The ninth represents King Robert the Wise (r. 1309-1343), Charles’s grandson, indicating his paternal French roots and the Hungarian origin of his mother.¹⁶ Both Charles I and Robert temporarily held nominal positions of power in Florence. The gold-on-blue *fleur-de-lys* pattern with a four-pronged red “rake” label also fills the arches of Palazzo Vecchio above all twenty devices.

Clearly, Brienne’s ouster immediately preceding these decorations did not harm the Florentine-Angevin partnership any more than did the earlier unpopularity of both Charles and Robert—and then of Robert’s son Charles, Duke of Calabria, who likewise held office in the city—that eventually ended their own respective appointments to positions of authority in Florence.¹⁷ Indeed, while alluding to certain political aspects of that bond, historian David Abulafia recounted in some detail its ongoing, far-reaching economic aspects. The Kingdom of Naples provided Florentine banker-merchants with much-needed wheat, barley, beans, oil, wine, livestock, and a



Figure 11. Jacopo di Cione (ca. 1325-ca. 1399), *Heraldic Schematization of the Corporate Culture of Florence*, fresco, Palace of the Guild of Judges and Notaries, Sala dell’Udienza, Florence, 1366-68. Photo: © Ghigo G. Roli / Art Resource, NY.

source of leather, conceding to them tax benefits, and allowing Florentines to dominate southern export markets for those products to other regions as well. The Angevin lords also granted their Florentine associates high administrative offices and land ownership. In return, Florentines tendered monetary loans to the House of Anjou to conduct its various military ventures and to fund certain cultural initiatives, finding in the south a sizeable market for their indispensable, lucrative industry in finished woolen cloth.¹⁸

Subsequently there were strains in the relationship, with responsibility falling on both parties. Yet several other works of art from the later fourteenth century utilizing heraldry confirm the steadiness and continuity of the Florentine-Angevin connection. In 1366-68, Jacopo di Cione, a younger

brother of Andrea Orcagna, painted a diagram of concentric circles symbolizing Florence’s corporate culture on the ceiling of the audience chamber in the guildhall of Judges and Notaries (*Arte dei Giudici e Notai*), one of the city’s seven major guilds (fig. 11).¹⁹ Within the innermost circle, the eagle clutching a dragon and the Florentine lily reappear, carrying Angevin and Guelph connotations, complemented by the cross of the Florentine people and the bipartite shield of Florence and Fiesole. Some years later, this design resurfaced in a now-detached ceiling fresco originally at the



Figure 12. Jacopo di Cione (ca. 1325-ca. 1399), with Simone di Lapo and Niccolaus (Niccolò di Tommaso?), *Coronation of the Virgin* (*Zecca Coronation*), tempera and gold leaf on panel, Galleria dell'Accademia di Belle Arti, Florence, 1372-73. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

much-refurbished residence of the influential Silk Guild (*Arte della Seta*), or possibly at that of the Physicians and Pharmacists Guild (*Arte dei Medici e Speziali*), both also among Florence's seven major trade associations.²⁰ In the latter case, however, allusions to the alliance partners are more direct, with the added presence of the crossed keys of the Church and papacy at the very center, and with the surrounding blue ceiling strewn with gold *fleurs-de-lys*, here, ingeniously embellished by a multipronged red "rake" encircling the entire diagram at its outer edge to denote the House of Anjou. By extension, the Guelph Party takes its place here, too.

The Florentine Mint's *Coronation of the Virgin Altarpiece*, the so-called *Zecca Coronation*, completed in 1373 by the same Jacopo di Cione more than a year after its commission to and probable design by two other painters, offers a further example (fig. 12). Executed for the offices of one of the city's most important institutions, the base of this panel presents a series of nine escutcheons pertaining to the communal power structure, rather than the customary predella of saintly narrative scenes. Left to right, the five in the center include the Florentine Guelph red lily, the Angevin gold-on-blue *fleur-de-lys* pattern with a four-pronged red "rake" label, the crossed silver

keys of the Church and papacy, the amalgamated arms of the extended House of Anjou, and the Guelph red eagle clutching a green dragon.²¹

A final such commission of the fourteenth century signaled the stability of the alliance more publicly than any since the painted crests of Palazzo Vecchio nearly a half-century earlier. In 1390, the office of the Opera del Duomo—the entity that oversaw construction and upkeep of the cathedral of Florence, located across the street from it to the northeast—ordered a half-dozen large, evenly spaced stone shields that are still present along the building’s angled façade above the second-floor windows (fig. 13). The Opera carried on with its work under the patronage of the Guild of Woolen Cloth Manufacturers (*Arte della Lana*), another of the seven major trade groups of Florence. All six devices, surely once brightly painted, are among the nine *scudi* emblazoned on Palazzo Vecchio. Four of them trumpet the city’s bond with the Angevin dynasts in Naples as well as their mutual attachments to the Church and the Guelph cause: namely, the eagle clutching a dragon, the crossed keys, the scattered *fleurs-de-lys* with a three-pronged “rake” motif, and the Florentine lily (fig. 14).²²

Like the other such displays of the era, these emblems on the former headquarters of the Opera del Duomo indicate that the unfortunate but fleeting Brienne episode of 1342-43 did not interrupt, let alone destroy, the traditional Florentine-Angevin rapport. Rather, the relationship continued to manifest through heraldic means, on commission by

the communal government and by some of the city’s most prominent and formidable institutions, thereby providing another basis for refuting Camelliti’s 1352 date for the *Allegory of Mercy*. Whatever the reason for the nonappearance therein of an Angevin coat of arms—spatial limitations, the vagaries of choice, a localized target audience, after-the-fact alterations, or something else—its absence from that fresco’s cityscape almost certainly lacked the derogatory intent she assigned to it.

To be sure, within the persistently unstable atmosphere of Italian power politics of that era, the reciprocally advantageous ties linking Florence and Angevin Naples were wavering by the end of the fourteenth century. The relationship declined for compounded internal and external reasons, obstacles both financial and political affecting each party in tandem with problems simultaneously weighing upon France and a schism-weakened papacy, time-honored Guelph allies of the Tuscan metropolis and the southern kingdom. With its historical basis shaken, the liaison reached a low point early in the next century when the insatiably ambitious Ladislaus, then occupying the Neapolitan throne as leader of an ascendant branch of the House of Anjou (r. 1386-1414), attempted to subdue Florence, Rome, and all of central Italy.²³ Yet in 1416, in the aftermath of Ladislaus’s sudden death ending the threat, the Florentine government made a striking decision, signifying that it was eager to heal the uncharacteristic breach in its connection to Naples. Complementing alterations made to Donatello’s early marble statue of David, transforming the biblical hero

from a prophet into the victor over an evil Goliath, and the sculpture’s subsequent transport from a cathedral workshop to a second-floor council chamber in Palazzo Vecchio, lilies on a blue field (“*gigli nel campo azurro*”) were painted on the wall behind it.²⁴ The intention behind the refurbishment and new placement of the marble was unquestionably political: to symbolize Florentine steadfastness and its preservation of freedom from such would-be oppressors as Ladislaus. Just as surely, the intention behind the backdrop provided for the figure must have been to signal the restoration of the Florentine-Angevin alliance after its momentary rift.

That said, however, the general instability triggered by Ladislaus’s aspirations, far more than the temporary enmity between Florence and Naples that he had engendered, proved a harbinger of things to come, eventually ensnaring all of Italy. Dynastic rivalries and an unruly nobility in Angevin Naples, along with continuing uncertainties in post-schism papal Rome, prevented both from playing significant roles in the volatile Italian political equation prior to the midpoint of the fifteenth century. Then, throughout the second half of that century, beleaguered by mostly petty rivalries and competing commercial interests among all five of its principal states—once more including Naples and Rome, joining Florence, Venice, and Milan—the peninsula suffered at the hands of an ever-changing series of coalitions, power blocs that nonetheless saw Florence and Naples mostly in unison while opposing one another only intermittently. Historical



Figure 13, top. Former Offices of the Opera del Duomo, Piazza del Duomo, Florence, 1388ff. Photo: William R. Levin.

Figure 14. Former Offices of the Opera del Duomo, Piazza del Duomo, Florence, 1388ff., detail of upper façade displaying third and fourth coats of arms (of six total, read left to right), signifying the papacy and the House of Anjou, 1390. Photo: William R. Levin.

developments corroborated by heraldic evidence from that era reveal that the ancient alliance retained its relevance and value for both, a resilient pairing that survived the transformation in leadership of Tuscany effected by Cosimo de' Medici in 1434, the Aragonese takeover of the southern kingdom in 1442, and the waning significance of the Guelph cause as well as diminished authority of the Guelph Party everywhere.

An overview of the tense situation in Italy during the later fifteenth century would underscore—by way of its durability, and despite occasional differences and even short periods of conflict—the depth of the relationship linking Florence and Naples over the preceding two hundred years, since well before the mid-fourteenth-century creation of the *Allegory of Mercy*. Surprisingly, information in that regard is somewhat dispersed and not easy to come by. Yet even with a modicum of clarity in hand concerning political developments, such an account would extend chronologically beyond the period taken up in this study, well past events with direct bearing on the matter of the shields represented—and not represented—in the *Allegory*, and their immediate ramifications for dating the fresco. Readers may wish to consult the capsule description, provided in a postscript to this article, of the historical setting in Italy after 1450 emphasizing the constancy of the Florentine-Neapolitan connection, with an extended discussion of heraldic ornamentation inside Palazzo Vecchio testifying to it, and with concluding remarks on the retrospective implications of such

a decorative scheme for dating the *Allegory of Mercy* to 1342.

Turning back to the fourteenth century, Vittoria Camelliti further justified the 1352 date for the fresco by conjuring an event far more catastrophic than the 1343 rebellion against the overbearing Walter of Brienne, namely, the Black Death of 1348. In a city recently rocked by the specter of mass mortality, she held that the *Allegory of Mercy* expressed the Misericordia Confraternity's desire following the pandemic—regarded as the result of God's displeasure with humankind's evil ways—to promote peace and stability in Florence among the survivors through performance of the works of mercy, ultimately, the keys to salvation.²⁵ Though hardly incorrect, this viewpoint again minimizes, even ignores, a larger, often overlooked historical picture, in this case the city's own mounting troubles during the decades preceding the Black Death, as discussed at length by various scholars.²⁶ They have noted the bitter, enduring class frictions dividing the old aristocracy (*magnati*) and their wealthy bourgeois colleagues (*popolani grassi*), the artisan middle classes (*artigiani*), and the disenfranchised and restive proletariat (*popolo minuto*), observing, too, how the first group continued to commit violent crimes with impunity as they always had done. These socioeconomic antagonisms reflected long-festering contests for political power between the greater and lesser guilds (*arti maggiori, arti minori*), and found voice in the contempt of longtime city residents for immigrants from outlying villages and rural

areas, in turn echoing a general discord between urban and country populations over administrative and taxation policies. Governmental opposition to the wealth and traditional privileges—proprietary, jurisdictional, and inquisitorial—of an often-uncooperative local clergy was an equally constant theme.

Problems of an external nature did nothing to diminish these domestic woes. Fiercely resisting Florentine mercantile and political expansionism within Tuscany—so damaging financially, as intimated earlier—were the Ghibelline polities of Pisa, Lucca, and Milan, a fraught situation magnified by the memory of imperial invasions in 1312-13 and 1327-29. Aggravating matters, animosities lingered between the triumphant Black Guelph faction ruling Florence and the families of exiled White Guelphs who had found refuge in rival Ghibelline strongholds. The unremitting tensions that resulted sometimes devolved into open warfare and occasional defeat, exemplified by decisive Pisan victories over Florence in October 1341 and July 1342. Foreign mercenaries hired by Florence to fight its battles all too often transformed into aggressive marauders, a growing menace especially in rural districts. The normal costs of war augmented by the bribes demanded by those combatants-turned-brigands, plus the expenses incurred over many decades in building perhaps Europe's most imposing municipal fortification wall, were crushing. Exacerbating this problem—intensified during the 1330s by the flattening of a previously expanding economy—were continually escalating state revenue policies

emphasizing indirect taxes (*gabelle*) detrimental to persons least able to afford them, which proved stubbornly insufficient regardless. Meanwhile, wealthier Florentines, enriched by commerce, profited from earnings on investment in the public treasury at rates so high that half of the tax levies collected, supplemented by forced loans (*prestanze*), were required just to pay the interest.

Cash-flow difficulties continued to multiply. Since the thirteenth century, those same affluent banker-merchants of Florence had benefited greatly as financiers of the city's Guelph associates in Naples, the papacy, and an international array of high ecclesiastics, all seeking to forestall their common Ghibelline enemies, but as hinted above, such preferential relationships hinged on the Florentine regime's regular subsidies to those allies. With its debilitating level of indebtedness, however, in autumn 1340, spring 1341, and winter 1342, the government necessarily informed its coalition partners of its inability to contribute further. Paralleling this dilemma in the private sector, since the late 1200s, Florentine companies had bankrolled the Plantagenet monarchs of England in exchange for favored commercial status. But King Edward III's default on his realm's enormous debts in May 1339, at the outset of the Hundred Years' War, initiated a rapid, unparalleled succession of financial collapses that further undermined the Florentine economy, with suddenly insolvent banking houses unable to reimburse depositors, foreign and domestic. Add to these

systemic issues a litany of closely spaced natural disasters always threatening to repeat: devastating fires in 1331 and 1332; the Arno River flood of November 1333, carrying off some three hundred human lives as well as buildings, bridges, mills, livestock, and basic supplies; famines in 1328-29, 1339, and 1340 that necessitated slow, risky, and expensive importations of foodstuffs; and common diseases precipitated and/or worsened by poor sanitary conditions, including typhoid and tuberculosis, that crested in 1340 with what may have been an influenza epidemic.²⁷ The concurrence of these various tribulations—especially in the dozen years preceding and, then, on into the traumatic decade of the 1340s—is stunning.

Taking this longer and fuller view, the Black Death of 1348, while undeniably horrific, was in fact but one more in a series of largely unpredictable natural misfortunes that gripped Florence during these years, all transpiring against a broader background, long underway, of societal challenges owed squarely to human shortcomings. As such, history suggests that a date of 1342 for the *Allegory of Mercy*, with its message of hope for communal tranquility, steadiness, and security, and the possibility of salvation—recalling Vittoria Camelliti's understanding of the fresco—is entirely reasonable. Indeed, George Bent recognized this when noting the close correlation between the painting's inscribed date, September 2, 1342, and the mandate given to the desperate city's illusory savior, Walter of Brienne, named military commander-in-chief of

Florence on August 1, then *signore* initially for a one-year term on September 7, and finally its lifetime sire on the following day (fig. 3).²⁸ This glimpse at the destructive trends and calamitous events characterizing the early decades of the fourteenth century in Florentine history, therefore, leads to the same conclusion as do the preceding challenges to Camelliti's analyses of features within the *Allegory of Mercy*: clothing style and details, the bell in the Palazzo Vecchio tower, and the shields on the city gateway. Together, they argue for maintaining 1342 as the correct date of the fresco.

A Framework for Scholarly Debate

Whether or not readers find convincing the foregoing arguments and their interpretive outcome, they may recall that this essay was conceived with a second purpose in mind: a didactic one. Why, how, and with what tone should a writer respond to another scholar's evaluation of a work of art that conflicts with, even contradicts, the writer's own essay and assessment of that artwork?

Whereas an implausible opinion or judgment may hardly be worth a refutation in the public forum, the significance of the question as to why a writer might respond increases in direct proportion to what is at stake, the persuasiveness of the other scholar's reasoning, and the implications of any deductions proceeding from it. In the case at issue here, the disputed date of execution of the Misericordia Company's *Allegory of Mercy*, the need for accuracy is considerable. This was an image commissioned

by a leading civil institution during a convulsive era in the history of Florence, on conspicuous display and available to all in the ecclesiastical center of the city, and with enormous doctrinal and sociological relevance. For cultural reasons of every sort, therefore, precision concerning the fresco's chronological placement—or as close to precision as possible—seems mandatory. Despite harboring certain doubts, grounded chiefly in an unduly narrow interpretation of the political situation and the unacknowledged role of other profoundly unsettling recent events, I view Vittoria Camelliti's explications of several well-chosen, telling details within the painting, and her appraisal of information pertinent to them, as not only sensible but compelling enough in their presentation to warrant open contestation resulting from further analysis. Indeed, acknowledgment of the strengths of another scholar's argumentation that together produce a tentatively credible conclusion is essential to underscoring why a reply is worthwhile.

From there, it is a matter of examining the evidence and inferences put forward by that scholar to determine if they stand up to closer scrutiny, and if not, clarifying why they should be amended or rebuffed, and supplying cogent rationales to the contrary. Ascertaining first, of course, that all assertions made by the scholar have factual bases, do the particulars regarding each lend themselves to logical reinterpretation without stretching beyond belief a revised perception? Has the scholar accounted for all aspects and

implications of the data collected in arriving at the proposed conclusion, or are there "loose ends" that do not quite mesh with the rest of the testimony provided? Likewise important, do additional pieces of information exist—documentary, textual, and/or visual—perhaps joined by well-reasoned opinions expressed in published studies by other researchers, that might alter the scholar's elucidation of the facts presented? Affirmative answers to these questions legitimize a challenge to the scholar's reading and simultaneously function as guideposts for how to mount that challenge: first by explaining why the evidence offered by the scholar is debatable, inconsistent, incomplete, or even flawed; and then by furnishing attestations and argumentation in support of a different explanation.

There is, too, the matter of tone that a writer should adopt when countering the analyses and findings of an earlier study. Constructive criticism must always be the rule in academic debate. The intellect and character of the scholar whose research and opinions are under review deserve the same high degree of respect as that which the writer in turn desires to receive. Also imperative in fashioning a thesis, the writer must give credit where credit is due regarding the relevant research, observations, and convictions of previous authors, including those of the contested scholar. Camelliti's article itself is exemplary in this way, revealing within her text proper and in notes appended to the text her debt to earlier scholarship. Lastly, combining elements of these two tenets—and germane to the present

author's rebuttal of Camelliti's analyses—is a point worth repeating. On those occasions when the writer agrees in essence with the other scholar's position on a particular matter but finds reason to adapt that stance to substantiate a contrasting view, it is incumbent upon the writer to recognize unreservedly and in a considerate way the content and merit of the disputed scholar's interpretation, even while distinguishing the new reading from the old one.

Postscript: Florence and Naples in the Later Fifteenth Century

While it is difficult to perceive any patterns in the frequently shifting alliances among the major political entities in Italy during the second half of the fifteenth century, one relatively constant factor in that morass was the tie forged during the previous two centuries between Florence and Naples.²⁹ The steadfastness of their constructive partnership through that later period reflects backward, including the middle years of the fourteenth century, reinforcing the argument that the absence of an Angevin crest on the cityscape portal in the Misericordia's *Allegory of Mercy* fresco—for whatever reason—is immaterial to the question of its date.

To be sure, owing to the competing concerns of Florence and Venice regarding the question of Sforza command over the Duchy of Milan, Florence and Naples—at peace with one another following the demise of Ladislaus in 1416—engaged in hostilities again from 1450 to 1454. The former aligned with Milan (and France), while the latter was coaxed

into a compact with Venice. That situation concluded with the Peace of Lodi embracing all combatants on the peninsula. As a result, early in 1468, Florence under Cosimo de' Medici's son Piero, joined by Milan and now Naples, successfully confronted a band of mercenaries and anti-Medicean Florentine exiles led by Bartolomeo Colleone in the brief, aptly named Colleonic War. By 1474, however, new alliances had formed, pitting Florence, Milan, and Venice against a revived and aggressively expansion-minded papacy in Rome, which then called upon Naples for support. Pope Sixtus IV's deep involvement in a 1478 conspiracy against Cosimo de' Medici's grandson Lorenzo drew Florence briefly into battle once more with Sixtus's Neapolitan ally. This encounter—the Pazzi War, named after a family prominent among Florentine enemies of the Medici—ended with Lorenzo's dramatic, though eminently sensible, peace mission to Naples, lasting from December 1479 to March 1480, and the pope's willingness, in December 1480, to settle with Florence during a standoff against a looming Ottoman force.

Détente between Florence and Naples was thus reestablished. Consequently, when Sixtus's aggressive nature resurfaced, precipitating the Ferrarese War of 1482-84, Florence, Naples, and Milan replicated their united front from the Colleonic War, defending a smaller Ferrara in opposition to Rome and Venice, until Rome reconciled with its erstwhile enemies over the pope's sudden but well-founded fear of Venice. In 1485-86, following the Treaty of Bagnolo terminating the Ferrarese

conflict, Naples and Rome, the latter now under Pope Innocent VIII, were again at war with one another, a clash that did not officially end until 1492. Lorenzo de' Medici, who died in that year, commendably steered Florence away from that dispute while studiously maintaining his city's renewed accord with Naples alongside its bond with Milan. It seems clear, therefore, that despite the vicissitudes of fifteenth-century Italian politics, and even the replacement of the Angevins by the Aragonese in the south, leaders in both Florence and Naples understood that it was to their mutual advantage, and did their best, to retain their long-established rapport.

Simultaneously, although loyalties that once united adherents to the Guelph cause had become progressively less meaningful, Lorenzo, like his father and grandfather before him, anxiously nurtured Florence's longstanding political and commercial ties to an increasingly meddlesome France. Indeed, in 1465, King Louis XI of France had permitted the Medici family to substitute for one of the six red balls on its coat of arms a sphere with the venerable emblem of the House of Capet, gold *fleurs-de-lys* on a blue field, to validate and reward the commitment of both Florence and the Medici to his realm. Yet Lorenzo and his forebears were engaged in a delicate balancing act. For in 1328 the French crown along with—even earlier, in 1290—the County of Anjou had passed from the Capetians and Angevins, respectively, to their Valois relatives, giving successive later-fifteenth-century Valois monarchs in Paris, including Louis

XI, a vague albeit justifiable claim as well to the throne of Aragonese Naples formerly occupied by their distant Angevin kinsmen. In addition, a yet more remote family relationship through the Orléans branch of the Valois family encouraged French kings to eye the Duchy of Milan as theirs.

The disastrous ensuing events are well-known and upended Lorenzo de' Medici's carefully constructed political equilibrium. An escalating personal dispute between the rulers in Naples and Milan culminated, in 1494, with the latter inviting a formidable French army under King Charles VIII, son of Louis XI, to invade the southern kingdom. In Florence, joined by the papacy, the less-than-gifted son of the deceased Lorenzo, another Piero, lined up behind Naples as expected. As the intruders entered Tuscany, Piero suffered a failure of nerve and essentially signed his city over to the French, who briefly occupied it as Piero fled, soon to be replaced by the fiery Dominican monk Savonarola. Although the French force continued south, seizing Rome and then Naples the next year, a pan-European coalition led by the Aragonese sovereigns in Naples and Spain—from which a cowering Florence excluded itself—forced the invaders' retreat from Italy. For much of the sixteenth century, however, and to the detriment of nearly everyone on the peninsula, the bloody contest for dominion over Florence and all of Italy continued between the Aragonese, by then united through marriage with the Habsburgs, and their French adversaries in the extended Valois line.



The council chamber known as the Sala dei Gigli, the Room of the Lilies, on the second floor of Palazzo Vecchio, is the site of the heraldic evidence from the later fifteenth century alluded to in the main text of this article. It testifies to the long continuance of the Florentine-Angevin connection, even decades after the direct line of the original House of Anjou dating to the 1260s no longer ruled in Naples, and in

fact had become extinct. Archival documents of the 1480s make it clear that all four walls of the Sala dei Gigli were to bear figural paintings.³⁰ Records also suggest that these paintings, commissioned to a team of leading artists, were to replace a Famous Men (*uomini famosi*) fresco cycle from ca. 1385, a literary theme of the fourteenth century that had once adorned a smaller adjacent assembly room, and that had been

Figure 15. Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli (1450-1526), portion of the southern wall of the Sala dei Gigli decorated with *fleurs-de-lys* and red “rake” label, fresco, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, 1489-90. Photo: William R. Levin.

among the earliest of such programs in Italian art. The new series in Palazzo Vecchio was to signal the virtues of Medicean governance of Florence, particularly those of the current head of the family, Lorenzo.

Officials evidently made the decision in short order to condense this second Famous Men cycle onto one surface only, the eastern wall of the room, which Domenico Ghirlandaio painted in 1482-83 with possible assistance of his brothers. Simultaneously—and suddenly—mention of the other three walls and of Ghirlandaio’s collaborators on the project disappeared from the records, leaving the rest of the room unadorned, a condition fully remedied only years later. When work resumed, decorations for the ceiling came first, executed in two campaigns: the application to it of deep, ornately defined hexagonal coffers, each containing a rosette from which radiate six *fleurs-de-lys*, all modeled in high relief, with the flat interstices painted blue as a background (1483-86); and then the gilding of all projecting surfaces (1488-90).³¹

Once the gilding process was underway, officials took up the matter of the three bare walls of the Sala dei Gigli. In continuity with the design chosen for the ceiling, they commissioned Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli to fresco the northern, southern, and western walls with scattered gold *fleurs-de-lys* on a blue field—thus giving the room its common name—a task likewise completed in 1490. Beyond question, the mural backdrop provided for Donatello’s marble *David* housed in this chamber since 1416, as mentioned in the main body of this study, informed Rosselli’s larger decorative scheme. Art historian Melinda Hegarty proposed that, in the 1480s, administrators chose this pattern to express the role of France and the French monarchy, long symbolized by lilies on a blue field,

as protector of Florentine liberty; as an indication that Lorenzo de’Medici’s stewardship of Florence marked the return to a Golden Age; and as a symbol of his family’s dynastic succession.³² One or more of her suggestions may be sound, but another explanation—or an additional one—seems just as likely.

Atop each portion of the council room’s three walls exhibiting the *fleur-de-lys* pattern, divided one from another on each wall by fictive raised pilasters festooned with *groteschi* motifs, is a five-pronged red “rake” label seldom noted by scholars and mentioned only in passing by Hegarty (fig. 15). Recall that this is the feature added to the French royal coat of arms identifying not the Capetian monarchy proper but the original House of Anjou in Naples that sprang directly from it, founded in 1266 by King Charles I. (Whether or not the 1416 wall painting behind Donatello’s *David* included this element, though probable, is unknown.³³) Charles I ruled over both the County of Anjou and his south-Italian realm, as did his son and successor Charles II (r. 1285-1309) for several years until, in 1290, a family marriage led to a separation of the two regions, with Anjou passing to the Valois family that later, in 1328, ascended to the throne of France. The County of Anjou—both the territory and the title associated with it—was incorporated into the crown from 1328 to 1360, after which the province, now a duchy, was conferred upon a cadet line of the Valois family. Then, in 1480, a covetous King Louis XI, representing the main branch of the French royal family, again joined

the two in his person. It is notable, however, that heraldry associated with Louis XI eschews the once-familiar Angevin “rake” label, favoring instead the regal *fleur-de-lys* alone.³⁴ In Palazzo Vecchio, therefore, the implication is clear, that by displaying both components of the badge that formerly signified Angevin rule in southern Italy—gold lilies and the distinctive red pronged design on a blue ground—the northern, southern, and western wall frescoes of the Sala dei Gigli proclaimed and reaffirmed the time-honored political and commercial ties binding Florence specifically to Naples, not France, in the very seat of Medicean power.

While this connection, in the 1480s, admittedly may have had a somewhat nostalgic flavor reminiscent of the fourteenth-century state of affairs, looking past the dynastic change of 1442 that had occurred in the south and those rare moments of reciprocal animosity reported above, the two states’ close relationship survived three-quarters of a century of general peninsular upheaval and radical shifts in policy. To reiterate events of the 1480s that characterize their cordiality toward one another, consider Lorenzo de’Medici’s intrepid reconciliation with his fleetingly incompatible Aragonese foes to end the Pazzi War, their alliance during the Ferrarese conflict, and his cautious neutrality in the bellicose quarrel arising between Naples and Rome. This shared history tends to confirm and add specificity to Hegarty’s hypothesis regarding the walls and ceiling of the Sala dei Gigli as signifying a Laurentian return to a former Golden Age. It does something else as well.

The familiar Angevin device blanketing the late-fifteenth-century walls of the Sala dei Gigli further substantiates my conclusion—borne out by the examples, presented earlier, of such heraldry from the fourteenth century—that the Angevin crest “missing” from the cityscape portal in the *Allegory of Mercy* was not, as Vittoria Camelliti proposed in dating the fresco to 1352, a belated indication of disapproval on the part of Florence and the Misericordia, tainting by omission a disgraced foreign-born autocrat. Nor did its exclusion from the painting announce divisive and enduring acrimonies yet to come. The uprising against Walter of Brienne and his forcible exile from Florence in 1343 must be seen as an ephemeral event without bearing on the already protracted friendship and mutual dependence existing between that city and Brienne’s adopted hometown of Naples. Viewed in this light, the absence from the *Allegory* of an Angevin emblem was surely a choice, the reason, or reasons, for which are unknown. As noted in the main section of this essay, it may have been determined by an insufficiency of space within the fresco’s representational field, a simple lack of consistency and uniformity with respect to other artworks on the part of the patron and artist in selecting from among a variety of potentially appropriate heraldic shields, a calculated appeal to a primarily local audience, or an alteration sometime—perhaps years—later to what might originally have been there.

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Endnotes

The author expresses his appreciation to the editor of *Art Inquiries* and four anonymous readers of a draft of this article for their suggestions that led to an improved exposition of its content, reevaluation of a point that necessarily remains an open question, and responses to a pair of requests for additional information. Professor Roger Crum and Librarian Christopher Tangeman of the University of Dayton were instrumental in securing relevant research materials. Aspects of this study were presented as papers at annual meetings of SECAC (formerly the Southeastern College Art Conference; Baltimore, 2022), the Renaissance Society of America (San Juan, 2023), and the South-Central Renaissance Conference (Berkeley, 2023). With respect and gratitude, this essay honors three supportive colleagues and longtime friends, each a former SECAC president: Debra L. Murphy, Floyd W. Martin, and Sandra J. Reed.

1. Friends of Florence, an American-based foundation, funded a restoration of the fresco and sponsored a film summarizing the entire process, narrated in Italian and lasting thirteen minutes and forty seconds, that is available online at <http://www.adottaunoperadarte.it/il-restauro-della-madonna-della-misericordia-al->

[museo-del-bigallo](http://www.adottaunoperadarte.it/museo-del-bigallo) (accessed 10 July 2023). Conservation, expertly undertaken in 2012-14 by Lidia Cinelli after a series of physical, chemical, and stratigraphic analyses, included a cleaning of the surface through both physical and chemical means to remove accumulated grime and areas of paint applied during earlier restorations, followed by a consolidation of the plaster wall support and infilling of areas of paint loss. The most notable revelations from the restoration are the moat, no longer in actual existence, seen in the foreground at the base of the wall surrounding the crowded cityscape; a minute figure also in the foreground, referred to in the film as a pilgrim, about to enter the city through the gateway, identified in the film as the Porta di San Gallo; and farther back, a portion of the Arno River flowing through the metropolis. In addition, according to film narration, old reports that the fresco had been detached from the wall sometime in the past were proved false.

2. For bibliography containing the fullest discussions of the *Allegory of Mercy* by the author and others see most recently William R. Levin, “The Bigallo Triptych: A Document of Confraternal Charity in Fourteenth-Century Florence,” *Confraternitas* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 59 nn. 13-14; William R. Levin, “Art as Confraternal Documentation: Homeless Children and the Florentine Misericordia in the Trecento,” in *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, ed. Christopher M. Bellitto, vol. 83 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2019), 444 n. 17; William R. Levin, “‘Sepellire imorti poueri et miserabili’: La Settima opera di carità e la Misericordia fiorentina nei suoi primi anni di formazione,” *Iconocrazia: Potere delle Immagini / Immagini del Potere* 17 (2020), n. 3, <http://www.iconocrazia.it/sepellire-imorti-poueri-et-miserabili-la-settima-opera-di-carita-e-la-misericordia-fiorentina-nei-suoi-primi-anni-di-formazione/> (accessed 10 July 2023); and William R. Levin, “Indications for a Franciscan Role in the Philanthropic Activities of the Early Florentine Misericordia,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 49, no. 1 (2023): 18 note 22.

3. For a comprehensive discussion on the historiography of the dating, see William R. Levin, *The Allegory of Mercy at the Misericordia in Florence: Historiography, Context, Iconography, and*

the Documentation of Confraternal Charity in the Trecento (Dallas, Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: University Press of America, 2004), 16-19 and accompanying notes, including bibliographical references. See also notes 5-8 below for bibliography.

4. The verse in the Gothic-lettered inscription preceding the date, from the apocryphal Old Testament, is Ecclesiasticus 16:15. Occupying the first three lines of the inscription, it buttresses the theme of the fresco. The entire inscription, including the date, reads thus:

OMNIS MISERICORDIA FACIET
LOCUM UNICUIQUE
SECUNDUM MERITUM OPERUM
SUORUM
ET SECUNDUM INTELLECTUM
PEREGRINATIONIS ILLIUS
ANNO D. MCCCXLII DIE II MENSIS
SEPTEMBRIS

In the Vulgate version of the Bible, the final word of the verse is “IPSIUS,” not the erroneous “ILLIUS” of the inscription. The authoritative 1609 translation of the Vulgate by the English College at Douay renders the passage thus: “All mercy shall make a place for every man according to the merit of his works, and according to the wisdom of his sojournment,” that is, in keeping with the Lord’s perception of each man’s earthly pilgrimage.

5. Stefano Rosselli gave the date of the fresco as 1342 in vol. 3 of his *Sepoltuario fiorentino* of 1657 (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, MS. 2.4.536, fol. 1012). Historians concurring on the 1352 dating include Ferdinando Leopoldo Del Migliore, *Firenze città nobilissima* (Florence: Nella Stamp[eria] Della Stella, 1684), 80; Placido Landini, *Istoria dell’oratorio e della Venerabile Arciconfraternita di Santa Maria della Misericordia della città di Firenze* (Florence, 1779; reprint edition with notes by Pietro Pillori, Florence: Cartoleria Peratoner, 1843), 38; Luigi Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti di beneficenza e d’istruzione elementare gratuita della città di Firenze* (Florence: Tipografia Le Monnier, 1853), 452-53; Giovanni Poggi in idem, I(gino) B(envenuto) Supino, and Corrado Ricci, “La Compagnia del Bigallo,” *Rivista d’arte* 2 (1904): 206; Paul Perdrizet, *La Vierge de Miséricorde: Étude d’un thème iconographique* (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, Éditeur, 1908), 150; Margherita Sichi, *Un’Istituzione di beneficenza fiorentina: Il Bigallo* (Naples: Officina Arti Grafiche,

1927), 103-4 n. 2; and Cesare Torricelli, *La Misericordia di Firenze: Note storiche* (Florence: Arciconfraternita della Misericordia, 1940), 179 n. 1. Oddly, the date 1342 for the fresco appears in the frontispiece engraving and on p. ix in vol. 10 (1762) of Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine*, 10 vols. (Florence: Nella Stamperia di Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1757-62), whereas on p. 294 of vol. 7 (1758) it is given as 1352. Architectural historians also dating the fresco to 1352 include Walter and Elisabeth Valentiner Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: Ein kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, 6 vols., Frankfurter wissenschaftliche Beiträge: Kulturwissenschaftliche Reihe, 4 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1940-54), vol. 1 (1940), 390 nn. 34-35; and Gunther and Christel Thiem, *Toskanische Fassaden-Dekoration in Sgraffito und Fresko: 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Verlag F. Bruckmann, 1964), 135-36.

6. Howard Saalman, “Santa Maria del Fiore: 1294-1418,” *The Art Bulletin* 46 (1964): 472, 472 n. 6; drawing upon Peter Metz, “Die florentiner Domfassade des Arnolfo di Cambio,” *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 59 (1938): 122-24 and accompanying notes; and Howard Saalman, *The Bigallo: The Oratory and Residence of the Compagnia del Bigallo e della Misericordia in Florence*, Monographs on Archaeology and the Fine Arts sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America and the College Art Association of America, ed. Anne Coffin Hanson, vol. 19 (New York: New York University Press for the College Art Association of America, 1969), 9-10, 9-10 n. 24, 44 (doc. 1), and fig. 13. The seventeenth-century summary of the Misericordia document utilized by Saalman, which describes the company’s purchase of property in 1321/22 to house its offices, is in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, catalogued as Carte Stroziane (old classification), MS. Magliabechiano, classe 37, numero 300, fol. 132.

7. Hanna Kiel, *Il Museo del Bigallo a Firenze*, Gallerie e Musei di Firenze, ed. Ugo Procacci (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1977), 118-19 (cat. no. 3) and pls. 17-21; drawing upon Luciano Bellosi, *Il Buffalmacco e il trionfo della morte* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1974), 60 n. 65.

8. See note 5 above for the 1762 engraving. Recent authors favoring the 1342 dating of the *Allegory of Mercy* include, for example, Ludovica Sebgondi, “Ofanotrofo del Bigallo: Schede,” in Francesca Carrara,

Ludovica Sebgondi, and Ulisse Tramonti, *Gli Istituti di beneficenza a Firenze: Storia e architettura* (Florence: Alinea Editrice, 1999), 29 and figs. on pp. 30, 177; Phillip Joseph Earenfight, “The Residence and Loggia della Misericordia (Il Bigallo): Art and Architecture of Confraternal Piety, Charity, and Virtue in Late Medieval Florence,” Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1999, chap. 4, esp. pp. 138-40, and fig. 20; and George Bent, *Public Painting and Visual Culture in Early Republican Florence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 88-93, esp. 88 and 92, pl. XI, and figs. 32-34.

9. Vittoria Camelliti, “La Misericordia Domini del Museo del Bigallo: Un Unicum iconografico della pittura fiorentina dopo la Peste Nera,” *Studi di storia dell’arte* 26 (2015): 51-66, with abundant references in the endnotes. Camelliti’s dating of 1352 was accepted by Federico Botana in “The Frescoes of the *Allegory of Divine Mercy* and the *Story of Tobit and Tobias* in the Bigallo: New Viewpoints,” in *Politiche di misericordia tra teoria e prassi: Confraternite, ospedali e Monti di Pietà (XIII-XVI secolo)*, ed. Pietro Delcorno (Bologna: Società Editrice Il Mulino, 2018), 97-117.

10. Camelliti, “La Misericordia Domini,” 57-62 and accompanying notes, including bibliographical references.

11. *Ibid.*, 54-56 and accompanying notes, including bibliographical references.

12. There is no reference in the film chronicling the *Allegory’s* restoration, signaled in note 1 above, to the bells or canopy of Palazzo Vecchio appearing in the cityscape. My request to Friends of Florence, which funded the restoration and sponsored the film, for an official written report of the conservation campaign went unanswered.

13. Bent, *Public Painting*, caption beneath pl. XVII; for discussion see pp. 114-21. The fresco is currently located in a room of Palazzo Vecchio reserved for official use and not open to the public.

14. Camelliti, “La Misericordia Domini,” 54 and accompanying notes, including bibliographical references.

15. See note 1 above regarding the recent restoration of the fresco. Just as the Palazzo Vecchio bells and canopy depicted in the *Allegory* escape mention (see note 12 above), the Friends of Florence film makes no reference to the four shields pictured on the cityscape portal.

16. Useful here are two illustrated online sources: Chris Dobson, “The Heraldry of Florence 1: The Heraldry of the Palazzo Vecchio,” <https://renaissancedissident.com/heraldry-of-florence-1-palazzo-vecchio.html> (accessed 10 July 2023); and Alessandro Benedetti, “Curiosità su Firenze: Gli Stemmi sulla facciata di Palazzo Vecchio,” published March 2011, <https://curiositasufirenze.wordpress.com/2012/03/11/gli-stemmi-sulla-facciata-di-palazzo-vecchio/> (accessed 10 July 2023). The red and silver fields of the emblem on the *Allegory of Mercy*’s cityscape portal representing the unified communities of Florence and Fiesole are reversed on the façade of Palazzo Vecchio, likely an alteration without significance. The sixth shield (minus the tiny lily) is that of Pope Clement IV, who in 1265 lent his personal emblem along with money and other aid to the Guelphs of Florence in their common struggle, led by the future king of Naples Charles I of Anjou, against the Ghibellines. Of the remaining two insignia, the fifth in the sequence, with the word *LIBERTAS* written in gold diagonally across a blue field, refers to the priors, the *priori della libertà*, who headed the communal government of Florence instituted by the guilds in 1282; while the seventh, a white lily on a red field, portrays the original symbol of the city itself. The latter came to be associated with the local Ghibelline bloc, hence the reverse color scheme adopted by the victorious Guelph Party. Not mentioned in either online source—and seldom elsewhere as well—are the pair of crests that briefly extend this presentation of heraldry onto both the northern and southern flanks of Palazzo Vecchio, wrapping around the corners of the façade. In each case—left and right, respectively—the two coats of arms preserve and continue without interruption the order of the shields displayed on the façade. While ascertaining their date has proved elusive, twenty-two painted shields beneath protruding arches resembling—and likely contemporaneous with—those of Palazzo Vecchio’s façade adorn the far-earlier Torre Volognana, integrated into the nearby Bargello (the Palazzo del Podestà) during its mid-thirteenth-century construction. Six on each of the tower’s longer northern and southern sides, five on each shorter side, form a continuous, four-part alternating sequence beginning with the Angevin *fleurs-de-lys* and “rake” label, followed by the cross of the Florentine people, again the Angevin *fleurs-de-lys* and

“rake” label, and the Florentine Guelph communal lily. The Bargello functioned as headquarters of the city official charged with preserving the rule of law (the *podestà*), as a courthouse, and as a prison.

17. Commencing during his successful 1265-68 campaign to end imperial hegemony in the south of Italy, Charles I served simultaneously as papal vicar in Tuscany from 1267 to 1278 and as *podestà* of Florence from 1267 to 1280, though his rule over the city was largely absentee. Far more engaged in establishing a personal empire with substantial holdings in Europe and the Mediterranean basin and making numerous enemies in the process, both of his administrative positions in Florence ended in dismissal. While still a prince, Charles’s grandson Robert came to Florence with an army in 1305 as *signore* of the city to lead the Black Guelphs in their struggle against their erstwhile White brethren in neighboring Pistoia. He returned as a king in 1312-13, again with a legion, to counter successfully the invasion of Tuscany by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII. From 1313 until 1321, again as *signore* of Florence, Robert retained a mostly distant hand in the city’s politics, but his popularity faded dramatically beginning in 1315 as Florentines became increasingly suspicious regarding his interest in establishing peace between Guelphs and Ghibellines in Tuscany. His term of office was not renewed. Charles of Calabria, Robert’s son, arrived from Naples with troops in 1326 at the invitation of Florence to oppose a Ghibelline force commanded by Castruccio Castracane of Lucca and bolstered the following year by an army led by Ludwig of Bavaria on his way to Rome to be crowned emperor. As *signore* of Florence, Charles wielded considerable influence within the government, but lost support by repeatedly levying burdensome direct taxes to subsidize his Tuscan military campaign and by spending copiously on revelry. Locally, the Ghibelline threat receded by late in 1327, and following his recall to Naples—to the relief of most Florentines—to defend the capital from Ludwig, Charles died suddenly in 1328. In each of these cases, once the immediate enemy danger had passed, the government and people of Florence encouraged and welcomed, whether straightaway or eventually, their Angevin ally’s departure. See the references named in note 26 below for fuller discussions of these persons and events.

18. David Abulafia, “Southern Italy and the Florentine Economy, 1265-1370,” *The Economic History Review*, n. s., 34, no. 3 (August 1981): 377-88, with references in the notes to earlier studies furnishing more detailed information upon which Abulafia’s synthesizing argument rests. The political factors uniting Florence and Naples included not merely their common allegiance to the Guelph cause but specifically the focus that the dominant Black Guelph faction in Florence placed on the south-Italian mainland ruled by the Angevins, as distinct from Ghibelline and Florentine White Guelph interests concentrated more locally on north-central Italy as well as on Aragonese Sicily. With the spring 1282 rebellion known as the Sicilian Vespers, the island had freed itself from Angevin control, replacing the latter in late summer with the interlopers from eastern Spain who had dynastic ties to the Holy Roman Empire and its Ghibelline supporters. Especially notable among the Florentines awarded high office in Naples and landed estates elsewhere in the south was Niccolò Acciaiuoli (1310-1365), appointed Grand Seneschal—i.e., chief administrator—of the kingdom in 1348 by Queen Joanna I (r. 1343-1382).

19. Giovanni Fanelli, *Firenze, Le Città nella storia d’Italia*, ed. Cesare De Seta (Rome and Bari: Giuseppe Laterza e Figli, 1980), 54 and fig. 21; Anna Pomierny Wąsińska, “Florence and its Signs: A Late Mediaeval Diagram of the City,” *Nova Heraldica: Medieval and Early Modern Heraldry from the Perspective of Cultural History* (a Hypotheses.org blog), published 14 September 2016, <https://heraldica.hypotheses.org/4880> (accessed 10 July 2023); and Bent, *Public Painting*, 146-47, 150-51, and fig. 50.

20. Anna Pomierny Wąsińska, “Florence and its Signs, part 2: The Heraldic Diagram of another Florentine Guild and the Bossolo,” *Heraldica Nova: Medieval and Early Modern Heraldry from the Perspective of Cultural History* (a Hypotheses.org blog), published 12 December 2016, <https://heraldica.hypotheses.org/5000> (accessed 10 July 2023). The ceiling fresco spent decades separated from its original guildhall setting, about which there seems to be some question, prior to its restoration and return (?) to the audience hall in the Palace of the Silk Guild, a heavily renovated edifice that now serves as a newspaper and periodical library.

21. Bent, *Public Painting*, 121-33, esp. 131, pl. XVIII, figs. 42-43, unnumbered figure

on p. 104, and accompanying notes, including bibliographical references. Today the *Zecca Coronation* is in the Galleria dell'Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence. Bent described the papal shield, third in line, as representing specifically the "Bishopric See of Florence," the ecclesiastical entity that acted on behalf of the Holy See at the local level. The fourth emblem, that of the extended House of Anjou, is divided vertically in thirds, with—left to right—red and gold horizontal stripes symbolizing the Kingdom of Hungary (recall the device on the façade of Palazzo Vecchio representing Robert of Anjou, whose mother was a Hungarian princess); three gold *fleurs-de-lys* arrayed vertically on a blue field signifying the Kingdom of Naples and its descent from the royal line of France; and the right half of a silver double-eagle on a red field denoting the Kingdom of Albania, precariously but stubbornly claimed by members of the family; above and spanning the entire width of the shield are three gold crowns set horizontally. To the left of the central group of five *scudi* appear, left and then right, the crest of the Alberti family with crossed silver chains on a blue field, and that of the Guild of International Woolen Cloth Merchants (*Arte di Calimala*, one of the city's seven major guilds) represented by a gold eagle on a red field clutching a bale of cloth. To the right of the central group, symmetrical with the pair just described, and therefore right and then left, are the insignia of the Davanzati family with a gold lion rampant on a blue field, and that of the Bankers Guild (*Arte del Cambio*, another of Florence's major trade organizations) indicated by gold coins dispersed over a red field. By statute, one delegate from each of these two guilds co-chaired the Mint's board of directors. A member of the Alberti clan representing the cloth merchants and one from the Davanzati speaking for the bankers served as superintendents of the Mint when the completed *Zecca Coronation* arrived at its offices.

22. Fanelli, *Firenze*, 46-52. No traces of the presumed pigments remain. The four crests named in the text are the first, third, fourth, and fifth in left-to-right order on the former Opera del Duomo façade. The remaining two coats of arms display the cross of the Florentine people and the word *LIBERTAS* signifying the *priori della libertà*, respectively the second and sixth shields. The building faces the northern tribune (transept) of the cathedral on a street

formerly known as via delle Fondamenta. Today, the three entrances of the building bear the addresses Piazza del Duomo 3, 4, and 5, each of them providing access to office suites and private apartments.

23. Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), esp. 231-47, 288-89, 368-95 regarding Ladislaus. See also the first two references cited in note 26 below.

24. H[orst] W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 3-7, esp. 3; Nicolai Rubinstein, "Classical Themes in the Decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 36, 37 n. 60, 41 n. 100; and Melinda Hegarty, "Laurentian Patronage in the Palazzo Vecchio: The Frescoes of the Sala dei Gigli," *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 2 (June 1996): 279 n. 171 (interpreting the patterned wall decoration of 1416 somewhat differently than here).

25. Camelliti, "La Misericordia Domini," 62.

26. For the various historical currents and events recapitulated here see the following standard sources: Ferdinand Schevill, *Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936; New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Harper Torchbooks, 1963); Marvin B. Becker, *Florence in Transition*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967, 1968); Benedetto Croce, *History of the Kingdom of Naples*, trans. Frances Frenaye, ed. and intro. H. Stuart Hughes, *Classic European Historians*, ed. Leonard Krieger (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza e Figli, 1925 [in Italian]; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970 [based on the 6th Italian ed., 1965]); and J. K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy: The Evolution of the Civil Life, 1000-1350*, *New Studies in Medieval History*, ed. Denis Bethell (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

27. Additionally, David Abulafia ("Southern Italy and the Florentine Economy," 385) alluded to famines in Florence that occurred in 1323, 1333, and 1335. Clearly, the possibility of food shortages was an unremitting challenge.

28. Bent, *Public Painting*, 92-93.

29. For the following historical synopsis see, for example, the always entertaining and remarkably thorough Schevill, *Medieval and Renaissance Florence*, vol. 2 passim.

30. For this information on the Sala dei Gigli decorations see Rubinstein, "Classical Themes"; and Hegarty, "Laurentian Patronage." Besides Ghirlandaio, commissions for these frescoes that went unfulfilled were allotted to Botticelli, Perugino and Biagio Tucci, and Piero del Pollaiuolo (later replaced by Filippino Lippi). The two articles complement one another in various ways but differ on some points, among them the specific message intended by the Famous Men cycle of 1482-83 on the eastern wall of the Sala dei Gigli. Rubinstein (pp. 37-38, 41) held that Florentine power and patriotism is the concept emphasized, while Hegarty (pp. 273-75, 279, 281) insisted that the lesson imparted is one of Florentine liberty and its defense. In addition, while Rubinstein (pp. 32-33, 32 n. 29, 36) noted that, according to documents, there already existed two council rooms, one larger than the other, on the second floor of Palazzo Vecchio for which in 1469 officials ordered a "restoration and adornment," Hegarty (pp. 265, 265 n. 6, 271, 279 n. 171) seemed to waver between this interpretation and an older view that the two rooms were "created" from one earlier large hall.

31. Hegarty, "Laurentian Patronage," 277-78.

32. *Ibid.*, 278-80, 279 n. 171.

33. Only a thorough scientific analysis of the wall or the discovery of a heretofore overlooked document can solve this riddle.

34. A selection of images displaying Louis XI's coat of arms is available at https://www.google.com/search?source=univ&tbm=isch&q=Louis+XI+of+France+coat+of+arms&hl=en&fpr=K9gN1WEQZ4khlM%252Coz9nFEANO63OiM%252C_%253B6yivOaOuKc7PcM%252Coofkh8eLOGq5IM%252C_%253BM1KkqCnpNLeLpM%252CxCxGooUG4Ss1UsfM%252C_%253Bw52ONCoxKdZPTM%252C4N7Zryuc9oDlBm%252C_%253Buzu_hJcnCaCbaM%252C4lsySmrLm1MgiM%252C_%253BcIkDEUWeJpQT8M%252Ccmdgn4-1AQkcQPM%252C_%253Bzin7ZRQvVx53fM%252CNxQ3oKvcAuqogM%252C_%253BSZ6siyxjDiPgvM%252CY5a5k3fT-B5WeM%252C_%253Bz7lL7EPwn4xZKM%252Cek-FBhEdnXZyIM%252C_%253BxRMozKPl1VmaYM%252CU-aQPTbBhZFxiM%252C_%253B4L_-kTXklMcB6xLhStEjzXP7Rk_Ec95Hw&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwihRkycyffzAhVAQjABHRw5AY8QjJkEegQIAhAC&biw=1920&bih=969&dpr=1 (accessed 10 July 2023).

Translating Antiquity onto Souvenirs:

The Collectively Shaped Reception of the Doves of Pliny on Micromosaics

Lauren Kellogg DiSalvo

Pavements are an invention of the Greeks, who also practiced the art of painting them, till they were superseded by mosaics. In this last branch of art, the highest excellence has been attained by Sosus, who laid, at Pergamus, the mosaic pavement known as the “Asarotos œcos”; from the fact that he there represented, in small squares of different colors, the remnants of a banquet lying upon the pavement, and other things which are usually swept away with the broom, they having all the appearance of being left there by accident. There is a dove also, greatly admired, in the act of drinking, and throwing the shadow of its head upon the water; while other birds are to be seen sunning and pluming themselves, on the margin of a drinking bowl.

—Pliny the Elder,
*Natural History*¹

Grand Tour Ritual and Identity

The material culture of ancient Rome permeated the souvenir industry of the city with fans, models, gems, and micromosaics during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Micromosaics, created from minutely sized tesserae, were popular souvenirs that were generated in connection with the Grand Tour in Rome and continued in popularity through the nineteenth century. The ubiquity of micromosaics is enumerated by British traveler Charlotte Eaton who recounts:

There are hundreds of artists, or rather artisans, who carry on the manufactory of mosaics on a small scale. Snuff-boxes, rings, necklaces, brooches, ear-rings, &c., are made in immense quantity; and since the English flocked in such numbers to Rome, all the streets leading to the Piazza di Spagna are lined with the shops of these Mosaicisti.²

The subjects of micromosaics were often the same as other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century souvenirs including vistas of the city and representations of both ancient

and Renaissance works of art and monuments.³ Micromosaics decorated a wide scope of objects from brooches to tables, snuffboxes to paperweights, boxes to chimneypieces. The micromosaic was an object of paradoxes: it was embraced both for its easy reproducibility as small souvenirs and its status as fine art in larger compositions imitating paintings; it was a commonly reproduced motif and a unique, masterful design; it was sought after mostly by the English upper middle class who visited Rome and by international royalty and elite patrons; it was a miniature in its materiality but not always miniature in its composition size.⁴ The versatility of micromosaics is one thing that sets them apart from other souvenirs as they could offer a range of sizes, decorate a range of objects, and cater to a range of buyers’ pockets in a way few other souvenirs could.⁵ This essay will investigate one ancient Roman motif found on micromosaics—the Doves of Pliny—as an entry point to understanding how an artwork that is replicated serially on souvenirs can reveal the collectively shaped perceptions of tourists.



While this article will focus on the micromosaic, travelers to Italy brought back numerous types of souvenirs. What constitutes a Grand Tour souvenir exceeds the confines of Nelson Graburn's description of souvenirs as cheap, portable, and understandable. It also exceeds David Hume's reworking of Susan Stewart's categories of the sampled, the representative, and the crafted souvenir.⁶ There are obvious souvenirs like fans, miniature bronzes, gems, micromosaics, cork models, porcelain, and prints. There are also those less obvious: like the replica loggia of Raphael, produced for Catherine the Great,

that Antonio Pinelli includes in his essay on Grand Tour souvenirs, or the oil paintings and watercolors included by Ilaria Bignamini and Andrew Wilton, in their catalog of Grand Tour objects.⁷ Most useful prove the general guidelines offered by art historian Sarah Benson who suggests that souvenirs "shared [a] set of characteristics inherent to their media and representational conventions and to their use by those who purchased and contemplated them."⁸ These objects that Grand Tourists brought back with them served as markers of their experiences, their education, and their refinement.

Figure 1. Doves of Pliny Mosaic from Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli. Second century CE mosaic after second century BCE mosaic by Sosus of Pergamon. 85 x 98 cm. Capitoline Museums (MC0402). Copyright Soprintendenza di Roma Capitale - Foto in Comune.

Such souvenirs of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Rome as micromosaics represent a rich avenue for exploring the reception of specific ancient objects, as determined by the collective body of travelers who came to Italy.⁹ Micromosaics are understood primarily through catalogs, which typically detail methods of production, technological advances,

general subjects depicted, style and dating, and the names of artists.¹⁰ However, technological developments and production structures of micromosaic making are not a primary consideration of this essay. Instead, I explore how micromosaics can signify the collectively determined reception of an ancient object, a topic that is underrepresented in the existing scholarship on micromosaics.¹¹

In the case of this artistic medium, the collective body in question consists of English-speaking travelers who flocked to Italy becoming the primary occupants of the Piazza di Spagna quarter, where micromosaic vendors densely clustered. These mostly British and American travelers were the largest consumers of such objects, and typically selected from serially produced versions, whereas unique compositions served the domain of the elite and/or royalty, who commissioned larger compositions more akin to paintings. Tourist scholar Dean MacCannell's discussion of touristic experience—with its associated memories and souvenirs, revolving around participation in collective "ritual," while reinforcing a collective identity—will serve as this study's framework for understanding the collectively shaped social reception of the Doves of Pliny on micromosaics.¹² Anthropologist and art historian Christopher Steiner suggests that, rather than seeing the seriality of souvenirs as an inauthentic signifier, their seriality can be seen as a commanding authority through its repetition.¹³ In turn, I propose that modifications serially reproduced on micromosaics of the Doves of Pliny reinforced

Grand Tourists' aggregate beliefs about that ancient artwork.

An examination of one prolific iconographic theme on micromosaics, the second-century CE Doves of Pliny mosaic from Hadrian's Villa, in conjunction with the words of tourists recorded in travelogues, will demonstrate how variants of even the most widely reproduced of souvenirs can be used to understand the mentalities of travelers and their reception of a Roman artwork. The Doves of Pliny is a Roman mosaic depicting three doves perched on and drinking from a cup (fig. 1). Following its eighteenth-century discovery at Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, it was widely attributed to the famous 2nd century BC Greek artist Sosus of Pergamon whose artwork was recorded by Roman author Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24-79). This essay considers the ways in which this Roman mosaic fueled and shaped the micromosaic industry. A closer look at modifications of Doves of Pliny iconography, as represented on micromosaics, reveals how the industry responded to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tourist perceptions of the ancient mosaic, and in the process, materializing an understanding of the ancient artwork shaped by the collective of its consumers.

Early Micromosaic Production and Impact of Discovering the Doves of Pliny

In the late eighteenth century, souvenir micromosaics originated as an entirely distinct but related venture from the Studio del Mosaico Vaticano, in the Reverenda Fabbrica

di San Pietro in Rome. They were propelled to further popularity by eighteenth-century archaeological discoveries. The Studio Vaticano began in 1586, gaining momentum under the reign of Pope Urban VIII, who suggested replacing the deteriorating painted altarpieces of St. Peter's with more enduring copies in mosaic.¹⁴ The studio took its modern form of organization in 1727, under Pope Benedict XIII. As mosaicists working at the studio became aggrieved by a longtime record of inadequate compensation, they sought to supplement their income by opening private workshops outside the Vatican, peddling micromosaics as souvenirs to tourists. In 1775, Giacomo Raffaelli held the first recorded exhibit of micromosaics in his private studio.¹⁵ While private studios were an entirely separate undertaking from the Studio Vaticano, they often shared the same mosaicists and, at times, materials.¹⁶

Further fueling the zeal for modern micromosaic-making was the discovery of the Doves of Pliny mosaic. Monsignor (later, Cardinal) Alessandro Furietti excavated the renowned work at Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, just outside of Rome, in 1737. The mosaic remained in the residence of Furietti until his death, after which it was sold in 1765 to Pope Clement XIII, who later donated his complete collections for display in the Museo Capitolino. In 1752, Cardinal Furietti published *De Musivis ad SS Patrem Benedictum XIV*, a book on the history of mosaics that garnered a wide readership and featured text and an engraving documenting the Doves of Pliny mosaic.¹⁷ Through antiquarian publications and engravings, the news of the Doves of Pliny spread.¹⁸

The mosaic was on display and accessible to guests of Furietti as early as 1739, such as when the Marchese Scipione Maffei came to Furietti's residence to see the excavated finds.¹⁹ Archaeologist Carlo Fea's description of the mosaic mentioned that it could be seen either at the Museo Capitolino or, earlier, at the house of Furietti, implying that there were frequent visitors to the work while in Furietti's possession.²⁰ Naturally, the mosaic found a much wider audience once it was installed at the Museo Capitolino in 1765.

The wealth of information disseminated about the mosaic was augmented by a clear relationship to surviving ancient literature. When Furietti published his discovered mosaic, he connected it to a mosaic that the ancient Roman naturalist and philosopher Pliny the Elder described in his *Natural History*. During the eighteenth century, there was a deep yearning to connect artwork to surviving literary records.²¹ This impulse continued throughout the nineteenth century, and travelers frequently connected surviving artworks with ancient literature, often citing Pliny in particular.²² The mosaic discovered by Furietti came to be called, most often, the Doves of Pliny, named for the description in Pliny's text that bears connections to the mosaic.

In his account, Pliny discussed the famous Pergamene artist Sosus, who made a mosaic depicting "a dove also, greatly admired, in the act of drinking, and throwing the shadow of its head upon the water; while other birds are to be seen sunning and pluming themselves, on the margin of a drinking-bowl."²³ Tourist

accounts emphasize the importance of the mosaic from Hadrian's Villa and its connection to Pliny, often recounting Pliny's description in full.²⁴ British traveler George Head wrote of the undeniable connection: "[The Doves of Pliny mosaic] cannot fail to be recognized in a brief but peculiarly graphic description of Pliny."²⁵ It is clear that the popularity of the mosaic discovered in the eighteenth century was heightened by the striking similarities to the ancient textual record, increasing the authenticity of the mosaic as part of the material culture of antiquity.

The Doves of Pliny mosaic reinvigorated excitement about the craftsmanship level of ancient mosaics. While other mosaics garnered attention in the eighteenth century—such as the Nilotic scene from Palestrina on which Jean-Jacques Barthélemy and others published—the discovery of the Doves of Pliny mosaic marked a turning point because of its minute tesserae. With about 150 tesserae per square inch, the Doves of Pliny mosaic exceeded the tesserae-per-square-inch ratio in previously found mosaics.²⁶ Tourists routinely praised the minute tesserae of the Doves of Pliny in their travel narratives. Antiquarian J. Salmon noted that it was "composed of stones so small as to be scarce discernible, or the whole distinguished from the most delicate painting."²⁷ Adelaide Harrington, an American woman who traveled Europe, wrote that "the workmanship is so fine that one hundred and fifty stones can be counted in the space of a square inch."²⁸ The travelers' accounts demonstrated that in addition to the high level of skill needed to execute a mosaic with such small tesserae, the painting-like result of the tesserae

was valued.²⁹ Therefore, the small and dense tesserae of the ancient mosaic spurred to popularity the burgeoning art of the modern micromosaic, which used tesserae on an even smaller scale than the Doves of Pliny mosaic.

Following the ancient mosaic's discovery, souvenirs depicting the Doves of Pliny proliferated in a range of media. The mosaic was reproduced on cameos,³⁰ *pietre dure* [or *pietra dura*],³¹ fans,³² sculptures,³³ and gems.³⁴ The subject, however, most frequently appeared on micromosaics, likely due to its shared medium of mosaic (fig. 2). The strong presence of and demand for these micromosaics is demonstrated by the nineteenth-century American tourist William Gillespie, who recalled "the Mosaic of Pliny's doves, copied in miniature on half the breast-pins that you see."³⁵ In addition to brooches, the Doves of Pliny appeared on nearly every type of surface that micromosaics could decorate, from mosaic pictures to plaques to tables to paperweights.

The connection between micromosaics and the ancient Doves of Pliny mosaic is borne out by travelers' accounts frequently referencing micromosaic copies in their discussions of the Museo Capitolino mosaic from Hadrian's Villa. In one case, an anonymous tourist brought home "a small modern copy of this very subject [the Doves of Pliny], certainly far better executed."³⁶ In another, George Hilliard recalled how "this graceful composition [the Doves of Pliny] is still popular, and constantly repeated by the mosaic workers of Rome, in diminished proportions."³⁷ Clearly, the demand of micromosaic



representations of the Doves of Pliny by travelers to Rome spurred the market for the medium. Convergence of the new discoveries at Hadrian's Villa, the rise of finely crafted micromosaic souvenirs, and travelers' excitement over connections between the ancient mosaic and a contemporaneous account demonstrate the interconnectedness of Roman antiquity and the modern production of micromosaics.

Modifications Spurred on by Pliny the Elder's Description

Micromosaicists were especially in tune with how visitors received the ancient Doves of Pliny mosaic, modifying their compositions to mirror tourist mentalities. The most striking modifications favored elements from Pliny's description despite the details of the actual mosaic discovered at Hadrian's Villa. Consider these modifications as

Figure 2. Micromosaic brooch of Doves of Pliny by Giacomo Raffaelli. 1779. 5.6 cm d. © The Trustees of the British Museum (1990,0710.1). Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial- ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.

useful tools for shedding light on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century visitors' experience of the Doves of Pliny mosaic from Hadrian's Villa. Adjustments made by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mosaicists

also demonstrate how the actuality of the ancient mosaic was intertwined with the mosaicists' long-standing knowledge of Pliny's description.

However closely aligned the mosaic from Hadrian's Villa with Pliny's description, it offers no shadow. Pliny stated that one of the birds "throw[s] the shadow of its head upon the water," but such an effect cannot be seen in the mosaic Furietti uncovered in 1737. Some tourists accepted, with no hesitation, the idea that this mosaic was the one about which Pliny wrote. In 1845, William Gillespie wrote, "It is beyond doubt the identical work described by Pliny."³⁸ Other travel accounts, however, disputed whether the Doves of Pliny mosaic was in fact the exact one discussed by Pliny. Despite Scottish traveler Joseph Forsyth's doubts that the mosaic was the same as the one described by Pliny, it was "still regarded here as the

original of Sosus. If it really is that original.³⁹ An anonymous traveler also speculated that "this one in question is more probably an antique and valuable copy than the original."⁴⁰ There was no accord on the issue, as British theologian Edward Burton described it in 1828:

This mosaic has excited considerable controversy. Pliny, where he is mentioning the perfection to which the art of mosaic had been carried, describes a specimen of it, as being peculiarly excellent, which bears some resemblance to this. Many, however, do not allow it to be the same; and certainly the resemblance is not sufficient to convince.⁴¹

The wealth of travelers' accounts speculating on whether the mosaic from Hadrian's Villa was the exact

one discussed by Pliny or simply a copy, and the lack of their consensus on the matter at any given date, suggests that this was a continual issue throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Most early micromosaics, especially those of noted micromosaicist Giacomo Raffaelli, do not depict any sort of shadow, corresponding with the mosaic at Hadrian's Villa (see fig. 2).⁴² By the early nineteenth century, however, micromosaicists introduced what looked like the shadow of the drinking bird's face into their compositions, which directly parallels visitors' desires to connect the mosaic to the one

Figure 3. Micromosaic box of Doves of Pliny with bird's reflection in the water and vivid colors. Circa 1830. 2.3 x 8.4 cm. Copyright Victoria & Albert Museum, London (M.92-1969).





described by Pliny (fig. 3).⁴³ In actuality, the “shadow” produced by the micromosaicists was typically a reflection of the bird’s face, but it also served as a clear reference to Pliny’s passage. This very deliberate act of displaying the bird’s “shadow” in the water addressed the inconsistencies between Pliny’s account and the actual ancient mosaic, giving tourists the idealistic version of Pliny that the material culture of antiquity itself did not provide. Furthermore, micromosaicists strove to remain competitive on the souvenir market, through the innovation of including the drinking bird’s “shadow,” which certainly distinguished micromosaics from the sea of other souvenirs without this modification.⁴⁴ In some mediums, such as gems,

artists had a more difficult time presenting this modification without color.⁴⁵ The addition of the “shadow” suggests that Pliny’s account proved more influential than the actual mosaic uncovered at Hadrian’s Villa.

Another alteration to the Doves of Pliny micromosaics likewise reflects tourists’ reception of the ancient mosaic found at Hadrian’s Villa. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, certain micromosaic plaques display feathers resting on the pedestal that supports the vessel, presumably feathers that have just fallen while the bird preened itself (fig. 4).⁴⁶ In some instances, there are also round, seed-like objects in addition to feathers. The dimensions of these micromosaic plaques

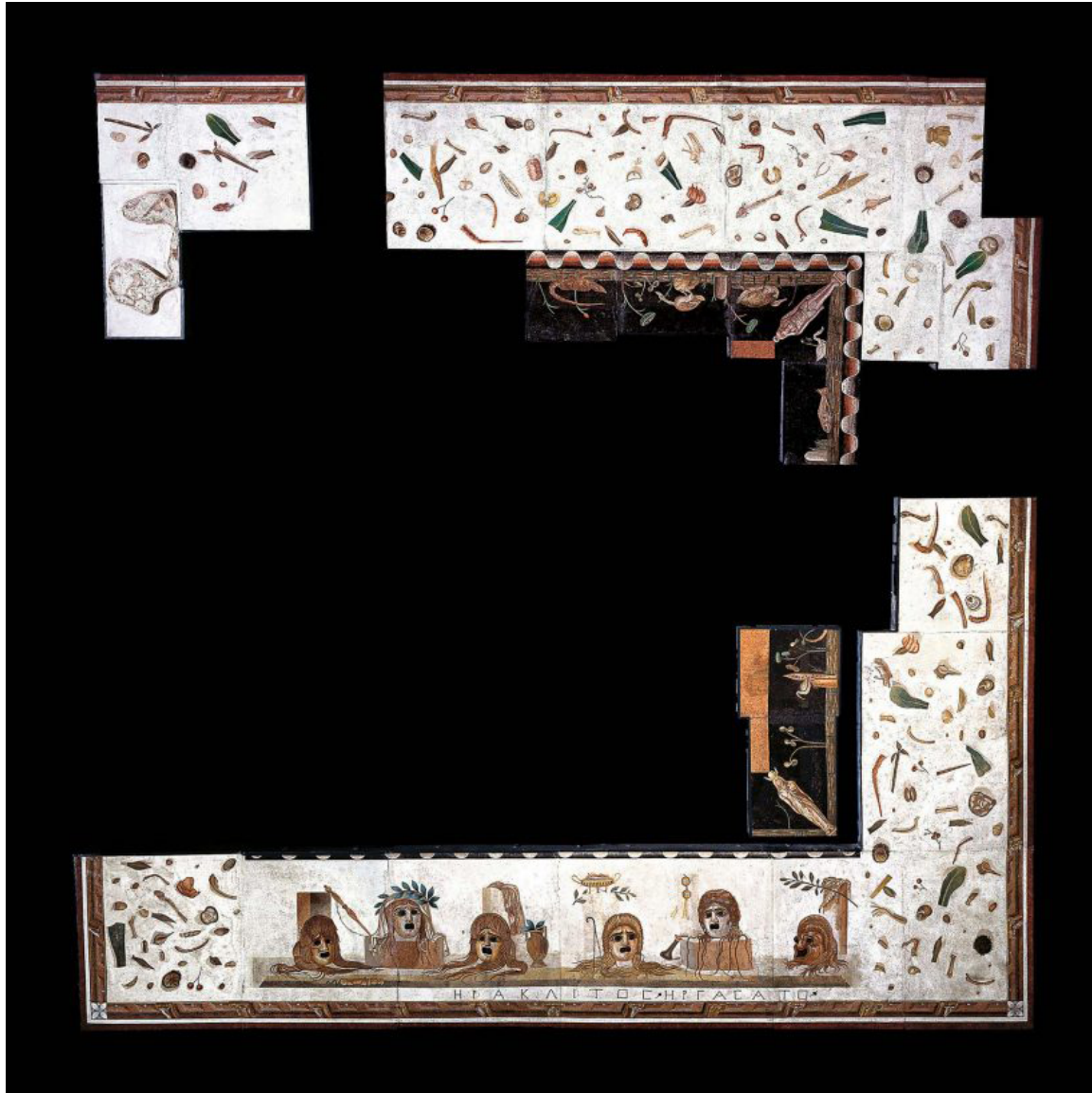
Figure 4. Micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny with feather and seeds. Circa 1850. 39.5 x 51 cm. Private collection. Photograph Courtesy of Sotheby’s, 2023 (“Sotheby’s Lot 169,” auction date April 20, 2007).

are close to those of the ancient mosaic from Hadrian’s Villa, so the composition itself is not miniature, only the tesserae. With the inclusion of feathers and seeds, the attention to realism and illusion is striking. I would suggest that the addition of these fallen items relates to Sosus’ *asarotos oecus* or “unswept-floor” mosaic, the famed mosaic Pliny documented in the same passage, alongside the dove mosaic (fig. 5). Pliny’s documentation of both mosaics, praised their illusionistic qualities, essentially linking them in tourists’ minds.

In 1833, a mosaic matching Pliny's *asarotos oecus* description was discovered in the Vigna Lupi on the Aventine Hill and then displayed at the pontifical museums.⁴⁷ The newly

in this missing space, thus further binding the two discovered mosaics and Pliny's account.⁴⁸ In the initial 1833 announcement of the discovery of the *asarotos oecus* mosaic in

Figure 5. *Asarotos oecus* mosaic by Sosus of Pergamon. Photo copyright © Governorate of the Vatican City State-Directorate of the Vatican Museums (inv. 10132).



discovered *asarotos oecus* mosaic was missing its central emblem due to the construction of a later wall. Many accounts contemporary with its discovery concluded that the Doves of Pliny mosaic from Hadrian's Villa originally belonged

the *Bullettino dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica*, Bunsen wrote:

We must look in the center of the mosaic to have physical proof that the exact copy of

that famous work by Sosus was preserved on this floor; where the Capitoline doves should still be found, if they really are the faithful copy taken from the same original.⁴⁹

The London *Morning Post* also included a reference to the Doves of Pliny in their announcement of the 1833 discovery of the *asarotos oecus* mosaic: “Pliny states that two doves on a vase were represented on the mosaic, but this part of the work has been damaged by the construction of a wall near the place where it was deposited.”⁵⁰ Both of these accounts associated the Doves of Pliny with the *asarotos oecus* mosaic. In much the same way that multiple accounts verbally reconstructed the mosaics together, so too were they visually brought together. Such was the case when, in 1851, the Ospizio Apostolico di San Michele made a tapestry that depicted the Doves of Pliny mosaic surrounded by the *asarotos oecus* mosaic.⁵¹

Given the deeply ingrained connections between the two mosaics of Sosus, I propose that the appearance of seeds and feathers in the mid-nineteenth century correlates with the 1833 discovery of, and ensuing excitement over, the illusionistic qualities of the *asarotos oecus* mosaic, matching Pliny’s description.⁵² In this way, the two mosaics of Sosus provided the tourist not only with a more complete experience of Sosus but also with a chance to showcase their knowledge of Pliny’s account.

Modifications for Modern Sensibilities of Superiority

In addition to the modifications based on Pliny’s text, some micromosaics deviated from the ancient Doves of Pliny mosaic from Hadrian’s Villa to align themselves more closely with the modern sensibilities of travelers. Changes from the original color

in the later nineteenth century proved a significant modification of micromosaics of the doves.⁵³ Early micromosaics were more faithful to the ancient Doves of Pliny from Hadrian’s Villa and were restrained in palette, using only browns, beiges, and white to represent the birds, as seen in the works of Giacomo Raffaelli. In later nineteenth-century representations, however, the colors of the doves drastically differ from one micromosaic to another. The colors chosen are significantly brighter and include the use of blue and purple tones (see fig. 3). In part, this change in coloration of the doves was inspired by technological advances that provided an ever-increasing number of colors to micromosaicists over the course of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ That does not fully explain, however, why micromosaicists chose to use such a variety of colors.⁵⁵ The different gradations of color appealed to the aesthetics of tourists, especially since they praised the coloring and modeling of the ancient Doves of Pliny mosaic on display in the Museo Capitolino. William Gillespie wrote of the mosaic in the museum that “the colors are very sober and harmonious.”⁵⁶ In a magazine article about birds in art, Julien Armstrong wrote, “the soft coloring and the remarkable skill with which the glancing lights and shadows on the plumage have been depicted by the artist makes this mosaic well worthy of its great reputation.”⁵⁷

When discussing the Doves of Pliny mosaic, travelers often noted how, despite the excellence of ancient craftsmanship, modern mosaicists exceeded even the standards set by admired ancient artists such as Sosus. Joseph Forsyth observed:

I have mentioned that the ancients used Mosaics, but it is to be remembered that they had not the art of making and staining stone; they used only natural marble, &c. which did not furnish them with the same quantity of shades the moderns are possessed of, and, consequently, their colouring was less perfect. . . . [The] ancients are now excelled in the art of tessellation [by us].⁵⁸

Irish traveler Jane Waldie recalled how “[the art of mosaic] is probably carried to greater perfection in the modern than in the ancient world... [Ancient mosaics] are certainly very inferior to the productions of the present day.”⁵⁹ The Reverend George Evans wrote similarly, that “if this of the Capitol be really the original mentioned by Pliny, his admiration of the work only shews how greatly the ancients are now excelled in the art of tessellation.”⁶⁰

These accounts, and many others, underscore how prevalent was the idea of the superiority of modern mosaic-making over the ancient mosaic of the Doves of Pliny, trumpeting the ability of the nineteenth century to triumph in the replication of antiquity. This competitive attitude corresponds with nineteenth-century national fairs and the introduction of world fairs, like the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851, where micromosaics were on display and won prizes.⁶¹ It was at exhibitions like this that highly crafted skill and technological advances, like the ones the travelers praised, were put on display to champion the accomplishments of nations. Therefore, in addition to mirroring technological developments, the

choice to augment coloring and modeling in the micromosaics chiefly reflected tourists' interest in the superiority of contemporary mosaic-making over the ancient practice.

Especially interesting in relation to this idea of modern superiority are the Studio Vaticano's views on mosaics. They boasted of their technological advances in color over the ancient Romans in a document dating to the nineteenth century under Pope Pius VII:

While it is true that the ancient Romans laid the foundation of this art [mosaic], they didn't perfect it as modern artists have, who went so far as to create new materials similar to those used in antiquity. With these materials, they would elevate their craft to create a close copy of the painting. Indeed, if one had to judge based off of what remains of their monuments, it could be said that Romans limited their use of mosaics to their floors; and the famous doves so highly praised by Pliny. Yet now, we have reason to believe that [the Ancient Roman mosaics] are far from the virtues of modern advancements that can now be admired in Rome. One of the reasons of this limitation was certainly because of the restricted availability of pigments, used to color the stones, with which Ancient Romans realized such works. Whereas, modern artisans, with the knowledge of chemistry, sought out, and happily succeeded in creating varnishes in great abundance, with many variances of color that were necessary to imitate the most difficult combinations of paint in ancient works.⁶²

This passage explains how the ancient mosaic from Hadrian's Villa, while admirable for the time, was far removed from contemporary technological advances in color. It parallels the same type of thought seen in tourist accounts evoking the Doves of Pliny in their comparison of ancient and modern mosaics.⁶³ Therefore, the superiority of contemporary over ancient mosaics culminated in the materiality of modified micromosaics of the Doves of Pliny connecting direct representations of the ancient mosaic with the desired experience of the tourist. Micromosaics were unique in offering this modification; such other souvenirs as cameos and gems could not, and a medium like *pietra dura* did not. By using the same marble stones as ancient mosaic, *pietra dura* was just as limiting as the outdated technology of "the Romans [who] chiefly used coloured marbles, or natural stones, in their mosaics." It typically used a variety of earth tones or all white to color the doves.⁶⁴

Micromosaic souvenirs of the Doves of Pliny also demonstrated superiority because of the ways in which their miniature tesserae exceeded the minuteness of even ancient tesserae. Contemporary scholar of mosaics Gaetano Moroni wrote how superior modern micromosaic craftsmanship was for miniaturizing the Doves of Pliny:

Through similar discoveries, a knowledge of the superiority of materials used in the making of modern mosaics has emerged. Such methods were surely unknown by ancient artisans, for which one could presume that the art form has finally reached its peak perfection.

Evidence of this can be seen in what has come to be known as the Cup of the Doves, illustrated by Pliny, and more particularly by the commentary of His Excellency Cardinal Furietti, stating emphatically that within one square inch of the mosaic, now residing in Campidoglio, 163 pebbles can be counted, whereas today, the same cup can be made with the same design, minus four less birds in the same square inch.⁶⁵

Here, Moroni emphasized how contemporary micromosaicists surpassed Sosos' work that had 163 tesserae per square inch by fitting the entire cup of the composition into a single square inch.

Tourists also took note of the minute contemporary tesserae, and micromosaicists capitalized on a market fascinated by the miniature. For example, in 1820, Jane Waldie wrote, "The art [of mosaic] is now practiced much more minutely [than the Doves of Pliny mosaic]; and is so admirably executed, that it frequently requires the best sight to discover the joinings of the pieces."⁶⁶ The souvenir, Waldie expounded, was a miniature of a miniature, which held such appeal because it operated in another world. As Susan Stewart argues in an influential study, there is no miniature in nature, and it is therefore miniaturization that can offer the purchaser an alternative time outside of the historical, lived time in the natural world. Steeped in nostalgia, the miniature could manipulate lived experiences.⁶⁷ This ability to create an alternative time, where experiences are warped by nostalgia, corresponds well with a souvenir that, like the micromosaic,

was meant to memorialize and rewrite past experiences. I would argue that the Doves of Pliny was detached from historical time in the mind of the tourist. As shown in previously quoted tourist excerpts, accounts often jump between past and present through simultaneous discussions of ancient mosaics and contemporary micromosaics. For example, Waldie references ancient mosaic practice while discussing modern micromosaic-making at the Vatican: “Mosaic is, as I suppose every one knows, a revived art.”⁶⁸ Miniatures can create romantic histories that tie a contemporary practice, like micromosaic, to a historic one, like ancient Roman mosaics. The miniature materiality of the Doves of Pliny micromosaics offered travelers an alternative space in which nostalgia could rewrite the memories of their experiences.

Conclusions

Alterations made to the Doves of Pliny micromosaics were largely unique to that medium and were not regularly pictured on other souvenirs replicating the Doves of Pliny. The reason for this is the materiality of micromosaics, whose minute tesserae not only mimicked the marble mosaic from Hadrian’s Villa but also had the ability to surpass it and offer advantages that other mediums could not. However, the Doves of Pliny was not the only ancient object to be subjected to the modifications that the collective body of travelers to Italy desired in souvenir format. In representations of the Parthenon, for example, micromosaics, fans, and prints often removed the much-detested campanili added under

Pope Urban VIII, well before their actual removal in 1883.⁶⁹ Visitors despised these campanili, including American George Hillard, who recalled: “He [Urban VIII] shares with Bernini the reproach of having added those hideous belfries which now rise above each end of the vestibule; as wanton and unprovoked an offense against good taste as ever committed.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, micromosaics, porcelain, fans, and gems all modify the original indoor setting of the Seller of Cupids to an outdoor backdrop.⁷¹ This change from a private, indoor scene to a public, outdoor one helped deemphasize erotic aspects of the wall painting. Additionally, micromosaics adopted a landscape suggestive of the Bay of Naples environment, connecting the painting to the environment in which it was found. While souvenirs may be serially-produced objects, they offer useful variations that can shed light on how tourists received specific ancient artworks and should be investigated for such possibilities.

A careful examination of the Doves of Pliny micromosaics demonstrates how souvenirs were adapted over time to correspond with tourists’ collectively shaped reception of the ancient mosaic found at Hadrian’s Villa. Tourists wanted a memento that reflected the literary record of Pliny the Elder—as evidenced by the addition of the dove’s shadow in the early nineteenth century, and the inclusion of seeds and feathers in the mid-nineteenth. They insisted on the superiority of modern mosaic-making over the already exquisite skills of the ancients, and this is borne out in the alteration of color from the Doves of Pliny mosaic to the later nineteenth century

versions and in the ever-more minute tesserae.

Travelers could then take the souvenirs home, allowing for touch-activated memories that improved upon and translated the tourists’ experience of seeing the Doves of Pliny in the Museo Capitolino in Rome. One can imagine a tourist returning home in the nineteenth century, sporting a brooch of the Doves of Pliny, and recounting to all admirers her in-person experience of seeing the minute tesserae of the vibrantly colored mosaic while confirming how it accorded with classical literature, the domain of learning in her world. The travelogues and material culture surrounding the Doves of Pliny demonstrate how intricately the ancient mosaic and its micromosaic adaptations were related; neither could exist without the other. The desires of tourists for the Doves of Pliny mosaic from Hadrian’s Villa materialized in micromosaic variations that ultimately augmented the ancient mosaic. The case of the micromosaic representation of the Doves of Pliny serves as an example of how souvenirs might be used to better understand the contemporary reception of ancient artworks.

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Endnotes

1. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. John Bostock (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855), 36.60.

2. Charlotte A. Eaton, *Rome, in the Nineteenth Century; Containing a Complete Account of the Ruins of the Ancient City, the Remains of the Middle Ages, and the Monuments of Modern Times* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1852), 1:311. Because of the number of shops and the general downward turn in quality of mass-reproduced micromosaics, toward the end of the nineteenth century, it was necessary for publishers like John Murray to provide a curated list of the best places to purchase micromosaics from the masses that were available; see Judy Rudoe, "Mosaico in Piccolo: Craftsmanship and Virtuosity in Miniature Mosaics," in *The Gilbert Collection: Micromosaics*, ed. Jeanette H. Gabriel (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2000), 45; and John Murray, *A Handbook of Rome and its Environs* (London: John Murray, 1881), 24.

3. Plaster and sulfur gems, with their similar subjects and seriality of production, are the souvenirs most comparable to micromosaics.

4. For a discussion of royalty and micromosaics, see Heike Zech, *Micromosaics: Masterpieces from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection* (London: V&A Publishing, 2018), 12–13, and Jeanette H. Gabriel, *Micromosaics: Private Collections* (United States: Brian McCarthy, 2016), 8–11. While larger micromosaics such as tables and pictures tended to be the domain of the elite, and smaller micromosaics such as snuffboxes or paperweights tended to be reproduced at higher rates for travelers, we should not discount the cultural value of smaller, less expensive micromosaics. Irish tourist Lady Morgan Sydney documented how small souvenir micromosaics in the form of jewelry presented an expense: "At this epoch all business is at a stand . . . the ingenious Mosaici, who set the Capitol on earrings, hang the Coliseum on the neck of beauty, and clasp the fairest arms with St. Peter in Vinculis, may take down their expensive toys and, to the relief of all husbands and fathers, close their windows: the curiosity shops no longer tempt the curious." Lady Morgan Sydney Owenson, *Italy by Lady Morgan* (London: Henry Colburn and Co., 1821) 2:295.

5. To give an idea of the variation in price of such objects, a micromosaic picture of the Temple of Sibyl at Tivoli was sold by the Studio Vaticano around 1876 for 2,800 scudi. "Nota dei quadri in mosaici in smalti filati sistemati nel Gabinetto particolare dello Studio del Mosaico al Vaticano dall'anno 1876" ["Notes of the mosaic paintings in spun enamel existing in the Cabinet particular of the Mosaic Studio at the Vatican from the year 1876"]; Archivio Reverenda Fabbrica di San Pietro (ARFSP), Vatican City, Armadio 84, A61, F37. There is an account of a mosaic necklace with gold chain from Venice that cost 30 scudi, and Gherardo Volponi, a mosaicist who worked both in a private studio and for the Studio Vaticano, made mosaic chimneypieces that cost 400 scudi for Marchese Marini. Archivio di Stato di Roma (ASR), Rome, Busta 98 (Fabbrica di mosaici 1813–1838), Num. 3 Gherardo Volponi.

6. Nelson H. H. Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 6–15. David Hume, *Tourism Art and Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 123.

7. See Antonio Pinelli, "L'industria dell'antico e del souvenir," in *Il Classico si fa Pop: di scavi, copie, e altri pasticci*, eds. Mirella Serlorenzi, Marcello Barbanera, and Antonio Pinelli (Milan: Electa, 2018), 110–111, and Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini, eds., *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996).

8. Sarah Benson, "Reproduction, Fragmentation, and Collection: Rome and the Origin of Souvenirs," in *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance, and Place*, eds. D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 15.

9. Antonio Pinelli situates the souvenirs of Rome, including micromosaics, in their Grand Tour context. Antonio Pinelli, *Souvenir: l'industria dell'antico e il Grand Tour a Roma* (Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2010). Sarah Benson suggests that the early modern souvenirs of Rome set forth a collectively determined framework for the ways that we understand souvenirs today: as repeatable, fragmentable, and portable objects that are collected ("Reproduction," 34). Wilton and Bignamini put forth a catalog of souvenirs associated with the Grand Tour (Grand Tour).

10. See, for example, a selection: Domenico Petochi, Massimo Alfieri, and

Maria Grazia Branchetti, *I Mosaici Minuti Romani dei secoli XVIII e XIX* (Rome: Abete, 1981); Alvar González-Palacios, *Fasto romano: dipinti, sculture, arredi dai palazzi di Roma* (Rome: Leonardo-De Luca, 1991); Dario Narduzzi, ed., *Mosaici in mostra dallo Studio del Mosaico della Fabbrica di S. Pietro in Vaticano* (Città Vaticana: Tipografia Vaticana, 2001); Roberto Grieco and Arianna Gambino, *Roman Mosaic: l'arte del micromosaico tra '700 e '800* (Milan: De Agostini Rizzoli Arte & Cultura, 2001); Roberto Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic* (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2009); Maria Grazia Branchetti, *Mosaici minuti romani: collezione Savelli* (Rome: Gangemi, 2004); Alvar González-Palacios, *The Art of Mosaics: Selections from the Gilbert Collection* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1982); Jeanette H. Gabriel, ed., *The Gilbert Collection: Micromosaics* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2000); Gabriel, *Micromosaics: Private Collections; Zech, Micromosaics: Masterpieces*.

11. A notable exception with micromosaics is an edited volume by Chiara Stefani, *Ricordi in Micromosaico: Vedute e paesaggi per i viaggiatori del Grand Tour* (Rome: De Luca Editori D'Arte, 2011). This volume explores the appeal of souvenirs and tourists' discussion of them. The essays move beyond merely recording the fundamental information about micromosaics and discuss how micromosaics reflect the tourists' experiences of their visit.

12. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory on the Leisure Class*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 137–143.

13. Christopher B. Steiner, "Authenticity, Repetition, and the Aesthetics of Seriality: The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 90–5.

14. Carlo Pietrangeli, "Mosaici 'in piccolo,'" *Bollettino dei Musei Comunali di Roma* 25–27 (1986): 83. Steffi Röttgen, "The Roman Mosaic from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century: A Short Historical Survey," in *The Art of Mosaics: Selections from the Gilbert Collection*, ed. Alvar González-Palacios (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art), 24. The first mosaic altarpiece was made in St. Peter's as early as 1627, though it was made

- of Venetian glass. Dario Narduzzi, ed., *Mosaici in mostra dallo Studio del Mosaico della Fabbrica di S. Pietro in Vaticano* (Vatican City: Tipografia Vaticana, 2001), 9–11.
15. Gabriel, *The Gilbert Collection*, 14.
16. The Studio's strict control of the use of their smalti, or enamels, by their workers for their own private workshops in 1794 suggests that unauthorized use was a problem. In fact, there was a custodian whose only job was to account for and regulate the distribution of *smalti* (Petochi, Alfieri, and Branchetti, *I Mosaici Minuti*, 18). Documents note, for example, how Vatican micromosaicist Antonio De Angelis (active first half of the nineteenth century) received a sum of 370 scudi from Signore Luigi Marini, who ran a private mosaic workshop on the Via del Babuino, for *smalti filati*. This document is stamped with the papal insignia and it dates from the first half of the nineteenth century, which suggests that Vatican enamels continued to infiltrate the private market well after stricter regulations were enacted. ASR, Busta 98 (Fabbrica di mosaici 1813–1838) [Fabbrica di mosaici di L.M.], Num. 2: Lettere e conti (1819–1838, 1847).
17. Scottish traveler William Cadell wrote, "This Mosaic was once in the possession of Cardinal Furietti, who published a description of it." *A Journey in Carniola, Italy, and France in the Years 1817, 1818*, vol. I (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1820), 415. English theologian Edward Burton also acknowledged Furietti's publication when he wrote about the Doves of Pliny in his travelogue; see Burton, *A Description of the Antiquities and Other Curiosities of Rome: From Personal Observation during a Visit to Italy in the Years 1818–19* (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1828), 137.
18. Appearing even earlier than Furietti's publication was a 1741 engraving in *Roma antica distinta per regioni*. Fausto Amidei, et. al., *Roma antica distinta per ragioni, secondo l'esempio di Sesto Rufo, Vittore, e Nardini* (Rome: A spese di Gio. Lorenza Barbiellini Libraro a Pasquino, 1741), pl. 63. Many other publications in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries address the find of the Doves of Pliny, such as Piranesi's plan of the villa in 1781, Bottari and Foggini's 1782 *Del Museo Capitolino*, Carlo Fea's 1790 *Miscellanea filologica*, and Nibby's 1821 *Descrizione della Villa Adriana*. Mariana De Franceschini, *Villa Adriana: Mosaici-Pavimenti-Edifici* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1991), 337.
19. The President de Broesses and Pope Benedict XIV also visited the mosaic at Furietti's residence. Fabrizio Slavazzi, "I mosaici di Monsignor Frueitti: nuove notizie sul mosaico delle colombe di Villa Adriana," in *Atti del X colloquio dell'Associazione Italiana per lo studio e la conservazione del mosaico*, ed. Claudia Angelelli (Tivoli, IT: Scripta manent, 2005), 730.
20. Carlo Fea, *Miscellanea Filologica Critica e Antiquaria dell'avvocato Carlo Fea* (Rome: Nella Stamperia Pagliarini, 1790), CXXXV.
21. Miranda Marvin, *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue between Roman and Greek Sculptures* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 27.
22. For example, English traveler Charlotte Eaton wrote about the artists to whom Pliny attributed the Laocöon and how Pliny described the statue of the Nile in the Vatican (*Rome, in the Nineteenth Century*, 111 and 244).
23. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. John Bostock (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855), XXXVI.60.
24. See, for example, Burton, *A Description*, 137; George William Evans, *The Classic and Connoisseur in Italy and Sicily*, Vol. I (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Gren & Longman, 1835) 447–8; and William Mitchell Gillespie, *Rome: As Seen by a New-Yorker* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 42. In addition to travelers who actually cited the passage in full, nearly all tourists at least connected the mosaic explicitly to the mosaic addressed in Pliny.
25. George Head, *Rome: A Tour of Many Days* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), 2:20.
26. In fact, the Nilotic mosaic was even subject to a lively debate between Barthélemy and Bernard de Mountfaucon regarding its possible connection to a passage of Pliny. Tamara Griggs, "Antiquaries and the Nile mosaic: the changing Face of erudition," in *Viewing Antiquity: The Grand Tour, Antiquarianism, and Collecting*, eds. Carole Paul and Louis Marchesano (Rome: Carocci editore, 2000), 42–3.
27. J. Salmon, *A Description of the Works of Art of Ancient and Modern Rome*, vol. 1 (London: J. Sammells, 1798), 80.
28. Adelaide L. Harrington, *The Afterglow of European Travel* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1882), 180.
29. This mosaic was even displayed like a painting. Cardinal Furietti mounted it as a picture on the wall at Montecitorio, and it is still displayed in this manner today at the Musei Capitolini. Slavazzi, "I mosaici di Monsignor," 730.
30. A dispatch in *The Morning Post* stated that "Fac-similies of this curious relic [Doves of Pliny] are made on shells, and sold at Rome." "Pliny's Doves," *The Morning Post*, issue 16848, Monday, December 20, 1824.
31. Pietra dura tabletop; Christie's South Kensington Ltd, *Antiquities and Souvenirs of the Grand Tour, Wednesday 4 November 1992* (London: Christie's, 1992), no. 236.
32. See fan, c. 1780, the Fan Museum in Greenwich, Wilton and Bignamini, *Grand Tour*, cat. 263; fan, c. 1785, the Brighton Museum, *Fans and the Grand Tour* (Brighton: Brighton Museum, 1982), no. 18; and anonymously produced eighteenth-century fan, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (38.91.107).
33. Alabaster tazza of the birds. "Sotheby's Lot 419," Sotheby's, auction date October 5–7, 2010, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2010/chatworth-the-attic-sale-110309/lot.419.html> (accessed 24 July 2023). James Paul Cobbet asserted: "Among the antique productions of art found at Adrian's Villa, is the original beautiful mosaic representing four doves perched on the rim of a vase, copies of which, in mosaic and in alabaster, we see in the shops of London." Cobbett, *Journal of a Tour in Italy and also in part of France and Switzerland* (London: 11, Bolt-Court, 1830), 264. George Head suggested that "people in all countries, from the numerous copies in sculpture which have been dispersed about the world, are quite familiar" with the Doves of Pliny mosaic (*Rome: A Tour*, 20). These copies, as attested above, often had a circulation well beyond Italy.
34. Lucia Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli, *La collezione Paoletti: stampe in vetro per impronte di intagli e cammei*, (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2012), 2: no. 215.
35. Gillespie, *Rome: As Seen*, 42.
36. *Mementoes, Historical and Classical, Of a Tour through part of France, Switzerland, and Italy in the Years 1821 and 1822* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1824), 1:33.

37. George Stillman Hillard, *Six Months in Italy* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850), 285.
38. Gillespie, *Rome: As Seen*, 42.
39. Joseph Forsyth, *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters during an excursion in Italy in the years 1802 and 1803* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1812), 117.
40. *Mementoes*, 33.
41. Burton, *A Description*, 136–7.
42. For a selection of micromosaics faithful to the Doves of Pliny mosaic, see micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny by Giacomo Raffaelli, 1798, Savelli collection, Rome, Inv. Sc. A 11/236. (Branchetti, *Mosaici minuti*, 19); micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny, c. 1800 (Gabriel, *The Gilbert Collection*, fig. 107); micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny, late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, private collection (González-Palacios, *Fasto Romano*, fig. 37); micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny, late eighteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic*, fig. 228); and plaque by Giacomo Raffaelli, c.1799, private collection (Gabriel, *Micromosaics: Private Collections*, no. 75).
43. Judy Rudoe acknowledges the addition of the shadow in alignment with Pliny's text in the case of two micromosaics in the Gilbert Collection ("Mosaico in piccolo," 34). For a selection of examples with the addition of the reflection of the bird, see: micromosaic paperweight of Doves of Pliny, second half of nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic*, fig. 332); micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny, first half of the nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco and Gambino, *Roman Mosaic*, 155); micromosaic table with Doves of Pliny, second quarter of the nineteenth century, Savelli collection, (Branchetti, *Mosaici minuti*, 53); snuffbox with micromosaic of Doves of Pliny, c. 1825, Gilbert collection (Gabriel, *The Gilbert Collection*, fig. 141); paperweight, mid-to-late nineteenth century, private collection (Gabriel, *Micromosaics: Private Collections*, no. 221); and mosaic picture, c.1850, private collection (Gabriel, *Micromosaics: Private Collections*, no. 35).
44. A rare representation of a shadow of the dove is in Amidei's 1741 print; however, the shadow is not in the water below as dictated by Pliny but is rather reflected on the bowl (Amidei, *Roma antica*, pl. 63).
45. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, however, there is a single reproduction of the shadow on a small cameo that was likely produced in Naples; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 2007.214a,b, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/231639> (accessed 24 July 2023)
46. For a selection of micromosaics with feathers and/or seeds, see micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny with feathers and seeds, mid-nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Mosaic*, fig. 373); micromosaic plaque of Doves of Pliny with feathers, nineteenth century, private collection, "Sotheby's Lot 253," Sotheby's, auction date October 30, 2013, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/19th-century-furniture-n09021/lot.253.html> (accessed 24 July 2023); and micromosaic plaque of the Doves of Pliny with feathers, late nineteenth century, "Christies Lot 379," Christie's, auction date October 25, 2007, <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/furniture-lighting/a-roman-micromosaic-plaque-depicting-the-doves-4982003-details.aspx> (accessed 24 July 2023).
47. It went to the Lateran Museum from 1846 until it was returned to Vatican in 1963. Alessandra Uncini, "Il rapporto con I Musei Pontifici," *Bollettino- Monumenti, musei e gallerie pontificie* 10 (1990): 170–1.
48. Wolfgang Helbig, *Guide to the Public Collections of Classical Antiquities in Rome*, trans. James F. and Findlay Muirhead (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1895), 1: 512.
49. "... il centro del mosaico per avere la prova materiale che in questo pavimento ci fosse conservata la esatta copia di quell famoso lavoro di Soso; dove allora pur dovrebbero trovarsi le colombe Capitoline, se realmente esse sono la copia fedele tratta dallo stesso originale"; C. Bunsen, "Scoprimo di un mosaico nella Vigna Lupi, incontro il bastione di S. Gallo a Roma," *Bollettino dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* 1833, 83.
50. "Fashionable World," *The Morning Post*, issue 19553, Thursday, August 8, 1833.
51. Anna Maria De Strobel, "L'arazzeria di San Michele tra il settecento e l'ottocento: attraverso le opere delle collezioni vaticane," in *Arte e artigianato nella Roma di Belli*, eds. Laura Biancini and Franco Onorati (Rome: Editore Colombo, 1998), 152–3, fig. 14. The tapestry was displayed at the Floreria Apostolica until 1935, when it entered the Musei Vaticani (Uncini, "Il rapporto," 171).
52. The only other image with the Doves of Pliny, and either feathers or seeds, is a nineteenth-century painting by Johann Wenzel Peter, who worked in Rome. His painting includes feathers and must have been painted before the 1833 discovery of the asarotos oecus mosaic, since he died in 1829. Perhaps micromosaicists were inspired by this painting with their inclusion of feathers. Regardless, its appearance on micromosaics correlates with the discovery of the asarotos *oecus mosaic*, which suggests that the discovery excited such iconographic choices in micromosaics. See "Sotheby's Lot 79," Sotheby's, auction date June 21, 2018, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/tableaux-omp-19me-sculpture-pfi809/lot.79.html> (accessed 24 July 2023).
53. For a selection of micromosaics with modified coloring of the doves, see micromosaic picture with Doves of Pliny, mid-nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic*, fig. 399); micromosaic brooch with Doves of Pliny, second half of the nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco and Gambino, *Roman Mosaic*, 64); micromosaic paperweight with the Doves of Pliny, late nineteenth century, private collection, "Christie's Lot 155," Christie's, auction date September 23, 2008, <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot/an-italian-micromosaic-and-bla-late-19th-5114105-details.aspx> (accessed 24 July 2023); micromosaic paperweight with Doves of Pliny, last half nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic*, fig. 332).
54. In the mid-eighteenth century, Alessio Mattioli discovered how to tint the opaque glass used for the tesserae, which freed the Vatican from reliance on shades of color from Venice; see Rudoe, "Mosaico in Piccolo," 28; Maria Grazia Branchetti, "L'Arte del mosaico minuto: una tecnica e il suo tempo," in *Mosaici Minuti Romani del 700 e dell' 800*, eds. Massimo Alfieri, Maria Grazia Branchetti, Guido Cornini (Rome: Edizioni del Mosaico, 1986), 21. The documents of the Studio Vaticano show the ever-increasing number of tints available to micromosaicists throughout the nineteenth century. For example, in 1816, there were 15,326 tints available (ARFSP, Sistema allo Studio de Mosaico della Fabbrica . . . 1816 Armadio 98 C33), but by 1838, there were over 18,000 (ARFSP, Nuovo Regolamento 15 Maggio 1838 Armadio 12 G14). The growing number was thanks to a new technique,

malmischiati, invented in the beginning of the nineteenth century. *Malmischiati* used multiple colors in a single cane, and this resulted in increased tones and versatility of coloring; see Chiara Bertaccini and Cesare Fiori, *Micromosaico: storia, tecnica, arte, del mosaico minuto romano* (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 2009), 90; Narduzzi, *Mosaici*, 17.

55. Likely also driving the interest in color was early nineteenth-century research by Quatremère de Quincy about polychromy in classical sculpture. See Paolo Bertonicini Sabatini, "Antoine Chrysostôme Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) and the "Rediscovery of Polychromy in Grecian Architecture: Colour Techniques and Archaeological Research in the Pages of 'Olympian Zeus,'" *Second International Congress on Construction History 2006*: 393-407.

56. Gillespie, *Rome: As Seen*, 42.

57. Julien Armstrong, "Birds in Art." *The Selbourne Magazine* 1890: 73.

58. Forsyth, *Remarks*, 58, 117.

59. Jane Waldie, *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817* (London: John Murray, 1820), 2:263.

60. Evans, *The Classic and Connoisseur*, 447-8.

61. Signaling micromosaic superiority as fine art was their display in London's 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, where micromosaicist Michelangelo Barberi won a prize medal from the council for his table of micromosaic *vedute* of Italian cities; ASR, Camerlengato, Parte II, Titolo III-, commercio, Busta 141, num. 2771. Grande Esposizione di Londra. This table was made for Francis Needham, the Earl of Kilmorey, demonstrating that such objects became the domain of the elite.

62. "Gli antichi ne gettarono è vero i fondamenti ma no la portarono a quella perfezione a cui li moderni artisti l'hanno condotta creando per fino di nuovi più

analoghi materiali, onde elevare questo vanno delle belle arti al punto di formarne l'imitazione la più prossima possibile della Pittura. Li Romani in fatti, se debbari giudicare dai monumenti, che ci restano limitarono il mosaico alli pavimenti, e le famose colombe così encomiate da Plinio ci provano abbastanza, che quest'arte era ben lungi da quei progressi, che ora vi si ammirano, e siccome una dale ragioni di questa limitazione era certamente la ristretta quanti la delle tinte, che presentano le pietre colorate, con cui gli antichi eseguivano tali opere, in conseguenza i moderni con l'aiuto della chimica cercarono e felicemente rinvennero nei smalti l'immensa quantità delle diverse degradazioni che abbisognano per imitare più difficil impasti della Pittura"; ARFSP. Armadio 12, G14c, F583, 1731-1811.

63. Charlotte Eaton writes a passage that almost directly mimics that of the Studio Vaticano (*Rome, in the Nineteenth Century*, 311).

64. Eaton, *Rome, in the Nineteenth Century*, 311.

65. "Mediante simili ritrovati risulta una superiorità di mezzi per eseguire i mosaici, che furono certamente sconosciuti dagli antichi, per cui si dovrebbe supporre che tale arte sia giunta ora alla sua perfezione, e prova ne sia la tazza detta delle palombe illustrata da Plinio, e più particolarmente dal summentovato cardinal Furietti, dicendo con enfasi che in un pollice quadrato di quel mosaico, ora esistente in Campidoglio, vi si contano 163 pietruzze, mentre oggi si eseguisce la tazza intieri con i quattro piccioni in meno del detto pollice quadrato"; Moroni, Gaetano, "Mosaico," in *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro ai nostri giorni*, vol. 47 (Venice: dalla Tipografia Emiliana, 1847), 78.

66. Waldie, *Sketches*, 263.

67. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 55-65, 69.

68. Waldie, *Sketches*, 263.

69. Micromosaics: snuffbox, end of eighteenth/beginning of nineteenth century, Savelli Collection, Inv. Ve.R.a. 33/149 (Branchetti, *Mosaici Minuti*, 39); plaque, late eighteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic*, fig. 264); snuffbox, 1815-1820, private collection (González-Palacios, *Fasto Romano*, 38, no. 73); plaque, given to Sir William Drummond in 1827, private collection (González-Palacios, *Fasto Romano*, 38, no. 40). Fans: late eighteenth century fan in the manner of Tommaso Bigatti, Praz collection, Inv. 204 (Rosazza-Ferraris, *Museo Mario Praz*, cat. 562); fan dating to c. 1780, the Fan Museum in Greenwich, (Wilton and Bignamini, *Grand Tour*, cat. 263); anonymously produced fan, eighteenth-century, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (38.91.107). Prints: Piranesi's engraving of the Pantheon for *Il Campo Marzio* in 1762 (Fagiolo, "Roma quanta fuit," fig. 7).

70. Hillard, *Six Months*, 316. Tourists often misattribute the towers to Bernini, though they were added by Carlo Maderno and Francesco Borromini.

71. For example: micromosaic box of the Seller of Cupids by Clemente Ciuli, early nineteenth century, private collection (Grieco, *Roman Micromosaic*, no. 288); tray with the Seller of Cupids manufactured by the Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda, private collection; see Angela Caròla-Perrotti, ed., *Le Porcellane dei Borbone di Napoli* (Naples: Guida editori, 1986), tav. 72. Also: Steatite gem, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum; see Maria Elisa Micheli, "Eroti in gabbia. Storia di un motivo iconografico," *Prospettiva: Rivista di storia dell'arte antica e moderna* 65 (1992): fig. 5. Finally: fan with Seller of Cupids, Museo Nazionale di San Martino; see Gina Carla Ascione, "Il 'souvenir' di Pompei. Dalle immagini neoclassiche alla diffusione nell'epoca della riproducibilità tecnica," *Rivista di Studi di Pompeiana* 12-13 (2001-2002): 83.

Images of Maps and Connotative Tendencies in Early Republican America

Kerr Houston

In general, historians of horology are unanimous in characterizing timepieces produced in late eighteenth-century Britain and America as unprecedentedly accurate—and as important elements in the formation of a rigorously chronopolitical culture.¹ Following Christian Huygens’s revolutionary application of a pendulum to the movement of a clock, around 1660, clockmakers developed new and increasingly reliable escapements, refined their devices to moderate air resistance, experimented with combinations of materials that could accommodate subtle changes in temperature, and crafted clocks that could withstand both the turbulent motions of a ship at sea and the nuanced demands of scientists.² Predictably, London was a leading center of production and consumption, but extremely reliable timepieces were also constructed in Paris, the Black Forest, Amsterdam, and Philadelphia—where, in the 1780s and 1790s, David Rittenhouse

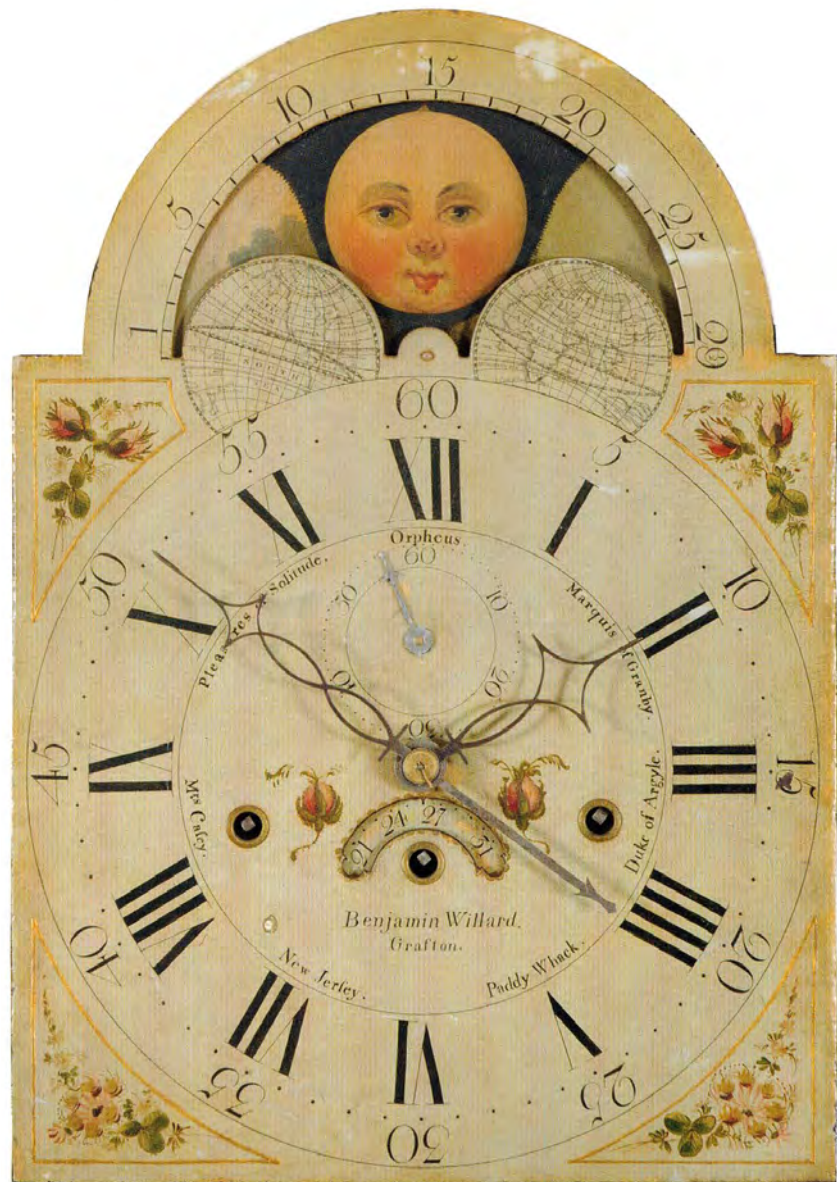


Figure 1. Benjamin Willard, brass dial from musical tall case clock, c. 1789, 18 ½ x 13 in. (47 by 33 cm). Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, Yale University. Photograph courtesy Yale University Art Gallery.

constructed a series of clocks that were, as Alexis McCrossen has observed, “astonishingly precise.”³ To be sure, clocks and watches remained costly items, affordable only to the relatively wealthy; as of 1800, less than a quarter of Americans owned a mechanical timepiece of any kind. Nevertheless, an increasingly extensive network of public clocks facilitated the intensification of a temporal culture that was characterized, as E.P. Thompson famously noted, by a growing emphasis on synchronization, exactitude, and discipline.⁴

Unsurprisingly, this interest in precision characterized the design and manufacture of most tall case clocks, among the most expensive and reliable of all eighteenth-century time-reckoning devices and the outcome of an intricate series of contributions by cabinetmakers, smiths, braziers and the clockmakers who assembled the movement.⁵ Typically between seven and nine feet tall, such floor clocks featured a wooden case that housed the pendulum and the substantial weights powering the movement and the striking. Most could run for a week before resetting, and a few could go a full month. In the clock’s hood, steel hands indicated the hour, minute, and second by pointing to engraved or painted markings on the dial plate. This plate usually communicated other data as well. A tall case clock finished around 1789, for example, features a dial bearing the name of the Massachusetts clockmaker Benjamin Willard, along with the date and the current phase of the moon (fig. 1). In addition, highly detailed hemispherical maps of the world implied an interest in the science of cartography and

the close measurement of space.⁶ Admittedly, the general air of scientific rigor in Willard’s clock was softened slightly by a quartet of painted floral sprigs and a menu of seven available melodies: organic form and popular art, supplementing science. Nevertheless, the general impression evoked by such a clock is one of careful calibration and mathematical precision.

Comparable examples multiply quickly. Take, for instance, a tall case clock assembled by Eli Terry, around 1792, and now owned by the Yale University Art Gallery (fig. 2). A skilled mechanic, Terry would transform the field of clockmaking; in later years, his innovative use of a water-powered mill and interchangeable parts facilitated clock production on a mass scale.⁷ In this example, however, Terry’s workshop was still relying on traditional techniques in producing an elegant, hand-wrought specimen. The handsome cherry case is crowned with a large hood, which is in turn capped by a pagoda-shaped pediment whose pierced fretwork reflects a broad interest in Chinese forms.⁸ Flanked by two carved columns, the glazed door reveals an elaborate brass plate featuring carefully engraved hour numerals, a seconds dial, a calendar aperture, and arabesques in the corners (fig. 3). As with Willard’s clock, the arched top features a painted moon dial, a lunar calendar, and a pair of engraved hemispherical maps. In addition, like Willard’s clock and many other high-end American

Figure 2. Eli Terry, tall case clock, 1792–93. Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, Yale University. Photograph courtesy Yale University Art Gallery.





clocks made in the years shortly before 1800, Terry's timepiece foregrounds exquisite craftsmanship, a tidy finished neatness, and meticulous engineering.

But this impression of exactitude fades with a closer look at the maps on Terry's clock—which are executed with a remarkably casual looseness.

To be sure, the longitudinal and latitudinal lines and degree markings imply an interest in systematic specificity. In the left hemisphere, for example, we can clearly discern North and South America, appropriately linked by an isthmus, while the Baja California peninsula is also apparent. Beyond those details, however, the two maps seem flatly

Figure 3. Eli Terry, detail of brass dial from tall case clock, 1792–93, 17 ½ x 12 in. (43.5 x 30.5 cm). Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, Yale University. Photograph courtesy Yale University Art Gallery.

uninterested in any geographical exactitude. The contours of South America are arbitrary; further west, we can make out several inexplicably

large landmasses in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean. The right hemisphere is even more confusing. Is this meant to be Europe? Asia? The meandering contours bear no meaningful resemblance to either continent, and the lack of any reference to Africa only intensifies our sense of disorientation. Nor do the apparent textual labels help: on close inspection, they reveal themselves as nothing more than nonsensical series of random letters and meaningless squiggles. Superficial signs of precision and science quickly give way to a blithe informality or complacency.

Terry's clock is far from alone in this regard. For example, the dial of a handsome clock made around 1780, by Pennsylvanian clockmaker Adam Brant, now owned by Lisa Minardi, also features two hemispherical maps, each of which is likewise subdivided by a series of longitudinal lines. It is virtually impossible to tell which map corresponds to what part of the globe. Fluid squiggles take the place of discrete continental boundaries—the effect is more calligraphic than cartographic. Or consider a case clock assembled around 1805 by Isaac Brokaw of Bridgetown, New Jersey.⁹ Like Willard's 1789 clock, it employs transfer-printed hemispherical maps in an even freer manner.¹⁰ In Brokaw's dial, the outline of Africa is comprised of largely arbitrary angles, and India dissolves into a thicket of invented islands. Call them rough maps, bad maps, or loosely rendered maps: in any event, they constitute an odd but pervasive genre. Placed just above eye level on some of the most intricate and accurate machines of their age, these maps suggest a casual disregard for the

intricate workmanship and precise engineering that surrounds them.

So how, then, should we understand this tendency? Several possible explanations quickly come to mind, but none ultimately satisfies. Could the roughness of these maps result from poor artistry or limited technical ability? Likely not—in many cases, the loosely rendered maps are coupled with competently rendered systems of marking. In the dial of Terry's clock, for instance, the engraving is precise and competent; the longitudinal and latitudinal lines are crisp and the quality of line consistent. The hemispheres were evidently the work of a practiced, accomplished engraver.¹¹ Might that engraver perhaps have had a limited familiarity with, or access to, detailed maps that could have served as a template? Again, such a prospect seems unlikely, since reliable, inexpensive, and highly specific maps of the world were widely available in eighteenth-century North America. Indeed, as Martin Brückner and other scholars have noted, widespread American interest in geography led to a vibrant market for maps in the late 1700s.¹² Moreover, many of these maps offered double-hemisphere images of the world, such as a 1775 print by Robert Sayer (fig. 4), or the opening map in Jedediah Morse's popular *Geography Made Easy*, first published in New Haven in 1784 and soon reissued in a number of subsequent editions. Cumulatively, this yielded a culture in which a dedicated boy could produce—with a bit of effort, an encyclopedia, and a globe as models—a highly detailed rendering of the world as, in fact, 13-year-old Charles Barrell did in 1797 (fig. 5). Attributing the rough quality of maps in contemporary clock dials

to a shortage of relevant models, a disinterest in geography, or technical ineptitude thus feels inconsistent with the surrounding visual evidence. Instead, this persistent feature demands a different explanation.¹³

In this article, I argue that such rough maps were part of a much larger tendency—visible in a variety of artistic genres in the late 1700s—toward evocation and suggestion rather than simple emulation. As the eighteenth century unfolded, Anglo-American writings on aesthetics eschewed a dogmatic insistence upon mimesis and articulated an intensifying conviction that roughly executed images could effectively convey a subject or a concept. This tendency was evident, for example, in favorable references to loose handling in paintings, in the growing value assigned to sketches, and in a lively interest in graffiti as well as visual rebuses. It was apparent, too, in the explosive popularity of caricatures, which ignored traditional academic notions of skill, employing instead a reductive linear shorthand and a fundamentally abstract element.¹⁴ It was manifest as well in the mounting frequency with which artists employed arbitrary marks and strokes in granting an impression (rather than attempting to offer an exacting copy) of a given subject. To be fair, this general turn away from mimesis toward evocation and connotation has occasionally been noted.¹⁵ Its appearance, however, in clocks—among the most expensive and complex devices extant at the time—has apparently not been observed, either by horologists or by historians of visual and material culture. This article contends that early republican American clocks can and should be

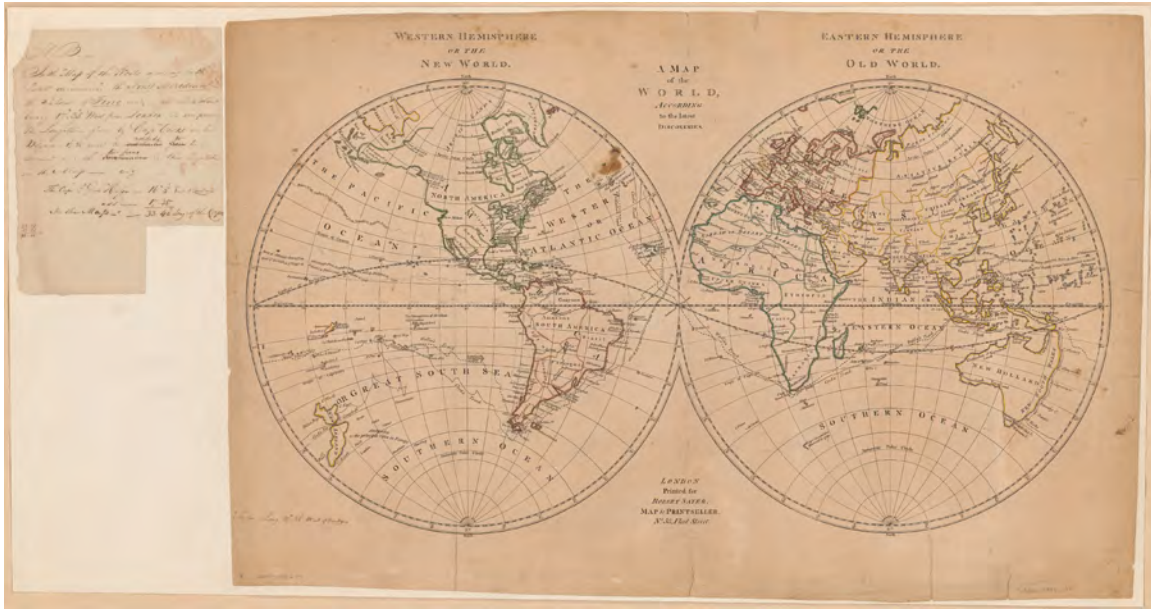
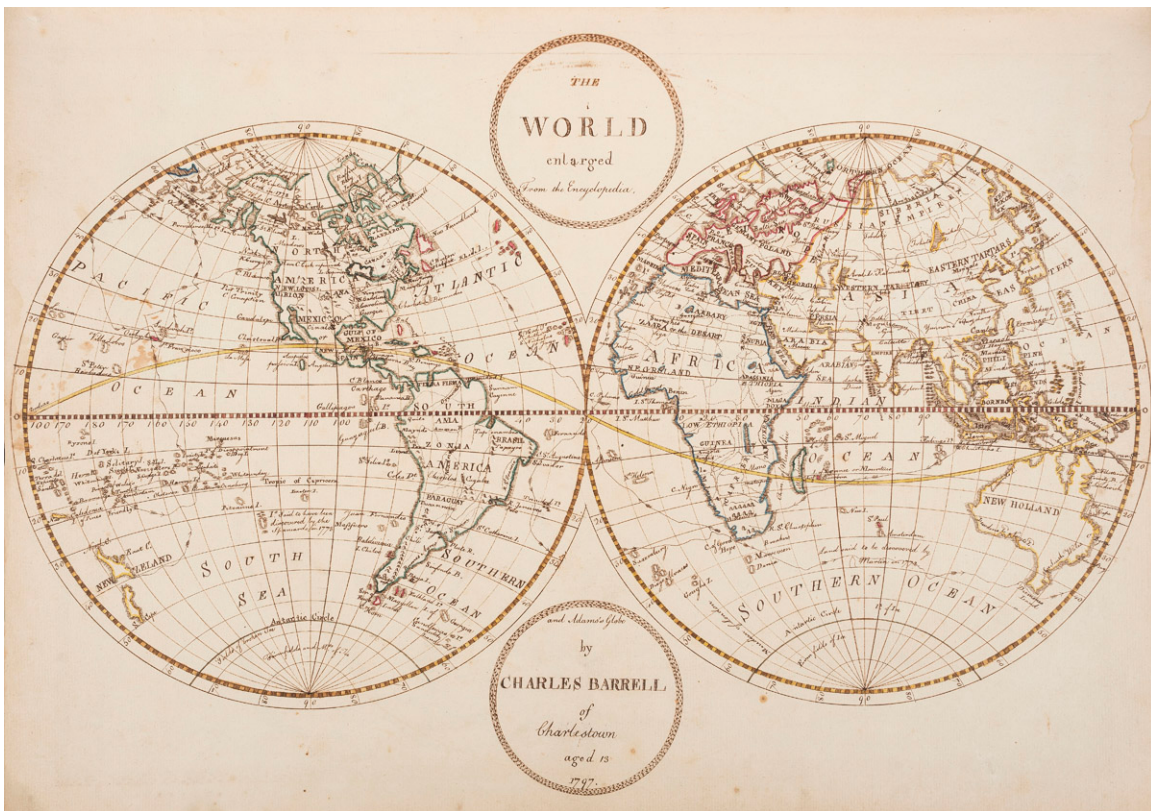


Figure 4. Robert Sayer, *A map of the world according to the latest discoveries*, c. 1775. Hand-colored print on paper, 17 11/16 x 27 15/16 in. (45 by 71 cm). Photograph courtesy Library of Congress.

Figure 5. Charles Barrell, *The World Enlarged*, from *The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Barrell*, 1797, 19 5/8 x 13 3/4 in. (50 x 35 cm). Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.



seen in relation to broader artistic developments. Moreover, I observe that an accent upon temporal precision was apparently distinct from an interest in geographical accuracy. Rather, the *connotation* of exhaustiveness could evidently suffice, as clocks reminded viewers of global space, without precisely describing it—because, while time and space were intricately connected, a clock could only indicate time in terms of *here*, rather than *there*. Viewed in these ways, the loosely rendered maps featured in the dials of numerous clocks need not be read as the products of poor workmanship, nonchalance in the name of efficiency, or simple geographic ignorance. Instead, we understand them more fully only when seeing them in relation to a common embrace, in early republican American visual culture, of artistic connotation, abstraction, and imaginative work.

From Mimesis to Abstraction

Maps have been understood and explained in many ways over the years—as pictures, as texts, as systems of signs—but their fundamentally mimetic aspect has long been acknowledged by historians of cartography.¹⁶ Imitation was a central, and often embattled, topic in eighteenth-century Anglo-American writing on the arts. Familiar with ancient Greek discussions of artistic mimesis, Enlightenment-era poets, painters, and philosophers regularly endorsed the idea that an underlying goal of the arts involved close imitation of the world at large.¹⁷ As Alexander Pope famously put it, in a 1711 essay, “First follow Nature.”¹⁸ Over the

course of the 1700s, however, the doctrine of mimesis was repeatedly qualified, delimited, and tested—until it reached a breaking point. Indeed, a substantial body of scholarship details the profound theoretical shift that took place in the late 1700s, as mimetic theory gave way to novel notions of artistic expression and nuanced doctrines of taste and judgment.¹⁹

Some of the period objections to mimetic theory are relatively clear and easily summarized. For one thing, critics acknowledged with increasing frequency that the various arts involved distinct degrees or forms of imitation. In 1757, Edmund Burke conceded that poetry and rhetoric affect by sympathy rather than imitation. Five years later, Lord Kames went still further, declaring that, “Of all the fine arts, painting only and sculpture are in their nature imitative.”²⁰ Mimesis, it seemed, was not a unifying artistic principle after all; at most, it was typical of only some of the arts. But was it in fact even that? As some writers pointed out, even painting and sculpture did not always copy from nature; rather, they often sought to improve upon and idealize it. Such an idea, of course, had already been articulated by Italian Renaissance theorists, and was explored by Jonathan Richardson as early as the 1720s.²¹ It was given an influential endorsement, though, by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his third Discourse, delivered in 1770. Skilled painters, he contended, attempt to transcend individual variations and accidental deficiencies, aiming instead to communicate “one common idea and central form, which is the abstract of the various individual forms belonging to that class.”²² Art,

in other words, aims at distillation and synthesis rather than rote copying. While some theorists still clung to imitation as an important artistic principle, their arguments became increasingly conditional and qualified; some argued, for example, that artists imitated natural principles or an underlying order. The imitation of nature thus became, as René Wellek observed, a concept now expected to accommodate every kind of art, “from literal naturalism to the most abstract idealization, and all stages in between.”²³

Strict notions of mimesis were under pressure from other directions as well. One of the most notable ways in which this played out involved a demonstrable interest, in some artistic circles, in the radical simplification of communicative form. If the function of art is representational, some artists wondered, what is the minimal threshold for effective representation? Annibale and Agostino Carracci implicitly raised such a question in the late 1500s in a series of reductive visual puzzles: simple linear schemata supposedly representing involved subjects, such as a bricklayer working with a trowel behind a wall in such a way that only the tips of his head and tool are visible.²⁴ Such an image eschewed all incidental detail, with the subject matter distilled into pure linear form or geometry—resulting in a nominally representational picture that verged on the abstract. In the mid-1700s, such examples intrigued William Hogarth, who repeatedly expressed his own interest in reductive visual communication. In a 1758 print, for example, Hogarth described a drawing “of a certain Italian Singer that Struck at first

sight, which consisted only of a Straight perpendicular Stroke with a Dot over it.”²⁵ He allegedly boasted, moreover, that he could draw a sergeant holding a pike and entering an alehouse while being trailed by his dog with only three strokes of a pencil. As Ronald Paulson has observed, Hogarth “was evidently fascinated with the possibilities of discovering the essential form of an object, or reducing an object to this essential form [...] Hogarth was seeking a recognizable representation at its most elemental.”²⁶

In that sense, Hogarth was far from alone in rendering individuals by means of a focus on a revealing or essential quality, for the increasingly popular work of British caricaturists often aimed at a comparably elemental recognizability. Here again, Italian art offers a useful precedent. In the 1630s, Gian Lorenzo Bernini executed a deft linear sketch of Scipione Borghese, managing to convey, in only a few lines, the pompous seriousness of the cardinal. As Irving Lavin noted, the image involves an extreme, exaggerated simplicity.²⁷ Bernini’s

drawing thus stood behind the flood of caricatures washing across Britain in the 1760s and 1770s, in what Sir E.H. Gombrich deemed “a fashion almost amounting to a craze in society.”²⁸ Of course, British caricaturists often worked in a

Figure 6. Alexander Cozens, plate XV from *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscapes*, 1785. Lift-ground aquatint and engraving on paper, 10 9/16 × 14 1/8 in. (27 × 35.7 cm). Open Access Image from the Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University. Photograph: R. Lee.



markedly satirical idiom, tending toward aggressive distortions of form in order to provoke humorous effects.²⁹ Still, underlying such imagery was a basic supposition that in the process they were getting at a deeper truth that transcended mere outward appearance.³⁰

Perhaps predictably, the popularity of both visual puzzles and caricatures was accompanied by a growing regard for loose, evocative handling. By the late 1700s, the ability to *suggest* by means of rough, gestural marks was widely prized. Such a development is partially discernible in the growing interest in sketches, often celebrated for an immediacy known as *prontezza* and praised for their ability to imply general ideas.³¹ It was also related, as M. Dorothy George has shown, to the popularity of caricature as a hobby among amateurs in the 1760s, a trend that soon led to the wide acceptance of “incorrect but expressive drawing.”³² It further informed contemporary analyses of finished paintings, as in Reynolds’s discussion, in his fourteenth Discourse, of Gainsborough’s emphatically gestural brushwork. “It is pre-supposed,” held Reynolds, “that in this undetermined manner there is the general effect; enough to remind the spectator of the original; the imagination supplies the rest.”³³ Indeterminacy, generalization, and imagination: in Reynolds’s view, a central strength of Gainsborough’s work lay in its ability to imply and evoke, rather than to merely record. Perhaps the most radical application of these ideas, though, appeared in a 1785 instructional manual in which Alexander Cozens recommended using ink blots as a means of generating landscape forms (fig. 6).³⁴

Arguing that such a technique “necessarily gives a quickness and freedom of hand,” Cozens stressed the ability of blots to evoke, through a sort of visual shorthand, more complex forms.³⁵

In a variety of ways, then, the mimetic model was yielding to a realization that abstraction and suggestion could play valuable communicative functions. In certain cases, this realization was the subject of explicit analysis, as in George Berkeley’s widely read inquiry into representation—which, he concluded, was ultimately dependent upon arbitrary conventions.³⁶ In other cases, it was merely implicit—as in Ezra Stiles’s remark, regarding his 1770-71 portrait by Samuel King, that the books and astronomical devices in the painting “are more descriptive of my Mind, than the Effigies of my Face.”³⁷ Regardless of the difference in emphasis, both Berkeley and Stiles were pointing to the perceived efficacy of connotative symbolism, as opposed to literal mimetic denotation. They were thus typical of an era in which, as Jules Prown once wrote, “[t]he palpable replication of natural forms gave way to two-dimensional abstractions [and] pictures of things were used in place of the thing itself.”³⁸

Maps, Impressions, and Concepts

Replication gave way to abstractions: to be sure, the interests of Royal Academicians were remote in setting and spirit from the workshops of early republican clockmakers, and American painters and engravers were often no more than indirectly familiar with the evolving challenges

to mimesis. Yet the tendency toward abstraction was undeniably widespread, cutting across media, artistic genres, and contexts on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, it was also markedly discernible in eighteenth-century images of maps, which commonly reflected the growing taste for simplification, distillation, and an emphasis on general effect. For a well-known early instance of this phenomenon, we might turn to *The Orgy*, from Hogarth’s popular series *A Rake’s Progress* (fig. 7). In the background of the chaotic scene, a maid seems to set fire to a large double-hemisphere map. Of course, there is a moralizing component in play here; Hogarth likely intended the map to be seen as a symbol of a secular, worldly life characterized by the exchange of commodities and bodies for sale. When we look more closely, though, several details are discernible: we can just make out, for instance, a title (“Totus Mundus”), hints of landmasses, and a pair of figures in the lower right corner. Still, the rendering is nothing like the highly detailed depictions of maps and globes visible in, say, Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors* or Jan Vermeer’s *Art of Painting*, which clearly allude to specific, identifiable sources.³⁹ Instead, Hogarth’s loose mark-making frustrates any attempt to perceive more specific details. As a result, we are left with, in the words of Geoff Armitage, “the impression of it being a map, rather than the image being a strict copy.”⁴⁰ Evocation replaces mimesis as an operational term.

The many prints circulating broadly on both sides of the Atlantic offer further examples of the tendency.⁴¹ In Matthew Darly’s 1772 *The Fly*



Figure 7. William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress III: The Orgy*, oil on canvas, 1734. 24 5/8 x 29 5/8 in. (62.5 x 75.2 cm). Photograph: © Sir John Soane's Museum, London.



Figure 8. Anonymous, *An Extraordinary Gazette, or the Disappointed Politicians*, 1778? Etching and mezzotint on paper, British Cartoon Prints Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Photograph courtesy Library of Congress.



Figure 9. Detail of plate from Jedediah Morse, *Geography Made Easy: being an Abridgement of the American Geography*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1791), 3 15/16 x 6 7/8 in. (10 x 17.5 cm).

here; rather, the maps are meant to suggest an eroding empire.⁴⁴ The larger idea matters more than any topographical particulars.

Interestingly, loosely rendered maps can even be found in American geographical textbooks, such as the third edition of Morse’s popular *Geography Made Easy*, published in 1791 (fig. 9). In the book’s opening pages, Morse discusses gravity and the roundness of the Earth, acknowledging that “many find it difficult to conceive how people can stand on the opposite side of the globe without falling off.”⁴⁵ The accompanying print offers a visualization of the problem, as two colossal men stand on opposite poles of a hemisphere, and a trio of ships ply the seas—all demonstrating, cumulatively, the phenomenon of gravity. Notably, the image includes several clearly labeled continents, while England and the Atlantic Ocean are also indicated. But, in general, the image’s geographical strategy is, like its inconsistent scale, pronouncedly informal. The shape of Europe is barely recognizable, Africa is crossed by an imaginary river and bears little resemblance to the continent’s actual form, and New Zealand (labeled “Zeland”) appears, inexplicably, in the southern Atlantic. Once again, mimesis and accuracy are jettisoned in the name of an overarching concept—in this case, the Earth’s gravitational pull.

Cumulatively, then, such images illustrate a general embrace of abstraction and suggestion. They

Catching Macaroni, for instance, a preening dandy bestrides the earth’s two poles as he seeks his frivolous quarry. The partially visible hemispheres are clearly labeled (*Antartick Circle* and *Artick Circle*), while longitudinal and latitudinal lines are rendered with some care.⁴² There is, however, no substantial interest in evoking actual landmasses—for these are not intended to be reliable, functioning maps. Rather, they are cursory indications of the obsessive habit of a foppish youth. Similarly, in a 1778 etching, a klatch of British politicians reviews developments in the former American colonies, two prominent wall maps occupying much of the background (fig. 8).⁴³ A caption above

the larger map states that it depicts British America in 1762, while the smaller is labeled “A map of America belonging to the English in 1778.” As a pair, then, they offer a concise history of Britain’s North American possessions, yet neither map is meant to be geographically accurate in any specific sense. The larger one includes several colonial site names but displays a flippantly relaxed attitude toward topography, placing New York to the west of Charleston and relying on loose graphic squiggles to suggest rivers or borders. The smaller map consists, in turn, of nothing but a cloud of wriggling snakes: a metaphorical allusion to the revolution that had taken place. Obviously, precision is not a goal

also call to mind Gombrich's famous observation that pictures are not statements that can be simply judged true or false. Rather, the truthfulness of any image depends upon the syntactical claims made about it.⁴⁶ In many late eighteenth-century images of maps, the implicit claims no longer depended upon absolute mimesis, but upon general evocation. Instead of purporting to offer an exhaustively detailed replica of a particular map, such images gestured toward a type of object, or an idea. Consider as example the American painter Ralph Earl's 1784 portrait of his second wife, Ann Whiteside Earl (fig. 10). In her lap, she holds a partially unrolled map, a compass rose occupying one corner. The rest of the map, however, consists primarily of mere squiggles and wavy lines. Does the map lie? Not at all—for we understand (as did Ezra Stiles in 1771) that its primary function is emblematic rather than mimetic. It is the sitter's implied conversance with a tool of knowledge that is at issue here, rather than our sense that this is any *specific* map.

It is critical to recognize that this was a choice, and that British and American artists working in the late 1700s could and did employ starkly different idioms, sometimes rendering their subjects with a highly mimetic level of detail, while other times employing a looser, more impressionistic style hinting at the essence of the subject. Indeed, they could even shift between these options in a single image. In the portrait just discussed, Earl rendered his wife and her clothing in an exceptionally sensitive manner; here, evidently, sartorial specificity mattered.⁴⁷ Sometimes, the details of maps also mattered. In Earl's 1798



group portrait *Mrs. Noah Smith and her Children*, one of the boys holds an opened book, revealing a foldout, two-hemisphere map. In this case, the level of detail and representative fidelity is high: high enough, in fact, to allow a scholar to speculate that it refers to one of Morse's geographies, keyed to specific grade levels.⁴⁸ This is not just any map, then. Instead, it points to the boy's familiarity with a specific body of knowledge appropriate to his age.⁴⁹

A similar range of approaches to the rendering of tools of geographical knowledge is evident in certain tradesmen's cards. In a card made in

Figure 10. Ralph Earl, *Ann Whiteside Earl*, oil on canvas, 1784. 46 5/8 x 37 7/8 in. (118.4 x 96.8 cm) Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, MA. Gift of Herbert L. Pratt (Class of 1895).

the mid-1700s for Thomas Jeffreys, a London-based engraver, geographer, and printseller, the reclining figure in the lower right touches a globe depicted in considerable detail (fig. 11). Without difficulty, we can identify the individual continents; in fact, the globe features even more local details, denoting Ireland, Florida, and several Caribbean islands. Of course, such detail makes sense in a card advertising



Figure 11. Anthony Walker, trade card made for Thomas Jefferys, engraving, 18th century, 6 15/16 x 9 13/16 in. (17.7 x 24.9 cm.). Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

an engraver and geographer: precision is naturally important here. Interestingly, though, at the bottom of the card we see a haphazard collection of books and manuscripts, two of which are open to pages labeled “Maps.” These maps, strikingly, share none of the globe’s interest in geographical specificity, as each consists of a few wavy lines, merely suggesting the idea of a generic territory instead of any actual state. Perhaps this relaxed attitude is due in part to the small scale of the forms, or to the fact that they occupy a marginal, heavily shadowed portion of the composition. Regardless, they employ a distinct syntactical logic: instead of mimicking, they evoke. Or, in more exacting semiotic terms, they prioritize connotation rather than denotation. As Nelson Goodman once argued, “A picture must denote a man to represent him, but need not denote anything to be a man-representation.”⁵⁰ By the same logic, the images at the base of the trade card are what we might accordingly call map-representations rather than denotations of specific maps.

We can perhaps better understand, at this point, the considerable variety of map forms visible in American tall case clock faces made in the 1780s and 1790s. Recall that many of these clocks included richly detailed hemispherical maps, offering highly specific and largely accurate renderings of the world’s form as it was understood at the time. In the example by Benjamin Willard in which continents and oceans are clearly labeled, New Zealand is correctly placed, and landmasses like the Arabian peninsula and Indian subcontinent are distinctly recognizable.⁵¹ Such details contribute to a general effect

of precision and order: an aesthetic embodied more generally by the clock itself, which took advantage of such recent innovations as elongated pendulums, mercury, and ivory pallets in an attempt to produce a highly reliable accounting of time. Instruments like Willard’s also suggest that the map was to be seen *as a map*: as a potentially usable display, that is, of geographical knowledge. Such a form aspires to mimetic accuracy and functions in a denotative register: its governing idiom is representative.

On the other hand, clocks by Terry, Brant, Brokaw, and many other contemporary examples seem largely satisfied with evocation and connotation. Rather than aspiring to precise reliability, they seem content with the communication of a concept or, to reprise Prown’s useful distinction, they are effectively pictures of maps, rather than functional maps. Within certain limits, it was clearly a satisfying approach. Granted, in some contexts, contemporary critics complained bitterly about inaccuracies in maps—as in the 1770s, where several observers lambasted the many departures from the geographical truth in a controversial map of Virginia.⁵² Those same critics, however, seem to have understood that complaining of “Ignorance and Mistakes” in a map on a clockface would have been beside the point—for such maps hardly pretended to complete accuracy. Rather, as one contemporary observer put it, “I have often seen Maps hung up in Houses, not because they were reckoned *useful*, but *ornamental*.”⁵³ In a similar way, the syntactical logic of the map-like forms in many early republican clocks was largely

ornamental and abstract, rather than mimetic and denotative. Precisely rendered borders meant less than a general impression of a map and the possibility of geographical knowledge that it suggested—or, as Reynolds put it, a map’s common idea and central form.

Definitions of Maps and Subjective Experience

But what, exactly, is the common idea or central form of a map? Again, the concept and essential properties of maps have been the subject of considerable scholarly analysis—but they were also closely considered in the 1700s, as English-language dictionaries proliferated. Underlying the definitions offered in those dictionaries is a classical or objectivist view of categories as composed of objects that share certain common properties.⁵⁴ Admittedly, modern theorists have since pressured this view and developed a number of other categorical models: one might think, for instance, of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblances, or Lotfi Zadeh’s concept of fuzzy sets.⁵⁵ But eighteenth-century epistemologies still centered on what logicians often call standard, necessary, and sufficient conditions.⁵⁶ It is thus worth teasing these out, in the case of maps.

In a brief but rewarding essay, J.H. Andrews once gathered a number of early definitions of maps, noting that, as a body, they reflect evolving intellectual fashions.⁵⁷ For example, in the 1745 edition of *An universal etymological English dictionary*, Nathan Bailey defined a map as “a representation of the Earth, or some Part of it, on a plain *Superficies*.”⁵⁸ It is a concise formulation—and,

in its twinned emphasis on the flatness and representational aspect of maps, typical of a larger strand of mid-century definitions.⁵⁹ In the late 1700s, however, an additional element also became common, as dictionaries began to refer to the use of longitude and latitude (or, relatedly, to the employment of projection or perspective). Samuel Johnson's celebrated dictionary, first published in 1755, offers the most salient example of such an approach. A map, to Johnson, is "a geographical picture on which lands and seas are delineated according to the latitude and longitude."⁶⁰ His entry is also relevant in a second sense as well: that is, in its characterization of a map as a *picture*. As Martin Brückner has noted, it became common in the later 1700s to call maps pictures, the tendency further accompanied by a strengthening semantic association between maps and the visual arts. As a result, observes Brückner, "maps were associated less with tools of navigation and more with images emerging from the studios and shops of painters and printmakers."⁶¹ Increasingly, they were viewed as visual entertainment, even works of art—an attitude that is already implicit in Johnson's definition.⁶²

So what, then, about accuracy? Were maps not also assumed to be *correct*? Certainly, a few period definitions emphasized accuracy. In one 1774 text, Thomas Harrington argued that a map is a "kind of pictures [sic] which should accurately represent all the different parts of our earth."⁶³ An 1805 dictionary entry alluded to "the site and description of an estate according to exact admeasurement."⁶⁴ However, as Harrington's use of the word "should" suggests, this was really

only an ideal—and a highly qualified one at that. In practice, it was widely understood that maps were often conceived hastily, executed by individuals without training in cartography, and subject to little by way of verification.⁶⁵ Or, as the eighteenth-century hydrographer Jacques Nicolas Bellin once wrote, "Nothing is more commonplace or easier than making maps. Nothing is as difficult as making them fairly good."⁶⁶ By *good*, Bellin presumably meant geodetically accurate, or founded on responsibly surveyed measurements. Still, the very idea of what made a map "good" could clearly vary. For, after all, those consumers who used maps as visual entertainment, or who prioritized their artistic and symbolic aspects, commonly displayed a bald disinterest in geographical accuracy.⁶⁷ Ultimately, accuracy seems to have been, at best, a radial criterion of maps: neither necessary nor sufficient as a quality, it merely characterized some maps in certain contexts.⁶⁸

Context mattered, then, in determining the function or success of a map; so, too, surely, did the particular viewer, at any given moment. Frustratingly, I know of no explicit recorded reaction to a map decorating a republican clock; perhaps future research will yield useful evidence. It nevertheless seems likely that both social training and individual predilections as well as experiences shaped reactions to such images. For example, as Eileen Reeves once noted, map-reading skills seem to have been conceived, at the time, as distinctly gendered: where rich pictorial detail was seen as appealing to female viewers, abstraction and interpretation "were distinctly masculine arts."⁶⁹

Children, too, presumably saw such maps differently than learned adults; viewers with pronounced political leanings likely viewed them through a certain ideological lens; enslaved individuals must have responded in still other ways. And, interestingly, the inevitability of such localized responses was acknowledged in the broad acceptance of the subjectivity of aesthetic experience. As Tom Huhn has observed, the late eighteenth century attached increasing value to judgment and the imagination. Abstract images naturally supported the active exercise of both, implicitly granting individual viewers the chance to "take up representations and fashion their meaning."⁷⁰

Here, perhaps, we can begin to assemble the various threads of our argument. As we have seen, late eighteenth-century images existed within an aesthetic context that was increasingly receptive to loosely rendered form and abstraction, in the name of communicating a concept and appealing to viewers. Squiggles could suggest text on a page; brushstrokes could evoke the folds in a garment. While the concept of a map varied, depending on context, period definitions usually held that maps were flat and employed a pictorial logic in representing part of the earth; accuracy was appreciated in certain contexts but hardly taken for granted. Viewed in this light, Ralph Earl's loose sketch of a map in his portrait of Ann Whiteside Earl is efficiently effective. It is clearly flat—the fact that it is partially rolled only reinforces our sense that it is printed on a piece of paper—and it employs a pictorial logic in its colored forms and lines, while the compass rose and dotted border

lines *hint* at latitude, longitude, and a systematic geodetic logic: exhaustive mimesis is not the goal here. Rather, Earl's painting economically suggests a map by emphasizing the very elements that comprised contemporary definitions of "mapness." Similarly, in a trade card issued around 1794 by the printer Angier March of Newburyport, Massachusetts, an unrolled form in the lower left is evidently a map: we can make out landmasses and a generic sea, while a series of radiating lines suggests a scheme of coordinates but little more.⁷¹ Having fulfilled the definition of a map, the image's work is done; no further detail is needed.

At times, artists strove for an even more reductive or suggestive approach, eschewing one or more of the accepted conventional features of a map. The maps in Jeffreys's trade card, for example, satisfy Bailey's definition ("a representation of the Earth, or some Part of it, on a plain *Superficies*"), but their extreme simplicity hardly meets Johnson's expectation that they delineate forms "according to the latitude and longitude." As a result, they become semantically unstable—which may explain the emphatic labels (*Maps*) that fix the otherwise potentially ambiguous forms. A similar phenomenon is visible in a highly generic image of a map that appeared in an alphabetical primer published in Philadelphia in 1809.⁷² On a curled page, we see a cluster of quickly executed shapes suggesting bordering counties or townships, the whole of the group roughly outlined by a jagged line that could indicate a coastline. In the absence of any local identifiers, though, the referent is far from clear, and the lack of reference

to latitude, longitude, or true north leaves us further unmoored. What sort of object, exactly, is this? Our question is answered in the accompanying caption: *A Map*. A categorical assertion, the text supplements the image by assigning it to a general class of things. Yet in an important sense it is *not* a map—or not, at least, a usable one. It is an image, we might say, of the concept of mapness, designed to illustrate a word and an idea, rather than a specific thing. In this sense, it aligns with an entire body of early republican thought and imagery.

What Things Are and What they Stand For

Returning to the engraved hemispherical maps in the arched top of Eli Terry's clock, several features stand out. For one thing, the two forms clearly satisfy contemporary expectations—as articulated by leading lexicographers of the day—regarding maps: they are flat, they represent the earth, and they allude to longitudinal and latitudinal subdivisions. Moreover, they delineate, to use Johnson's wording, lands and seas. To be sure, the delineation is hardly exact or exhaustive, but that seems not to have mattered to contemporary observers, one of whom even remarked knowingly, as we have seen, on the distinction between *useful* and *ornamental* maps.

When we encounter images of maps, we may expect a commitment to topographical accuracy, due to our training and experience. Some late eighteenth-century individuals also certainly valued, in particular contexts, highly detailed and reliable geographical charts. However,

as mimesis gave way to a more conceptual and imaginative mode of thinking and representing, some were often equally at ease with what Reynolds termed the general effect and the common idea. This was true of timekeeping as well: even as increasingly ubiquitous timepieces played an active role in fostering a culture characterized by rigorous temporal discipline, rough estimates, and loose allusions to the time of day often sufficed. Consequently, the casually rendered maps visible in numerous period clocks ought not to be seen simply as the result of technical ineptitude, artistic indifference, or geographic ignorance. Rather, they are better understood, in late eighteenth-century thought and imagery, as part of a much larger ongoing engagement with the principles of connotation and abstraction.⁷³

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Endnotes

1. For a relevant use of the term chronopolitics, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1983), 143-44.
2. For a recent summary of these developments, see Clare Vincent and Jan Hendrik Leopold, *European Clocks and Watches in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 12.
3. Alexis McCrossen, *Making Modern Times: A History of Clocks, Watches, and Other Timekeepers in American Life*

- (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 33.
4. E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present* 38 (Dec. 1967), 56-97.
 5. For especially useful overviews of eighteenth-century tall-case clocks, see Herbert Cescinsky, *The Old English Master Clockmakers and their Clocks, 1670-1820* (London: John Bale, 1938); Ernest Edwardes, *The Grandfather Clock: An Historical and Descriptive Treatise on the English Long Case* (Altrincham: J. Sherratt, 1974); and Donald L. Fennimore and Frank L. Hohmann III, *Stretch: America's First Family of Clockmakers* (Winterthur, 2013).
 6. Edwin A. Battison and Patricia E. Kane, *The American Clock, 1725-1865: The Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society Limited, 1973), 54-57, and <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/40783> (accessed 27 July 2023).
 7. Edward F. LaFond Jr. and J. Carter Harris, *Pennsylvania Shelf and Bracket Clocks, 1750-1850* (Columbia, PA: National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors Inc., 2008), 3; David Jaffee, *A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 2010), 68 and 148.
 8. Battison and Kane, *The American Clock, 1725-1865*, 38, and <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/40300> (accessed 27 July 2023).
 9. Battison and Kane, *The American Clock, 1725-1865*, 98-101, and <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/35178> (accessed 27 July 2023).
 10. On the process by which transfer-printed maps were made, see N.J.W. Thrower, ed., *The Compleat Plattmaker: Essays on Chart, Map and Glob Making in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 113-15.
 11. The identity of the engraver of Terry's clock is unknown. Clockmakers occasionally performed their own engraving, but more commonly relied upon professional engravers or colleagues; Terry's earliest clocks, for instance, featured dials engraved by Daniel Burnap, the clockmaker who trained him. Battison and Kane, *The American Clock, 1725-1865*, 38.
 12. On the growing affordability, popularity, and ubiquity of maps in late eighteenth-century America, see Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), esp. 11, 57, and 159, and Martin Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America, 1750-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), esp. 137, 146, and 177. Importantly, there was also a sizable market for maps in England and France at the time. See for example Mary Sponberg Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography: Making and Marketing Maps in Eighteenth-century France and England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 6, and Jean-Paul Forster, *Eighteenth-Century Geography and Representations of Space in English Fiction and Poetry* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 17.
 13. For a purely pragmatic explanation (which I will attempt to enrich below), see Brian Loomes, *White Dial Clocks: The Complete Guide* (London: David & Charles, 1981), 112: "they serve no purpose other than that of decoration. Presumably they arose from some dial-maker's idea of how to use up two almost circular spare shapes."
 14. Judith Wechsler, "The Issue of Caricature," *Art Journal* 43, no. 4 (Winter 1983), 317-18: 317.
 15. For an ambitious account of the disappearance of the term "imitation" in aesthetic theory and the shifting status of mimesis in the eighteenth century, see Tom Huhn, *Imitation and Society: The Persistence of Mimesis in the aesthetics of Burke, Hogarth, and Kant* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).
 16. Matthew Edney, *Cartography: The Ideal and its History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), esp. 18. See too I. Vasiliev et al., "What is a Map?" *The Cartographic Journal* 27, no. 2 (December 1990), 119-23; Alan M. MacEachern, *How Maps Work: Representation, Visualization, and Design* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995), 157-61; and the sustained and sophisticated debate about the nature of maps also that played out across a number of issues of *Word & Image* and *Imago Mundi* in the 1980s and 1990s.
 17. For a classic analysis of mimetic theory in the eighteenth century, see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).
 18. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (London, 1711), 7.
 19. See for example M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); John D. Boyd, S.J., *The Function of Mimesis and its Decline* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1980 reprint of 1968 edition); and Martin John Gammon, "Kant and the Decline of Classical Mimesis," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 1997).
 20. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 4th ed. (London, 1764), 332; Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1762), 3.
 21. For Richardson's comments on the idea that art involved improvements to nature rather than mere imitation, see Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 278.
 22. *The Life and Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (Hudson, Ohio: Sawyer, Ingersoll and Company, 1853), 40.
 23. René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 18.
 24. On Carracci's drawing, see Rudolf Wittkower, "Interpretation of Visual Symbols in the Arts," in *Studies in Communication* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1955), 109-24: 112; E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972 revision of 1960 edition), 214-5; and Anne Summerscale, *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci: Commentary and Translation* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 269.
 25. For a reproduction of the print and transcription of the text, see <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/collection/72-138/william-hogarth/the-bench-of-the-different-meanings-of-the-words-c> (accessed 27 July 2023). For a discussion of the print and Hogarth's appended commentary, see Ernst Kris with E.H. Gombrich, "The Principles of Caricature," in Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: International Universities Press, 1962 reprint of 1952 original), 189-203: 192.
 26. Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times*, vol. 2: 183-84.

27. Irving Lavin, "High and Low Before their Time: Bernini and the Art of Social Satire," in Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, eds., *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 18-50: 25.
28. Ernst Gombrich, *Caricature* (London: Penguin, 1940), 18.
29. On the relationship between satire and caricature, see M. Dorothy George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 13.
30. My phrasing here is derived from Filippo Baldinucci's account of Annibale Carracci's defense of caricature. For discussions of the passage, see Gombrich, *Caricature*, 11, and Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times*, vol. 1, 472-73. Also relevant is Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, 174: "so runs the theory of the time, it comes nearer to truth than does reality."
31. On the growing esteem attached to sketches, see Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, 199; on attitudes toward *prontezza*, see Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 14.
32. George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank*, 57.
33. *The Life and Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 261-62. It is important to note that such a position had a lengthy prehistory. For instance, in *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, first published in 1715, Jonathan Richardson defended the idea that roughness was entirely appropriate in large works that would be seen at a distance and contended that "There is often a spirit, and beauty in a quick, or perhaps an accidental management of the chalk, pen, pencil, or brush in a drawing, or painting, which it is impossible to preserve if it be more finished." See *The Works of Jonathan Richardson* (London, 1792), 70.
34. Alexander Cozens, *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscapes* (1785), in Jean-Claude Lebensztein, *L'art de la tache: Introduction à la Nouvelle méthode d'Alexander Cozens* (Montélimar: Editions du Limon, 1990).
35. Lebensztein, *L'art de la tache*, 474. For a discussion of the ideas of Reynolds and Cozens in relation to eighteenth-century epistemological models, see Charles A. Cramer, "Alexander Cozens's New Method: The Blot and General Nature," *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 1 (March 1997), 112-29.
36. For a useful paraphrase of Berkeley's ideas on the matter, see Richard A. Watson, *Representational Ideas: From Plato to Patricia Churchland* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 70-71: "Berkeley takes resemblance to be important in representation. He claims that it is not necessary in general, because anything can arbitrarily be the sign of anything else as long as someone makes the assignation."
37. *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D.*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 132. The general idea was not unique to Stiles. Horace Walpole once wrote, in relation to Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode*, "The very furniture of his rooms describes the characters of the persons to whom they belong," and Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser has pointed out that Jonathan Budington and Ralph Earl both regularly imbued their portraits "with personal details that provide an understanding of the social status and philosophical attitudes of his subjects." See *The Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal* 64 (1781), 187, and Kornhauser, et al., *Ralph Earl: The Face of the Young Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 251.
38. Jules Prown, "Style in American Art: 1750-1800," in Charles F. Montgomery and Patricia E. Kane, *American Art 1750-1800: Towards Independence* (New York: Yale University Art Gallery, 1976), 32-39: 37.
39. For a thorough discussion of Holbein's likely sources, see Elly Dekker and Kristen Lippincott, "The Scientific Instruments in Holbein's Ambassadors: A Re-Examination," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 62 (1999), 93-125; on Vermeer's use of maps, see James A. Welu, "The Map in Vermeer's *Art of Painting*," *Imago Mundi* 30 (1978), 2 and 9-30, and Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
40. Geoff Armitage, *The World at Their Fingertips: Eighteenth-Century British Two-Sheet Double-Hemisphere World Maps* (London: The British Library, 2012), 83.
41. On the well-established distribution networks that facilitated the export of London caricatures to America, see Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, 20.
42. See https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-4476 (accessed 27 July 2023).
43. See <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004672608/> (accessed 27 July 2023).
44. For a discussion of the print in relation to its setting and to contemporary notions of nationhood, see Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 146.
45. Jedediah Morse, *Geography Made Easy: being an Abridgement of the American Geography*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1791), 14. The accompanying plate appears between pages 14 and 15.
46. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 68 and 98.
47. On the sensitivity of Earl's portrayal, see Kornhauser, et al., *Ralph Earl*, 134.
48. John Rennie Short, *Representing the Republic: Mapping the United States 1600-1900* (London: Reaktion, 2001), 115.
49. For a more general observation in the same direction, see Martin Brückner, "Lessons in Geography: Maps, Spellers, and Other Grammars of Nationalism in the Early Republic," *American Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (June 1999), 311-43: 312-13.
50. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976), 25.
51. Battison and Kane, *The American Clock, 1725-1865*, 54-57, and <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/40783> (accessed 27 July 2023).
52. Brückner, in *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 163-654, offers a summary of the dispute, which played out in the pages of the *Virginia Gazette* and involved alleged inaccuracies and absent documentation of the propertied classes in John Henry's 1770 *A New and Accurate Map of Virginia*. As one critic wrote, "good Taste, which directed you to a better Disposition of Gentlemans Seats, and to assign more beautiful Dimensions and Courses to the Rivers, than those which Nature had allotted them."
53. Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 165.
54. George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp. xi and 5.
55. For a helpful overview of these models and an influential case for the concept

of what he called radial categories, see Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 5, 12-13, and 91-154; for an analysis of what this has meant for modern cartography, see MacEachern, *How Maps Work*, 151-52.

56. Relevant here is Christian Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches in Cartography throughout History*, ed. Edward H. Dahl and trans. Tom Conley (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 15, as he offers a brief discussion of what he calls “minimal but sufficient features” of cartographical drawings. On a still more general level, E.H. Gombrich briefly discusses what he calls minimum stereotypes in *Art and Illusion*; see 144.

57. J.H. Andrews, “What Was a Map? The Lexicographers Reply,” *Cartographica* 33, no. 4 (Winter, 1996), 1-11.

58. Nathan Bailey, *An universal etymological English Dictionary* (London, 1745), n.p.

59. Andrews, “What Was a Map?,” 2.

60. Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language* (London, 1755), n.p. The importance of Johnson’s contribution is briefly discussed in Andrews, “What Was a Map?,” 4. Variants of Johnson’s definition continued to circulate well into the 1800s. See for example Frederick Barlow, *The complete English dictionary or, general repository of the English language...* (London, 1772) and James Knowles, *A pronouncing and explanatory dictionary of the English language...* (London, 1835).

61. Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 120. For a related claim, see Martin S. Brückner, “The Ambulatory

Map: Commodity, Mobility, and Visualcy in Eighteenth-Century Colonial America,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2011), 141-60: 151.

62. Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 39.

63. Thomas Harrington, *A new introduction to the knowledge and use of maps*, 3rd ed., 1774 (London, 1774), 1. Cited in J.H. Andrews, “Definitions of the word ‘map,’ 1649-1996,” at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090326024555/http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/essays/andrews.htm> (accessed 27 July 2023).

64. William Perry, *The synonymous, etymological and pronouncing English dictionary* (London, 1805). Cited in J.H. Andrews, “Definitions of the word ‘map,’ 1649-1996.”

65. Thus Roger Chartier, *The Author’s Hand and the Printer’s Mind: Transformations of the Written Word*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), 20: “Mapping was a craft mostly left to engravers, who were as likely to feel as much concern for the aesthetic qualities of the picture as for its accuracy.”

66. Quoted in Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography*, 19.

67. See Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 165, and Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography*, 189, for the germane observation that the eighteenth-century consumer “could be adamantly undiscerning about maps.”

68. Useful here is Armitage, *The World at Their Fingertips*, 11 on what he calls a

“triumph of appearance over substance” in eighteenth-century British two-sheet double-hemisphere maps. More generally still, Barbara Belyea has pointed out that the very notion of error, in relation to cartography, is culturally specific—for, as she puts it, “The map’s connection with landforms out there is arbitrary, tenuous, and culturally imposed.” See “Inland Journeys, Native Maps,” in G. Malcolm Lewis, ed., *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1998), 135-55: 142.

69. Eileen Reeves, “Reading Maps,” *Word & Image* 9, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1993), 51-65: 55.

70. Tom Huhn, email to the author, May 4, 2023. For a full version of his argument, see Huhn, *Imitation and Society*.

71. March’s trade card is reproduced and briefly discussed, in different terms, in Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America*, 154-55.

72. *The Mother’s Gift, or, Remarks on a set of cuts for children* (Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1809), plate III; the image is reproduced and briefly discussed, in relation to period pedagogical practices, in Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America*, 112.

73. Relevant here is Alan MacEachern’s characterization of the difference between the denotative and connotative meanings of map signs as “that between knowing what things are (explicitly) versus what they stand for (implicitly).” See *How Maps Work*, 331.

An Interview with Brianna Harlan

Mysoon Rizk

BRIANNA HARLAN, the winner of the 2021 SECAC Artist’s Fellowship, is a multi-disciplinary artist and organizer. Deeply involved in community work, she describes her practice as a re-contextualization of objects that inspire reflections on sociopolitical identity and how it affects “health, selfhood, and community.” She has had solo exhibitions in New York (Field Projects Gallery), Oklahoma (Oklahoma State University), and Kentucky (Eastern Kentucky University). She has also held several artist residencies; in 2020, Harlan collaborated with Louisville-based 21c museum hotels and artist Nancy Baker Cahill on an “augmented reality memorial monument” dedicated to Breonna Taylor. Harlan completed an MFA in Art and Social Action at Queens College (New York). She was named Young Distinguished Alumni by her alma mater Hanover College (Hanover, Indiana). She is currently working at a diversity, equity, and inclusion training and organizing program at the City University of New York, and she holds a joint fellowship at the Museum of Modern Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem’s public programs. This interview emerged out of an exchange over email in spring and summer 2023.

First, congratulations on receiving the Artist’s Fellowship from SECAC in 2021, which was announced in October 2021, despite the cancellation of the annual conference in Lexington, Kentucky due to the COVID-19 pandemic. How did you find out you won?

I think I found out through email but there was also a Zoom event for the SECAC community. I was introduced and able to say a few words. I was met with a lot of support and congratulations.

Do you currently live in Louisville, Kentucky, or Lexington (where the SECAC conference would have met in 2021)? Do you also live in New York City, and are you from there? If so, how did you get to Kentucky? I’m especially curious about where you grew up.

I am from Louisville, Kentucky. I lived there most of my life. I was just there for a long visit [at the time interview was conducted]—but I do live in New York now. Louisville is home. I grew up in the West End and I go back there when I need to recenter. Ask me anything about it!

For people unfamiliar with Louisville, would you mind saying more about your West End neighborhood? What childhood memories do you call up when you think of Louisville? What formative experiences would you say stuck with you and/or shaped the person you became?

Black people live all over the city but there’s a concentration of us in West Louisville. To be honest, the city doesn’t invest in us the way they should, and gentrification is creeping in...but, when I was little, I just remember being outside all the time, surrounded by such a lively neighborhood: music, food, gatherings, people supporting each other and getting on each other’s nerves, porch sitting, storytelling, games. A very collective energy.

What beautiful memories, Brianna, and I’m happy for you that you get time back home. How do you think those West End experiences shaped your current understandings of community?

My nana is very active in the community. I think she shaped a lot for me. She’s in the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame and people look to her a lot. We have a huge family,

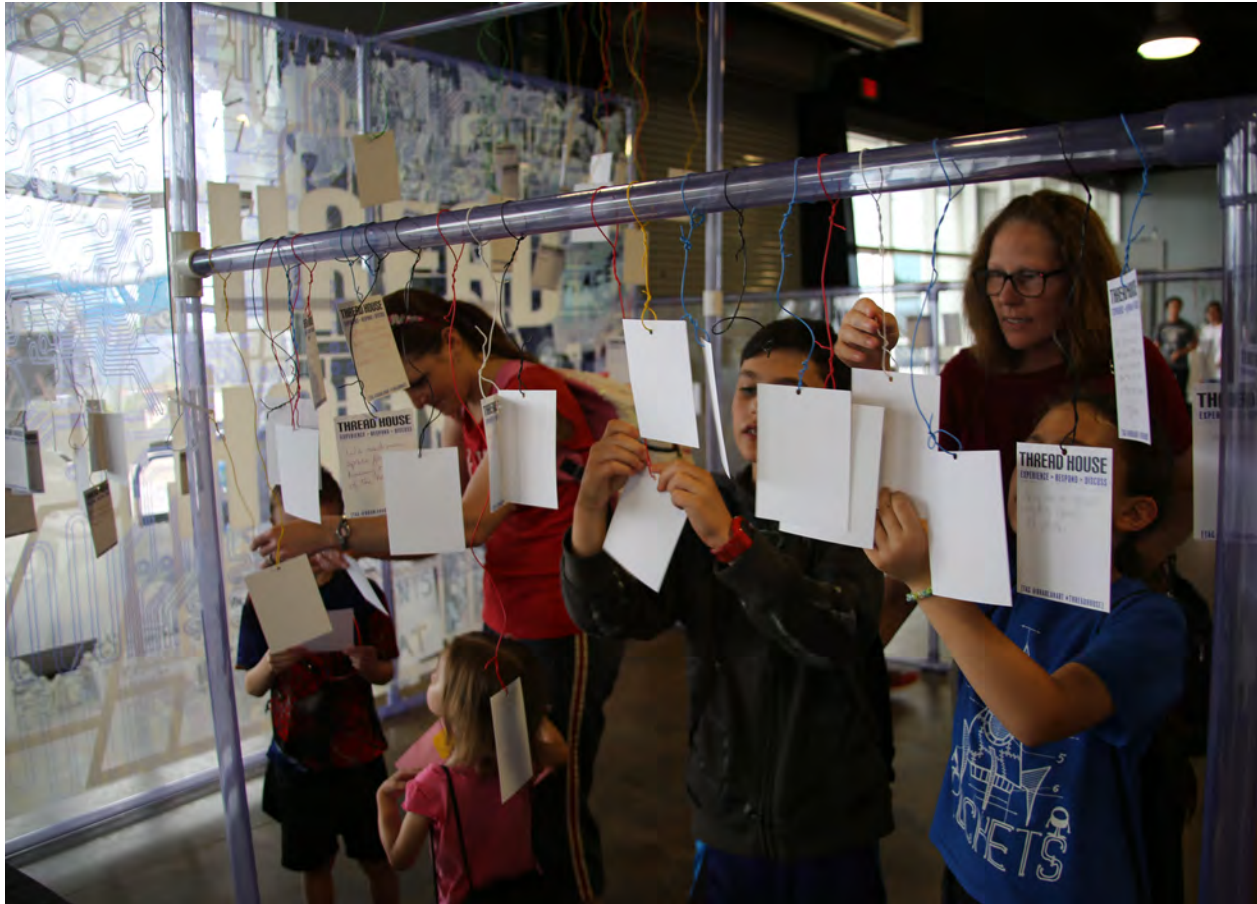


Figure 1. Brianna Harlan, Installation view of *Thread House*, 2019, Bowling Green, Kentucky; guests view and participate in the installation.

and there were foster kids, and the neighborhood, etc. I was always seeing people being together, figuring it out. But, also, I'm a very collectively minded person. My mama told me that I was good at team sports but never shined because I was prioritizing being nice and sharing. I know now that those things don't have to be mutually exclusive. I've learned a lot.

So many of your projects bring people together in community, facilitating discussion perhaps among familiars, but also among strangers. Would that be accurate to say, and do you also have a robust body of object-based production?

That's a very accurate way to explain my community practice. I even got my master's degree in the art of social practice, so that kind of engagement is very important to me. I am really into intimacy. That can be in so many forms and experienced on so many levels. True engagement is so beautiful, especially in a national culture of being inundated with social media and being overworked and undervalued as whole beings. We have so much to unpack together.

I try not to outright critique where we are, but to subvert. For example, in my work *Thread House* (2019), I created an installation that was like being inside of an internet thread (fig. 1). It made it physical,

and participants had to process and respond to comments that were hanging in the space on paper while in physical space with others, and while being active in their bodies (fig. 2). That changes the dynamics. Who we are alone is important, but how does what we allow ourselves to think, and how does who we allow ourselves to be, change when we're out in the world with others? That's crucial information. It tells us so much about our norms and conditioning, for better and for worse. A society should be self-aware.

How amazing that would be! So, part of your social practice work is to help increase your audience's understanding of—and maybe their reflection about—the ways that societal norms manipulate or condition individual behavior?

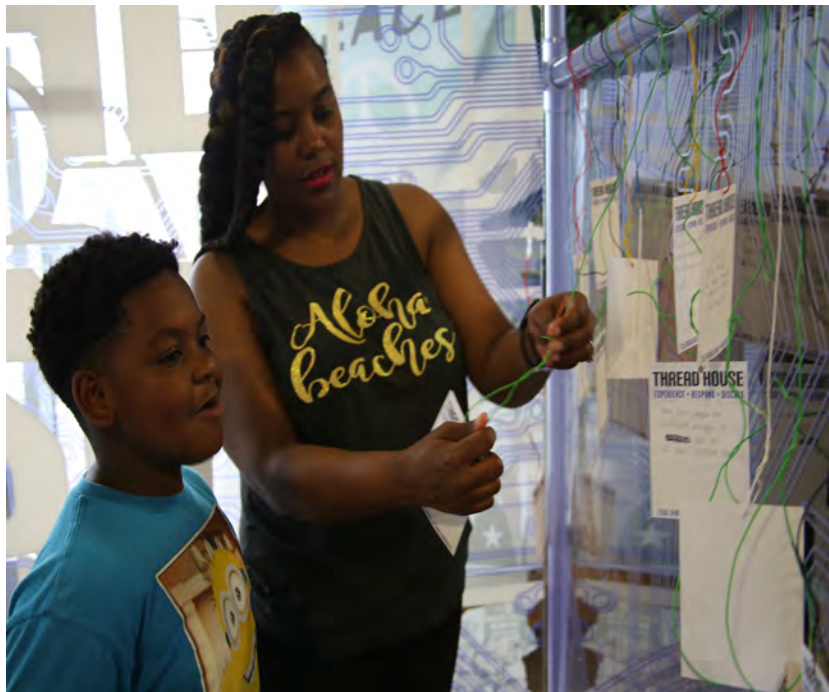
Yes! Or, further, to even interrupt that process, to make space to behave differently than how we've been conditioned and see what that brings up for us.

To come back to your multiple approaches as an artist, would you tell us more about your studio production?

Simultaneous with social practice, I have a robust object-based practice. The two paths of making inform each other and balance each other out, for me. They're both methods of opening something up and hopefully supporting people in finding something worthwhile. My studio production is conceptually based so it's not medium specific. Some people say one work is so different from the next. Some say they can see me in each of them. I think both can be true.

Please elaborate further on the dynamics of how these two paths inform and balance each other out. What would be an example of a time when such an interface seemed to be especially effective at opening things up and supporting people? How do you know when it succeeds?

The two paths support each other in how I make things. So maybe doing both supports me more than anyone else, which hopefully leads



to supporting the experiences I give others. Each process takes a very different energy. I like to think that they both build space for discovery, but social practice, for me, is about building a space for and prompting the viewer or participant to begin collaborating and creating their moment within the piece. It's an interjection.

Objects are more to be witnessed and processed in the way of traditional art. You see something and hopefully it speaks in a way that it makes something shift for you, even if just for a moment. Moments build. My objects usually are something I want to share and I'm trying to communicate. Whereas social practice isn't about me really; it's about us. *It doesn't exist without other people.* I love that.

How relevant or successful am I being? I'll know because it can't work without the people at all—and usually not people that frequent art spaces. The participants often don't even realize it's an art piece. They

Figure 2. Brianna Harlan, Installation view of *Thread House*, 2019, Bowling Green, KY; two guests view and participate in the installation.

only care about the experience in front of them. But I have my own world, as everyone does, with rich information so object-making is still so valuable.

A lot of my most recent objects involve lived experience more than a collaborative experience. I filled a gallery with paintings, sculptures, mixed media, installation, etc., essentially about mental health, and even though it was open to interpretation—which is always good—I had an authority over the work that I don't have with social practice. My sculpture *Lithium Dreams* (2020) was about the vivid dreams I had at night as a side effect of inconsistent medication. I'm presenting, and that's a different type of invitation (fig. 3).

I also have a piece that can be either, which is fun. *Eat My Heart Out* (2022) is a dinner/cafe installation

with heart-inspired foods, either to be viewed or to be experienced as a vulnerable, social dinner—exploring the ways we relate to others, often consuming them to sate our own fears, shame, anxiety, desire, social expectation, but not authentically connecting (fig. 4). There's a literal pig heart in the installation (fig. 5).

Anyway, you can hear it in this answer, a back and forth between

my art forms: a rambling of self and collective care with no clear line between the two really.

To return to social practice, and the kinds of communities with which you've engaged, do your methods of engagement necessarily vary, depending on community? What other variables play a role?

They definitely vary. Some projects are much more specific to the communities that I am focused on for that project. Some are very open for everyone to come and feel very welcome to have voice. I am happy for everyone to always participate in the work, but sometimes that participation is to observe, learn, or support—not to take a role in shaping it.

For example, when I work with the Black community, or in mental health, folks that have that lived experience need to be centered. The way we behave in different spaces changes, depending on how we're part of them. That's natural. Sometimes I'm protective of a space, sometimes I'm more curious, and sometimes I'm vulnerable.

Each art project is shaped by its own conditions within and without me. Maybe pointing out the viewer's role in the work based on their own lived experience and knowledge is just as important as the "message." I think so. The art may not be about you: hold that, honor that, but you are the one receiving it...what does that mean? What could it mean?

Well, your works have clearly provided viewers with multiple opportunities for growth. I wonder, was the 2022 installation in Baltimore—The Elders Project at BMore Art—an example of an open experience of social practice, or something more specific to a particular community? Would you say more about that exhibition? Could you



Figure 3. Brianna Harlan, Installation view of *Lithium Dreams*, 2021, Queens College Art Gallery, New York, NY; from Harlan's MFA Thesis Exhibition *Visiting Hours*.

describe what you felt, in that space, especially that night that SECAC conference attendees came to see it by busloads? I could be wrong, but I think I sensed your protectiveness, while I was moving through the show—was that the case? Honestly, I was caught up in the rapid pace of the conference’s competing events. I regretted not having spent more time with your exhibition. I wondered, though, about what other lives the show might have had, including other audiences and

other receptions. How did the premise of this show fit in with what you described above?

Figure 4, right. Brianna Harlan, Installation view of *Eat My Heart Out*, 2021, Queens College Art Gallery, New York, NY; guest sits at installation from Harlan’s MFA Thesis Exhibition *Visiting Hours*.



Figure 5, below. Brianna Harlan, Detail of *Eat My Heart Out*, 2021, installation, Queens College Art Gallery, New York, NY; from Harlan’s MFA Thesis Exhibition *Visiting Hours*.



So, *The Elder's Story Project* (2022) was to share the stories of the Silent Generation. Most of our elder population now is part of this generation. When people talk about past decades of American history it's very White-washed. I wanted to document and share what Black and Brown people were doing. What was life like, for an everyday person? What do they think about all the changes that have happened? So much has developed in their lifetime; for example, James Brown's "I'm Black and I'm Proud" was released right after the Civil Rights Act of 1968! What would that have felt like to live through?

Their wisdom...we have so much information now, but how are we being intentional about what gets passed down? That's still essential for a people. To quote one story: "Somewhere I read, you know how they always say, 'History repeats itself.' Well, I read somewhere that 'History rhymes,' and I sometimes feel that."

Everything is in response to what came before it in some way. We need to know what we're responding to. I love an informed choice.

If I'm being honest, that Baltimore exhibition didn't have the life in it that I wanted, and that's in large part due to COVID, because I wasn't able to be with the elders in the way I wanted throughout the process. So, figuring out how to share their stories, when I didn't get to experience them how I'd planned, led to some tension for me.

But I am grateful for the reception of it. People engaged with the stories and asked questions and made connections. I do believe it was

successful in that regard. I just wanted the elders to take over that space through my work, so I was a little apprehensive about speaking on their behalf too much, to compensate for the ways that couldn't happen.

That's my main critique, but it was a good show! There were such genuine reactions to the stories and, at the end of it, that was the core intention. One of the interviewees, over 90 years old, has since passed. Her story is still here.

Congratulations on that exhibition, Brianna, it was a great show! This is wonderful and important work. Would it be fair to think of your projects as dedicated to shifting the terms of who speaks and who gets heard?

Yes, absolutely.

Please say more about this. Would you describe an example of work that achieved such a shift, and say more about who was involved as well as why you think the exchange was so effective?

I invite anyone to look at my work and open a discussion with me or someone else about that potential shift. There is so much to unpack here. I don't make work for a singular topic or community. Sometimes it's who speaks and who gets heard in our own internal battles; sometimes it's within society. Sometimes it's *political-stage* political and sometimes it's *deeply personal* political. Sometimes it's in the streets and sometimes it's in my shower. I'm dodging the question a little, but there's a difference between an artist statement on work and an explanation of work. I only explain

work during artist talks when people have seen the work and can dialogue and challenge. Explaining it with no experience feels like the wrong order. I'm always here for a discussion though.

I will say that we internalize so much throughout our lives, and I'm very much interested in unpacking and examining that. We're not encouraged to, because an informed and connected member of society is dangerous to exploitative power structures. This condition seeps into every aspect of our lives including our relationship to ourselves and it's so divisive: it divides us on the inside and it divides us from each other. I carry that so deeply. And I work to heal and resist it.

I went to a small, private PWI for college that had a clear divide with race and class. There were lots of cliques and Greek houses. So, I went around at random, asking the first hundred people I saw what their biggest strength and weakness was, and documenting it. I took their photograph as they responded and I created an installation where students could unfold the photo, of someone they might have passed and ignored, and learn something important about them: their self-defined strength and weakness (fig. 6). That project, *Unfold* (2014), was my introduction into conceptual art (fig. 7). Sometimes I'm just pointing out how we see and hear each other, in the first place, within a given space or relationship. I don't have all the answers, but we explore that together.

When I'm talking about who speaks and who is heard, though, I'm usually uplifting the most vulnerable voices: BIPOC (most

frequently Black), disabled, queer, elderly, tiny humans, lower class. You know, that builds capacity for everyone when you sort out where it's hurting the most, who's being made to carry the most. Folks don't like to feel excluded sometimes but, like I said, you're never excluded. We're a society, you have a role in healing it even if not everything is for you. Find that role. Heal yourself and heal your spaces. Why are you so afraid to take care of someone? Cause it makes you feel guilty? Don't choose shame. Choose love. Taking care of your community can take care of you. Be nice! Choose love!

Such powerful words and such a powerful example to set for all of us! How much did your West End community, your upbringing, and your educational experiences help shape this position of clarity and conviction?

I had a very long answer and...



I just held back a rant.

It's all so simple but so complex in experience. I don't want to be misunderstood because a lot goes into this. So. Thoughts on this coming someday. I will say, to be born into a world that doesn't want you to

Figure 6, above. Brianna Harlan, Installation view of *Unfold*, Greiner Art Gallery, Hanover College, Hanover, IN; guests view and participate in installation.

Figure 7, below. Brianna Harlan, Installation view of *Unfold*, Greiner Art Gallery, Hanover College, Hanover, IN.



know what safety feels like because you love, or you have melanin and coily hair, or you're sick, so many reasons are so heartbreakingly violent. People are beautiful. But, God, when they're safe? That'll save the world, I think. Ask yourself who your behavior protects.

Because I only ever experienced one version of your work in person, I keep wondering about your other projects and what else is happening during such experiences of social practice? I believe you have already indicated to a great degree what you hope to accomplish, but I guess I still wonder if you would like to say more about it and maybe talk about your goals?

That depends on the project, and each one is so unique to itself. To speak broadly, attention is being brought to, usually, some social dynamic, such that the health of that dynamic is being processed, or a marginalized story is being witnessed and considered.

Accomplish? Well, if I can do that, what I just said, sheesh! I'm good! Okay. Of course, I hope it's a moment that contributes to the series of moments that causes something to change for someone, but typically I can't know that. So...I hope, and I do my best. I try not to be too attached to outcomes. I'm offering something, and how it's received or even rejected is good information. Not always fun information but helpful. It's making something apparent and since I like to learn about the relationship people have to my topics, that's interesting. Hopefully their reaction brings some self-awareness to them as well.

So then, is that something you stay in the vicinity of the work to observe? Or do you interact with your audience members in ways that help you confirm that they experienced that kind of shift in perspective? Do you ever hear back from viewers and/or participants who take part in your installations?

If it's social practice, I'm generally there, supporting people's experience. Sometimes I watch and sometimes I directly engage with them. The feedback is the experience and the reaction. Social practice doesn't run on critical reviews for me. Either the people are feeling connected to what you're doing in the moment, or they're not and it dies. The participants generally let you know what's up. Nothing a curator says changes that.

I don't watch people with the object-based work. They're having a private moment unless they invite dialogue. That seems to be the culture around gallery work. I respect that. That's how I am when I go to shows. I'm not engaging in a practice—I'm engaging *with* a practice. People need some space for that.

I do still have people talk to me about both social practice and object-based work. I love that. Tell me what you think. What are your feelings? Where is it in your body? Let's get into it.

A lot of your work seems to revolve around conceptual exchange, whether in person or in the gallery, often in words written down or spoken aloud, and shared in public. Are the public sphere and conceptualism integral with, or even critical

to, the kind of artistic practice you pursue?

That is true for my social practice work. Such work lives and dies with the people—in real time, in real life—and there's something very exciting about intervening in unplanned moments, to find something new and real.

What would be an example of such a project, and would you briefly describe it?

My project *Black Love Blooms* (2019-ongoing) is a public counter-space set on loving Black people as they are (fig. 8). It has traveled to at least seven states, with a model that makes it replicable, whether I am there or not (fig. 9). The moments it creates challenge racial stereotypes and how they affect the daily lives of Black people and the communities that hold them through gentle and soft offerings: Black communities gift flowers and love notes to other Black people in public. Black people are gifted an interaction that challenges the aggressions that they face outside of their homes. Audiences are brought to awareness of their own role in the systemic negative impact of stereotypes and what it is like to reverse them with acts of love. But sometimes people are like, "No, not interested." They don't receive or want love that way, and that's okay. And sometimes they're over the moon! Am I just standing on the street with flowers, or will someone pause and have a moment with a stranger? Will they believe me when I say free? This is New York after all. What's going on in the news at the time? Will someone challenge my concept? It's all very unexpected (fig. 10).

How fundamental has the use of language been to your artistic practice, overall, and what have you learned about the ways in which language gets wielded?

I love language. I'd be a writer if I could really get words together. I don't think I fully understand the power of it in art, just yet, but I feel it. I do think that power is layered and offers something directly that I appreciate. When I've used language, it's been to bring a clear message, and to support people in voicing their own lived experiences, or because there's a blend with showing and telling, which I find beautiful. Tell me poetically and explicitly, yes. I love the way artist Chloë Bass uses language.

How do you mean? How would you describe Bass's approach to language and what you love about it? And why don't you think of yourself as both a writer and an artist? Is being a writer something you aspire to become?

Chloë's use of language is honest, clever, and intimate. Three of the best things you can be with people and with yourself. It uncovers but doesn't answer. It's art. She finds the heart of something, and it would be great to just present that, but the way she writes gives it layers without reintroducing the mess. But somehow the mess is still always there.

Figure 8, top right. Brianna Harlan, *Black Love Blooms*, 2020, New York, NY, public art project; flower recipient poses with artist who holds the project's sign.

Figure 9, right. Brianna Harlan, *Black Love Blooms*, 2020, Jackson, MS, public art project; a flower and love note is gifted from one Black person to another as part of a multi-city project during Juneteenth.





This is what poets do. Smart. She has been putting her work in public spaces as installations. To pull on people's thoughts in their everyday spaces is difficult and incredible. She knows how to frame things in a way that makes the touch just different enough that it reactivates, and familiar enough that it feels profound.

I'd love to be a writer, but I'd need a very patient teacher and editor.

Figure 10. Brianna Harlan, *Black Love Blooms*, 2020, multi-city public art project; "Black Love Blooms" in the street.

You've touched on this already, but could you expand about how the last few years of COVID lockdown affected your process (or schedule) for realizing your work, whether object-based or social practice-oriented? How were you affected? In what ways? Did your interests shift at all in relation to the pandemic?

The pandemic forced a pause and care that didn't always feel good but I'm hoping good might come out of it. I think I'm still processing this. I haven't been making art recently and I'm seriously rethinking the standards of my practice. The way I think about my work has changed because I have. More on this one day. My apprehension is beginning to turn into anticipation so I'm hopeful.

One last question—of all the projects you’ve conceived and initiatives with which you’ve had a role, are there any that you count as favorites or especially meaningful?

Favorites are very hard for me. So much goes into making a moment or a point or a feeling. I find myself connecting with some projects more than others or finding them more successful. But if the project is

honest, and people feel that honesty and find something in it, that’s it. I do love *Black Love Blooms* because it’s so unconditional and simple: joy, vulnerability, love. But I also love the hard stuff—because who doesn’t want to feel understood, or even further, achieve understanding?

I think my favorite is whatever is next. I want to keep up with myself and the past year without making work, figuring things out, I think it’s going to show. I’m excited to see.

Since this interview, two of Brianna Harlan’s works have been selected for inclusion in the fall 2023 New York-based art exhibition *Our Votes, Our Stories*, co-organized by SUNY Oneonta’s Cooperstown Graduate Program and Golden Artist Colors for the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery in New Berlin.

Mysoon Rizk
The University of Toledo

An Interview with Jennida Chase

Sunny Spillane

The 2022 SECAC Artist's Fellowship was awarded to **JENNIDA CHASE** for *The Motherlode* (fig. 1). Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNC Greensboro), Chase is a multi-media artist who works with film, video, animation, sound, and photography. She received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University. Chase regularly collaborates with her partner Hassan Pitts under the moniker of s/n. Chase and s/n have screened and exhibited numerous media-art, video, and sound projects internationally in festivals, galleries, and museums. They have also been awarded a variety of prestigious grants and fellowships, including a New Faculty Research Award from UNC Greensboro. This interview grew out of a wonderful conversation between Sunny Spillane and Jennida Chase in June 2023 about *The Motherlode*, her award-winning documentary film addressing the messy, joyful, stressful, creative lives of artist mothers and non-binary parents. The wide-ranging conversation also covered the topics of creative collaboration with family members and getting real with students about the work of being an artist.

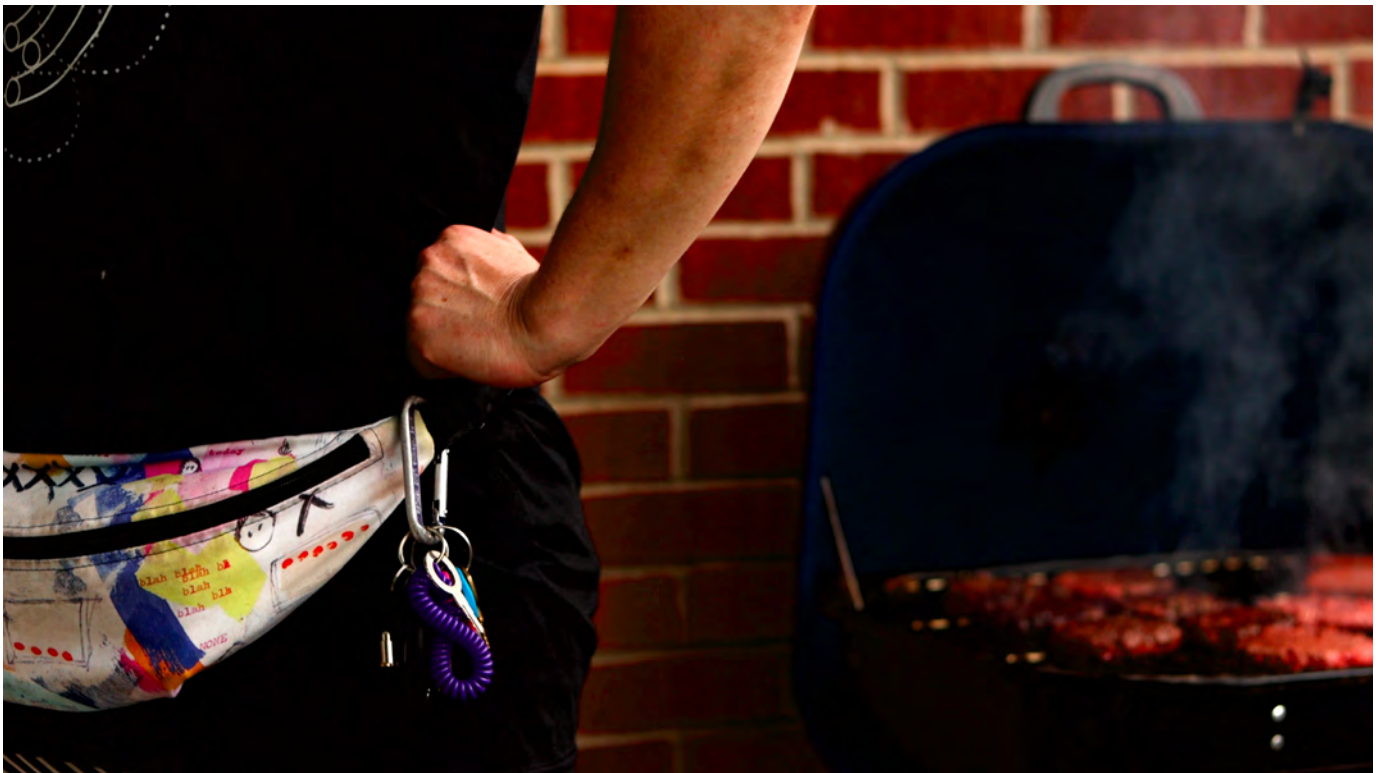


Figure 1. Jennida Chase, still from *The Motherlode* (001), 2021-ongoing. Video, color, sound, (work-in-progress).

I would love to approach this interview flexibly and collaboratively, to learn more about your story, your practice, and *The Motherlode* project in whatever way feels best for you. And, honestly, I'm just really jazzed to be talking to you as an artist-parent. Pick any place you'd like to start and talk to me about your life and your work.

I grew up largely overseas and came back to the United States to finish high school. I went to Tidewater Community College in the Hampton Roads area in Virginia for a couple of years and then transferred to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). I thought I would go into artist books, until I took a foundations class at SAIC called "Time Studios" that focused on video, sound, film, and performance. I realized then that the moving image was my native language, and I had been drawn to artist books because of the sequence of it all. I completely shifted my practice to film, video, and a little sound and performance for my undergrad. At SAIC, we had to minor in art history, so I took almost exclusively twentieth-century art with a heavy focus on film and video—as well as things like Dada, the Situationists, and other people who were responding to the social and political climate of their time—living their creativity in their daily lives and not just making objects.

When I got out of undergrad, my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer, and I ended up moving back to Virginia. I spent the next ten years working in restaurants, bartending, and hanging out in punk and Goth scenes of the late 1990s and early

2000s. It was literally my roaring twenties, and it ended in fire and ice, with zombie dragons setting the castle on fire. I spent time in therapy and started to get my life together. I would still take classes at TCC so I could have access to their dark rooms, but there was nowhere to edit film and video in the early 2000s. The technology was difficult to access and just out of reach for a long time for me.

But I wanted to keep making work, so I went back to grad school for photo and film at Virginia Commonwealth University and graduated with my MFA in 2009. In grad school, I had an assistantship with Dr. Shawn O. Utsey, who was chair of the Department of African American Studies at VCU. I worked on his documentary about black burial grounds in Richmond, several of which were on the VCU campus. That experience got me interested in documentary work.

Congratulations on the SECAC 2022 Artist Fellowship, and congratulations on your other awards and funding for *The Motherlode* project! That's a big deal! Where are you in the project? And for the Artist's Fellowship exhibition, how much work is involved for you beyond your original trajectory for the project?

That's a great question. One thing that helps me think flexibly about it is that, professionally and creatively, I'm in a hybrid position. I never went to film school. I went to two art schools, which puts me in this precariously weird place where I'm often too "entertainment" for art and too "art" for entertainment. So, I just make what I want. I fall

between video art, new media, filmmaking, and sometimes sound as well. It took me a while to call myself a filmmaker because it's not the only thing I do. I use the word artist constantly, and it's a small "a" to me, always. Anything who makes things is an artist. I don't overthink that weirdness. I also think about *The Motherlode* and a lot of my work in terms of transmedia. In film and entertainment, the MCU [Marvel Cinematic Universe] is a classic example of transmedia where there are comic books, movies, toys, games, television series, and all this world-building (as well as storytelling) across media that's all about, say, She-Hulk. Artists need to think tactically about the ways we release work. I tell my students in media studies to think of their film and video work as parts of a whole. So, for instance, I'm working on a segment that will ultimately go into the third act of *The Motherlode* documentary about building a mobile artist residency. In the segment, the artists in the film come together with our kids and create work. So, if I make that a twenty-minute segment that can stand on its own and can also plug and play into the third act of the longer documentary, I might be able to release that segment as a short film.

I was speaking with Tracy Stonestreet [Academic Conference Director of SECAC 2023], yesterday, about the exhibition and the space, which sounds fantastic. There's a couple of ways the exhibition might go. I don't know how to speak to that quite yet, but my goal is to have segments of the project that can be projected or shown on monitors. There will be a lot of moving images, because that's



my first language, and there'll be some sound. There might be some performance. Some of the featured mothers in the documentary are in Richmond, actually—because I lived there—so I'm super excited about that. I also feel like a roundtable conversation is in order. Part of the intent for the ultimate film was always to go to the cities that the artists are in and bring art organizations to the table to have conversations with us about how arts organizations can support artist-parents (fig. 2).

I just watched the trailer and read through your materials before our meeting today. The mobile residency you were describing is really intriguing to me. It also makes me think that an important part of the project is about going into the world and having a life beyond this core group of

artists that are featured in the documentary. I'm thinking about SECAC and how many of my friends and colleagues have kids and are doing all this juggling just to get there. Sometimes with our kids, sometimes with kids on the way. I'm possibly art directing your exhibition now, so totally take or leave it, but it could be powerful to invite people that aren't in the project to share their stories of juggling parenting and a creative and/or academic life. I love your ideas about people coming together in the space and talking, sharing stories, and finding connection and resource in one another.

Yes, yes, yes, I love that. I almost envision a photo booth where someone could just pop in and tell me all the things, you know, give me the low down on their lives as artist-parents. I went to *Documenta* [the

Figure 2. Jennida Chase, still from *The Motherlode* (005), 2021-ongoing. Video, color, sound, (work-in-progress).

contemporary art exhibition held every five years in Kassel, Germany] for the first time, last year, and in one of the big main buildings, on the first floor right when you walk in, was a daycare. I wept. I just stood there and cried. I wish I could build a daycare in the space for the Artist's Fellowship exhibition, but I don't know how to do that, and don't see that as a real way forward. It's a dream. But then, sometimes, I laugh with my artist friends about, like, what if I just brought in this whole room of couches, and let the kids play "the floor is lava" non-stop, and that's the show? Invite parents into a booth to tell me their stories while the kids play. A guided tour through chaos with children playing all over the place (fig. 3).

That's so real. That's exactly what my creative life with kids feels like. They're half-supervised, doing who knows what while I sneak away to work in the next room. So, my wife Shelby and I have a band with our teenage boys called Hot Pink Drive. I love it so much. We all just wanted to learn to play music, so we just started doing it. We're writing songs together, and we just had our first performance.

You told me about that! How was it?

It was awesome. I was a bag of nerves, but then we just did the thing. Being in the band with Shelby and the kids is the most exciting, frustrating, and vulnerable thing ever. We're in this parenting role as creative collaborators with the kids and doing a lot of gatekeeping or executive functioning for the band, e.g., keeping us on task when we're in practice. But then, creative collaboration with our kids is a lot like our parenting relationship with our kids. When do we step in? When do we step back? How do we put boundaries in place? How do we communicate expectations clearly while also maintaining connection and relationship?

Yes, that sounds so much like our process with working with Zahra in films. Only I would say that I definitely gatekeep hard with keeping us on track. I'm a director in a way. Actually, the most successful film we have ever made was this short called *The Fawn* (2017) (fig. 4). When Zahra was four, she was obsessed with Snapchat and all the



Figure 3. Jennida Chase, still from *The Motherlode* (007), 2021-ongoing. Video, color, sound, (work-in-progress).

filters. So, we made this wild little film featuring her with all these Snapchat characters—and that has gotten into more festivals and screened in more countries than everything else we've ever done. And it was just us fooling around and wearing these crazed outfits, with fawn faces (fig. 5). We were able to take her to Canada, to South Korea, to Japan with that film. She learned—really young—that if we work on all these projects, you're able to travel with them. She's more willful now at age eleven. That's a little different than it had been. We're working on a dance film with her right now at her elementary school together with some other schools and their dance teacher. I cannot imagine teaching in K-12.

I think that I survived my tenure track because I taught elementary school. I was an elementary art teacher before I was a college professor. I went from six classes a day to three classes a semester.

Kids are willing to try stuff, and they do have interesting and cool ideas. And there's a lot to be said about that. But there's also a lot to

be said about being burnt out and tired, and just being so desperate to see something not thwart your well-laid-out plan of survival. Do you know what I mean? Like, we just need to get through this and this, and then we can crash and go to bed. But then kids are like, "But what if we did this?" And that's where the mental work of trying to balance a creative life with whatever you do for an income—which may or may not be related—and getting through all life's hurdles, while keeping any kind of grace and openness and being in the moment, is where it almost falls apart.

Do you mean in the moment of parenting, or artmaking?

Both, I think. Last semester, it was hard on Zahra for us to shoot so many projects. Every weekend we'd be throwing down close to thirty-hour weekends. There were so many times where she would just be on the edge of a set as usual, on an iPad.



Figure 4. Jennida Chase, still from *The Fawn* (004), 2017. Video, black-and-white, sound, 8:14.



Figure 5. Jennida Chase, still from *The Fawn* (006), 2017. Video, black-and-white, sound, 8:14.

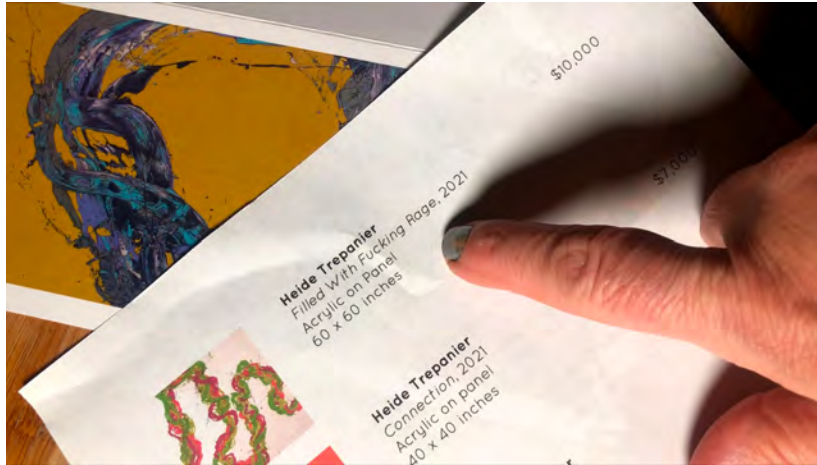


Figure 6. Jennida Chase, still from *The Motherlode* (008), 2021-ongoing. Video, color, sound, (work-in-progress).

It was absurd. So, then you're tired. You're crazed. You're cranky. You feel guilty. There's a weird, hard sort of balance that I don't know that I always can achieve. Sometimes I'm way out of balance, and that's the hard part of navigating all of this.

That's relatable for sure.

And it brings in tremendous feelings of failure and guilt. Like, great, Zahra's stuck on the side of this set again, because Mom needs to make tenure. If I don't make this work, there's a chance I can't keep my job. Those are real parts of the equation

that I want to say out loud, because I'm not the only one in this position (fig. 6).

Yeah, I think that's super important. From the outside, if you just look at the screenings, the performances, and the



Figure 7. Jennida Chase, still from *The Motherlode* (003), 2021-ongoing. Video, color, sound, (work-in-progress).

exhibitions, those are some of the rare and sparkly moments in an artist's life. The rest of it is the grind. Doing the work by the skin of your teeth or however you're able to get it done. You mentioned some of the opportunities you've had, to take Zahra with you around the world to film festivals and things, and to share work that you created with her. That is magical and extraordinary. And those opportunities exist because of the rest of the shit-show.

But I should also point out that those opportunities are almost never funded, and that goes for residencies, too. So, a lot of the time, we don't get to go to the festivals or exhibitions where the work is screened, unless we have a lot of lead time to prepare financially and logistically. In a university setting, we can apply for a little bit of travel money. It offsets some of the costs, but it usually doesn't cover everything. It is super important to me to talk about this stuff because the hustle gets old. It's not sustainable over a creative lifespan, especially in a family unit with kids.

I see that in the way we talk to our students about their commitment to their creative practices. Of course, it takes commitment. But I agree that we need to be honest about what that commitment looks like.

I think it's important to bring it up at SECAC. We are the ones doing the art education and we all collectively could be doing it better. When I went to SAIC, I was one of very few students working our way through school and paying our own living expenses without financial support

from our families. I don't know all the answers, but I think it starts by naming the problem and naming economics and how it operates in our field.

We both work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Our students are mostly regular folks from regular families, and they are asking us questions like, how do I make a creative life for myself that is sustainable and humane? Does being an artist have to mean giving up everything else that I want to do with my life and every other important human experience? Do I get to be a whole person with a family—if that's what I want?

Right? I choose a creative path and I refuse to lie about it to my students. I bring all of that up because it's a big part of *The Motherlode* (fig. 7). It's all part of the same conversation. None of this stuff exists in a vacuum.

I want to go back to what you said about artist with a lowercase "a." I agree with you on that one hundred percent. It is a radically free place to be and, coming out of art school in the 1990s, I definitely did not think about it that way. It's taken me decades to come around to that stance of thinking flexibly and expansively about creative practice. For me, I think it comes from teaching art in elementary school, teaching preservice art teachers, and thinking about what creative practice can mean and do in a regular person's life. I've also spent a lot of time working with social practice as a conceptual framework. It seems

like that is an important stance for you in your work.

Yes, yes, I was highly influenced by social practice. Grant Kessler and Claire Bishop were a big deal to me and informed the way I made work in grad school. And collaborative processes in general. My partner Hassan and I were encouraged to collaborate in grad school, and we've been collaborating ever since. I find that collaboration opens creative doors for me when I might otherwise be gatekeeping myself. You are forced to reckon with somebody else's ideas and, if you're really collaborating, it opens you up to make work you cannot make alone. You literally don't have the tools to think or make your way there. Don't get me wrong; collaboration is super challenging. It is so hard and time-consuming and can be a totally insane process. Especially if you're collaborating with people who are not used to collaborating. But I cannot give up that need for discovery that it provides. I'm addicted to it (fig. 8).

The question of *where* the art is, is endlessly fascinating to me in collaborative creative practice. I think about this in terms of my day-to-day family life but even more with the family band. For example, how a practice session goes, or the process of writing a song together, taking turns taking lead, stepping in and stepping back, negotiating power, authorship, ownership of the work we make together. What you said about collaborating with people who are not used to collaborating is real. On the one hand, we're used to being a family. We know each other. On the other

hand, making music together is different from just living life together at home. Taking a back seat to the kids' creative direction is intriguing and magical, and can be frustrating, like sometimes actually infuriating. And at the same time, none of us could do any

new faculty members, and the next wave of parents. I don't have all the answers, but I want to believe that collectively we can find them. It's literally about collaboration. We need more than one brain on it. And it is important to ask: who is missing from the conversation? What perspectives are not being shared,

I always have about fifty projects going at once. The feature part of *The Motherlode* project is the hugest of all of them. I'm still seeking further funding to do it as well as it needs to be done.

I'm in post-production for a music video for Quilla, one of the artist



of this without each other. How would you like to wrap up our conversation? *The Motherlode* challenges us to think about how to make an artist's life accessible, sustainable, and humane. What conversations do you want to see us having at SECAC, in our institutions, and in the broader art world?

That's a good question. I think we can do a better job of caring for and including the more vulnerable members of our professional community. You know: adjuncts,

what creative work isn't being made, what kinds of pedagogy are not being engaged, what ways of reaching our students are not possible because of who can't come in the door and participate in doing this work?

Really important questions for SECAC, our institutions, and the art world broadly speaking. As a final wrap-up, what's next for you after *The Motherlode*, and/or what other projects are you working on?

Figure 8. Jennida Chase, still from *The Fawn* (003), 2017, Video, black-and-white, sound, 8:14.

mothers in the documentary. I'm also in post for both a dance-film collaboration—between our Media Studies department and Morehead Elementary School, in Greensboro—and a joint collaboration with Media Studies faculty and students to launch a web series on campus.

I'm in the very early stages of working on a mother-artist "round-

robin”/exquisite-corpse project—it starts with several mother/child portraits, which get passed to graphic designers, animators, sound people, and so on, to see where/how each file ends up. Does it get printed, or turned into some other sort of media? Does it fracture out into multiple things? I hope to incorporate some elements of this experiment into *The Motherlode*. We have generated four portrait files, and I’m about to facilitate the first hand-off to the next artist.

And, most recently, we just wrapped up an experimental residency at Greensboro Project Space. I am still so close to it that I hardly have words to describe it. But a few folks gathered from across the globe to spend time and creative energy together in Greensboro. It was wild and fun, and several artist-mothers attended with kids in tow.

Wow that’s a lot! Sounds like you have a lot of exciting things happening! Jennida, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me about collaboration and creative practice and parenting and all their messy intersections. It’s been a really great conversation.

Thanks for your great questions! I’m excited to bring *The Motherlode* to Richmond and to see everyone at SECAC [in October 2023]!

Sunny Spillane
University of North Carolina
Greensboro

Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City

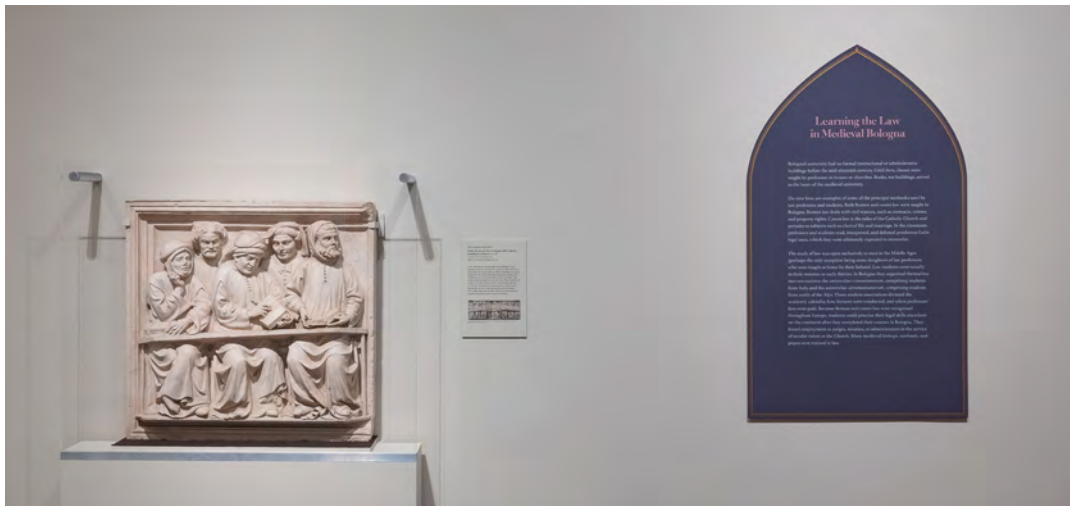
Frist Museum of Art

Nashville, Tennessee

November 5, 2021–January 30, 2022



Figure 1. Entrance of *Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City*, Frist Art Museum, Nashville, Tennessee. Photograph: John Schweikert.



Bologna’s three nicknames, “La Rossa, La Grassa, La Dotta”—“The Red, The Fat, The Learned”—allude to a rich history in architecture, gastronomy, and education. Art historians, however, have perennially overlooked the city in favor of better-known centers of medieval and early modern Italian art production, such as Florence, Rome, and Venice. *Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City*, curated by Trinita Kennedy at the Frist Art Museum, skillfully addressed this undervaluing of Bologna’s artistic heritage by bringing to light the specific visual concerns of medieval

Bolognese art/artists and their connection with experiences outside the workshop (fig. 1). Through its accessible focus on art as part of this city’s medieval life, together with objects’ iconographic and stylistic characteristics, the exhibition offered valuable experiences for both art historians and more casual visitors. As the first exhibition in the United States dedicated to the art of Bologna, c. 1200–1400, the substantial list of American lenders, augmented by Bologna’s Museo Civico, demonstrated the widespread—if neglected—presence of Bolognese art in this country’s collections.¹

Figure 2, top. Installation view of *Medieval Bologna* exhibition, with illuminated codices and folios in foreground and photograph of Basilica di San Petronio on the wall in background. Photograph: John Schweikert.

Figure 3, above. Installation view of *Medieval Bologna* exhibition, with marble relief from tomb of Lorenzo Pini, ca. 1397, by Paolo di Bonaiuto. Photograph: John Schweikert.

Interspersed throughout four galleries, large-scale photographs of key monuments and buildings in Bologna emphasized a sense of place as much as possible within the museum’s spaces (fig. 2). Bologna’s university, the oldest in Europe,



shaped the city's culture, and the exhibition's subtitle guided the focus of the first section. Displayed in an initial gallery, a wealth of sculptural fragments and manuscripts—both codices and folios—suitably grounded the visitor in that intellectual context. A marble relief from a professor's tomb, depicting a class in session, effectively relayed Bologna's distinctive character—remembering its teachers with elaborate monuments instead of dukes or popes (fig. 3).

Explicitly demonstrating the university's deep relationship to Roman civil and canon law, numerous texts and miniatures offered evidence of the high quality of late medieval Bolognese manuscript production.² Sustained juridical teaching and study stimulated a symbiotic book-making industry. In her catalogue essay, Susan L'Engle describes how textbook manuscripts were manufactured in large numbers, used, and often resold into the secondhand market, a familiar

trajectory for university texts today.³ Wall labels consistently furnished comprehensive explanations detailing the iconography of the illuminations and its connections to legal principles, and elucidating how text and image cooperated for the medieval user.

Some of the manuscripts on display featured areas of extensive annotation, such that a single page could include primary text, illumination, commentary, and a system of markings designed to link passages of gloss to relevant sections of law.⁴ These legal manuscripts, with clear monetary value as well as physical signs of prolonged use, are remarkably successful at engaging contemporary viewers who can easily imagine students hard at work hunched over such books. These objects also intimate a potential contribution to the burgeoning body of memory studies, since the illuminated and glossed texts helped students remember a large, complex volume of written material.⁵

Figure 4. Installation view of *Medieval Bologna* exhibition, with *Crucifixion*, ca. 1270-1275, by the Master of the Franciscan Crucifixes, visible on back wall; only panels of the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist are original, others are full-scale color reproductions. Photograph: John Schweikert.

Not all the manuscripts and folios on display came from the legal world; choir books and Bibles indicated something of the breadth of Bolognese book arts. The aesthetic variety achieved by the city's illuminators became particularly apparent in a subsequent gallery, drawing attention to the stylistic development of medieval Bolognese illumination. A First Style, identified by its bright, flat planes of color, gradually gave way to a Second Style, with an expanded palette, increased modeling, and similarity to sought-after Byzantine designs.⁶

If the exhibition's impressive display of manuscripts to this point had not already convinced visitors that medieval Bolognese painting



warrants a larger place in art history's collective consciousness, the panel and fresco paintings on view should have swayed them. To represent the significant presence of mendicant religious orders in the city's visual culture, a creative installation at the back of the first room presented the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist panels from the c. 1270-75 Master of the Franciscan Crucifixes' work, once located on the *tramezzo* of Bologna's major Franciscan church (fig. 4).⁷ With the bulk of the panel paintings assembled in the exhibition's third gallery, viewers had opportunity to become better acquainted with medieval Bolognese painting and illumination more broadly.

Instructive labels connected objects to such contexts as: the upheaval of early trecento papal politics spurring the commission of the (now destroyed) Rocca di Galleria, with its multiple paintings by Giotto and sculptures by Giovanni

di Balduccio; the influence of Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel frescoes on Bolognese artists; and contemporary scholars' ongoing struggle towards attribution of medieval Bolognese painting. Although many of the panel paintings survive as fragments from larger works—requiring a hefty degree of imagination to appreciate in entirety their intended impact—this section of the exhibition proved especially substantial in arguing for Bologna's geographical and figurative importance as a crossroads of Italian culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (fig. 5). Additional examples of three-dimensional work, however, would have assisted in rounding out the exhibit's presentation of Bologna's artistic spectrum. The few marbles in the galleries gave a tantalizing glimpse into the quality of the city's sculpture. It is no surprise that Nicola Pisano's

Figure 5. Installation view of *Medieval Bologna* exhibition. Photograph: John Schweikert.

sculpted tomb of St. Dominic is one of the best-known artworks associated with Bologna.

A final section explored Bologna's art after the plague of 1348. This aspect of the exhibition landed more viscerally than it might have, had it occurred even a few years ago. Originally scheduled for fall 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a year's delay before visitors could again attend the museum in person. In some ways, these profoundly challenging circumstances intensified the show's impact. On a practical level, it was no small curatorial feat to have maintained the large number of loans and lenders through the exhibition's postponement. Additionally, for today's college educators, the experience of standing before medieval students' texts, followed in short order by works of art in the

aftermath of widespread disease and societal disruption, yielded a potent—if unnerving—bridge to the people who made and used these works of art.

Besides the exhibition itself, a beautifully illustrated catalogue enriches the English-language scholarship on the history of medieval Bolognese art. Most of the essays explore the history of the city’s manuscript paintings from multiple angles, as well as in the tradition of trecento Bolognese narrative imagery. Others flesh out such topics as Bologna’s urban fabric and the relationship between mendicant orders and the city’s art. Given the array of essays and over seventy color plates, presented with stunning details, this catalogue will serve as a key reference for instructors adding medieval Bologna to their art history curriculum.

During *Medieval Bologna’s* run, the Frist Art Museum hosted the

biennial Andrew Ladis Memorial Trecento Conference, a highlight of the academic calendar for specialists in fourteenth-century Italian art. Although the conference had to move online and the exhibition became a virtual background, this affiliation affirmed the value of the exhibit for the field of art history. The gathering’s keynote lecture by Susan L’Engle (available online) offers a helpful primer in the development of medieval Bolognese manuscript illumination.⁸ After seeing the exhibition, which correctly argues for greater recognition of Bologna’s prominence in the landscape of late medieval Italian art, writ large, one cannot help but wonder why it took so long to receive such sustained attention from an American institution—followed quickly by gratitude for this significant first step.

Ashley Elston
Berea College

Endnotes

1. The exhibition catalogue lists over twenty-five American lenders, ranging from comprehensive museums (such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and National Gallery of Art) to numerous university museums, libraries and private collections.
2. Susan L’Engle, “Learning the Law in Medieval Bologna: The Production and Use of Illuminated Legal Manuscripts,” in *Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City*, ed. Trinita Kennedy (Nashville: Frist Art Museum, 2021), 41.
3. L’Engle, 42.
4. L’Engle, 44.
5. See, for example, the essays in *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages* (Brill, 2010).
6. Bryan C. Keene, “Pride and Glory in the Art of Illumination: Manuscripts for Church Ceremonies from Bologna and Environs,” in *Medieval Bologna: Art for a University City*, ed. Trinita Kennedy (Nashville: Frist Art Museum, 2021), 75.
7. The rest of the Crucifix (in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna) was represented by a full-scale color reproduction on the wall.
8. For the conference program, see <https://fristartmuseum.org/andrew-ladis-memorial-trecento-conference>. L’Engle’s lecture is available in its entirety: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXn3zM6ZwLM>.

Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston | Boston, Massachusetts

March 4–July 9, 2023

Hear Me Now: *The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina* was a powerful exhibition honoring the lives of enslaved potters whose work resulted in a wide array of beautifully crafted stoneware storage vessels, ranging from small jugs to large, wide-rimmed jars.¹ These handmade works stand as evidence of the forced labor of African Americans, labor that extended outside of plantation fields and industrial production with which we generally associate slavery. While the storage jars were functional, they were made with great skill, demonstrating consummate craftsmanship. They are adorned, in some cases, with decorative elements, adding to the creative expression evident in an overall design. Co-curated by Adrienne Spinozzi of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ethan Lasser of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Jason Young of the University of Michigan, the exhibition made every effort to document names of the individuals who crafted them, information often recovered from manufacturer ledger books. When known, dates of birth and individuals' work locations also appeared. This



dedication to naming individual potters reflects the exhibition's primary goal in telling the unique stories of enslaved people who, despite their circumstances, created works of great creativity and skill.²

Figure 1. Dave (later recorded as David Drake), storage jar, 1857, object place Edgefield County, South Carolina; made for Lewis J. Miles Pottery, stoneware with alkaline glaze, overall height 48.3 cm (19 in.), overall width 45.1 cm (17 ¾ in.), weight 35 lb (15.88 kg), Harriet Otis Cruft Fund and Otis Norcross Fund, 1997.10.

In the case of one named potter—Dave, later named David Drake, ca. 1801-1870s—his storage ware can be found in museum collections and has been included in other exhibitions. One of his vessels was recently part of a traveling exhibition, titled *American Perspectives: Stories from the American Folk Art Museum Collection*, organized by New York’s

American Folk Art Museum in 2020. Dave stands out among other potters in that he embellished his work by signing his name, an action that risked extreme punishment for enslaved people due to laws against reading and writing. Even more daring, in the case of several identified pots, including one on view from the Museum of Fine Arts permanent collection (fig. 1),

he inscribed lines of poetic text that provide insight into his lived experience. On another jar, on view and from the collection of the Greenville Museum of Art, South Carolina, Dave wrote:

I wonder where is all my
relation
Friendship to all—and every
nation.

As the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFAB) wall text explained, it was around this time that Dave was separated from wife and children when they were sold to an enslaver in Louisiana. The poignancy of this line is hard to bear when considering his circumstances. Yet, astoundingly, Dave offered “friendship to all,” even while marking the loss of family he was forced to endure.

The exhibition also included a collection of face jugs and cups (fig. 2) made by the Edgefield potters. In contrast to the functional storage jars that might be found in homes throughout South Carolina, and parts of Georgia, the face vessels are thought to have been made by Edgefield potters for themselves, and specifically for their own spiritual practices. Wall text offered connections between these face vessels and the *nkisi nkondi*, a power figure used by healers and diviners among the Kongo peoples of West-Central Africa. Museum



Figure 2. Unknown African American, face jug, made at Thomas Davies Pottery, ca. 1860, stoneware, alkaline (ash) glaze; kaolin clay inserts, 21.6 x 17.8 x 18.4 cm (8 1/2 x 7 x 7 1/4 in.), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The John Aelrod Collection—Frank B. Bemis Fund, Charles H. Bayley Fund, and The Heritage Fund for a Diverse Collection, 2011.1807. Photo: Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



labels also informed viewers that, in 1858, a slave ship illegally transported hundreds of Africans to the United States, including one hundred individuals who were sent to Edgefield and forced to work in the potteries. This may account for such objects as these face jugs and cups, which would have been part of a broader resurgence of African-influenced religious and cultural practices in African American communities.

Recognizing the vessels on view as important markers of the lives of their enslaved makers, the MFAB did an excellent job of creating an atmosphere of solemnity throughout its exhibition design

(fig. 3). Each object was placed on an individual pedestal. The gallery was dark with lighting limited exclusively to spotlights directed at individual works. By way of this arrangement, each ceramic held a pride of place. Except for the face jars and cups, located together in a case at the back of the gallery, the exhibition invited visitors to contemplate the unique life of each maker, while spotlights served to highlight their craftsmanship and labor. Meanwhile, the quiet solemnity of the installation was disrupted, periodically, by the presence of a few containers made by enslavers who owned the potteries, as well as by containers signed by enslavers who had not

Figure 3. Installation view of *Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield*, South Carolina, exhibition photograph, courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

actually made them, a practice essentially negating the labor and lived experiences of enslaved makers. This juxtaposition of works associated with both oppressed individuals and their oppressors kept visitors grounded in the history of American slavery, even while showcasing the beauty and craftsmanship of these objects.

Two other components warrant recognition. Reminding viewers that the North also profited from slavery, the MFAB's version

of the exhibition featured the stoneware and pottery business of Isaac and Grace Parker, located in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and operating from 1715 to 1774. Forced to work for the Parkers, two enslaved men—Jack and Acton, known only by their first names—were recognized in the exhibit, though only represented by one photograph of a work produced there. In addition, the exhibition featured related works by contemporary artists, including examples by Simone Leigh (b. 1967), Theaster Gates (b. 1973), and Woody De Othello (b. 1991). In the case of two especially poignant ceramic pieces, Adebunmi Ghadebo (b. 1992) made them using clay from the same plantation in South Carolina where her enslaved ancestors had worked the land. There were also works on paper by Robert Pruitt (b. 1975). From the museum's permanent collection, one depicted Sofia Meadows-Muriel, a museum intern at the time, pouring water from a face jug owned by the MFAB and included

in the show (see fig. 2). While these contemporary works were meant to bring the legacy of Dave and other African American potters into the present, it is worth wondering how the older vessels made by African American potters might have been experienced, had they had been celebrated solely and independently within the context of the time period in which they were made.

Hear Me Now was a powerful and compelling tribute to enslaved African American potters. It served as profound recognition of their persistent humanity, even under the most cruel and inhumane conditions in which they lived. One exhibition label indicated that, in 2021, a jar by Dave sold at auction for \$1 million. Dave himself may have been referring to the exploitative economic market that existed during his lifetime when he wrote on one jar: "I made this Jar = for cash—though it's called = lucre Trash." The museum didactic posited that his words may have served as ironic reference to the owner of the Stony Bluff

Manufactory where the jar was made. It is likely that owner Lewis Miles profited from Dave's labor without compensating him. Yet the craftsman's words offer caution beyond his own time. They warn us of how the current art market might end up exploiting Dave's labor, and that of other Edgefield potters, yet again.

Cynthia Fowler
Emmanuel College

Endnote

1. The exhibition tour also included the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan, August 26, 2023–January 7, 2024; and High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, February 16–May 12, 2024.
2. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalog that includes thoughtful reflections on the Edgefield potters by scholars and curators, an interview with Simone Leigh, and color reproductions of the objects on display; Adrienne Spinozzi, ed., *Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2022).

Suzanne Valadon: Model, Painter, Rebel

The Barnes Foundation

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 21, 2021–
January 9, 2022

Modigliani Up Close

The Barnes Foundation

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 16, 2022–
January 29, 2023

Two recent exhibitions at the Barnes Foundation featured artists working in Paris who formed a fond friendship a century ago. Suzanne Valadon faced poverty, lack of education, and a misogynistic art scene; Amadeo Modigliani was an Italian immigrant, Jewish, and chronically ill. Existential hardships may have been the common ground that drew them to each other. This review considers two individuals who created original and compelling artworks, each holding key places in art history despite obstacles and suffering.

Virtually unknown in the United States, Suzanne Valadon's first North American exhibition included



paintings, drawings, and prints that spanned her long and creative career.¹ The subject of the nude was a particular focus for the artist, along with landscape, portraits and still life. Context is key for insight into why her work is relevant today. Valadon

Figure 1. Suzanne Valadon, *Marie Coca and Her Daughter Gilberte*, 1913, oil on canvas, 63 3/8" x 51 3/16". Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, purchased from the artist 1937. Photograph: ©2021 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / Image ©DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY.

(1865-1938) was a post-Impressionist painter, who grew up dirt-poor during the Belle Epoch in Montmartre. She began working at age twelve, eventually joining a circus until, as legend has it, a fall from a trapeze ended her acrobatic career. She then found her way to the “model market” in Place Pigalle, where she landed work in the studios of such painters as Puvis de Chavannes, Renoir, and others.² Valadon’s vivacious personality, striking appearance, and ability to hold difficult poses established her as a popular model. By eighteen, she became an unmarried parent—yet continued to model as well as draw.³ All these difficulties make her professional trajectory astonishing at a time women were denied access to formal art education. Also remarkable, her low-class status provided social leeway—since bourgeoisie women were held to rigid patriarchal rules restricting public comportment and bodily autonomy. Valadon learned to paint from the artists for whom she modelled. Degas mentored and taught her printmaking. In 1894 she participated in her first Paris exhibition with the *Société Nationale des beaux-Arts* and was the inaugural woman admitted to the group. Her reputation as an artist flourished; by the 1920s, robust international sales of her paintings made her financially independent.

The first gallery enlightened the visitor on Valadon’s work as an artist’s model, reproducing wall photographs along with paintings by the artists who hired her. These included portraits by Toulouse-Lautrec and Jean Eugène Clary, Santiago Rusiñol’s *Laughing Girl* (1894), and Gustav Wertheimer’s monumental *Kiss of the Siren* (1882). The latter depicts Valadon as a

mythological seductress luring a sailor to his death. Her idealized life-size naked figure immersed in a turbulent sea was strikingly the most contradictory painting in the exhibit, given that the other nudes—painted by Valadon—were not created with a sexist narrative.

A second gallery, generally intimate in scale and subject, displayed her early works on paper. This allowed for close inspection of Valadon’s decisive and supple contour lines, produced in observation of her domestic coterie. There were drawings of her child, a self-portrait at age eighteen, a tiny profile of lover Miguel Utrillo, and a few “keyhole nudes”—early prints heavily influenced by Degas.

Valadon began seriously painting in 1909.⁴ Hanging in a third gallery were a life-size *Self-Portrait* (1911) at age forty-six; large landscapes; a portrait of the artist’s niece, *Marie Coca and her daughter Gilberte* (1913) (fig. 1), and *Family Portrait* (1912). The latter is just under life-sized, with Valadon encircled by son, mother, and lover Andre Utter. In this compelling arrangement, the artist at the center of this little tribe of personalities, right hand over her heart, gazes directly out at the viewer. Hanging nearby was a double portrait of her mother, son, and family dog, *Grandmother and Grandson* (1910). A kind of psychological disconnect in these familial compositions gives the impression that, while physically together, everyone—except Valadon—is mentally absent, absorbed in some private interiority. *Marie Coca and Her Daughter Gilberte* is especially discordant, with the seated mother physically twisting away, gazing off in the

distance, and, heedless of the child at her feet, ironically cradling a doll. A small Degas ballerina painting on the wall behind the upholstered chair mutely connects the painter to her early mentor.

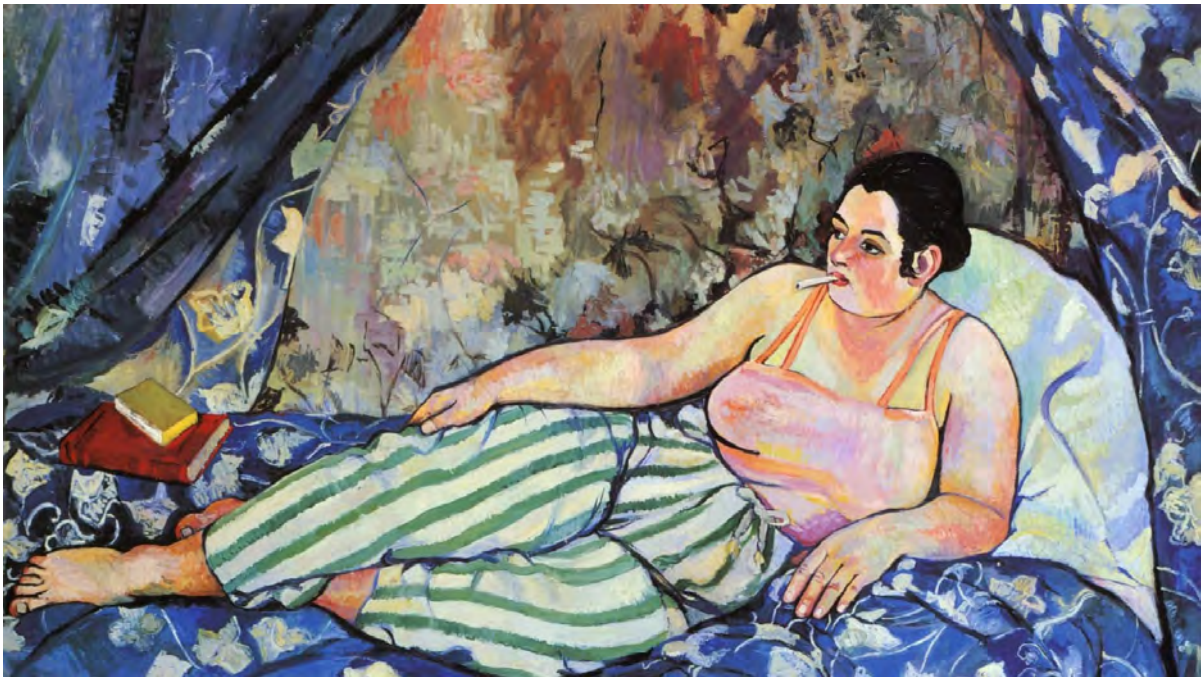
Large oils dominated the next two galleries of mostly nudes. The fact they were painted by a woman is truly noteworthy. Women rarely painted nude figures in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, or, if they had, their nudes were censored from exhibition. Valadon’s representations communicate an understanding of *bodies*: how they move and take up space with confidence. This ability is likely connected to her origins as model and subsequent empathy she brought to her studio. Standouts were *Adam and Eve* (1909), *The Blue Room* (1923) (fig. 2), and *Nude with Striped Blanket* (1922). Valadon’s palette often feels boldly exuberant in the use of prismatic colors to render flesh, and a heavy use of outline that appears black but, looking more closely, is blue.

Blue is the predominant hue of *The Blue Room* in which a semi-reclining woman in green-striped pajama pants and pink tank-top lounges on a bed, cigarette dangling from her lips, books stacked at feet. Enveloped in bold abstracted floral patterns, her dark eyes gaze at something outside of the picture frame. The work feels fresh and timeless, yet it was painted one hundred years ago; it renders Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) old-fashioned, as Valadon turned the tables on how women are viewed in paintings. Also remarkable are *Seated Woman Holding an Apple* (1919) and *Black Venus* (1919) (fig. 3). Both feature an unidentified

Black model, another pronounced deviation from conventional studio practice, with some unambiguous shock value that expanded the canon of representation. This year followed the end of World War I: issues of French Empire and colonization were newsworthy and W.E.B. DuBois held the first Pan-

is thin and brushy. Yet the mirror's reflection brings apples, vase, and artist's features into focus with thick paint. She gazes in serious resolve, seemingly daring herself to keep going. Though Valadon did not subscribe to any art movements, she was certainly aware of contemporary approaches. Uncomfortable with

Figure 2. Suzanne Valadon, *The Blue Room*, 1923, oil on canvas, 35 7/16" x 45 11/16" Centre Pompidou-Musée National d'Art Moderne/CCI, Paris on deposit to the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Limoges, State Purchase, 1924. Photograph: © 2021 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo by Jacqueline Hyde / Image © CNAC/MNAM, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.



African Congress. While perhaps a political statement, Valadon also renders the Black female body as one with mythological connotations, including those related to the archetype of Eve in a primeval forest.

The final gallery held many still life and portraits, including a compelling late *Self-Portrait* (1927). Painted in the tradition of *vanitas*, Valadon captures her sixty-two-year-old face reflected in a tabletop mirror. Closest to the picture plane between mirror and viewer is a loosely painted still life in which the paint

art manifestos, she believed art was driven by emotion or passion.⁵ *Model, Painter, Rebel* served up Valadon's uncompromising philosophy. She relished the visual world populated with bodies, flowers, pets, decorative objects, and hillsides. That love was communicated via pigment and brushes; death claimed her at seventy-two in the act of painting.

Valadon's son became a drinking buddy with the young painter Amedeo Modigliani. When the Montmartre bars closed, Valadon would care for the two inebriated

artists, developing a tender friendship with "Modi." He called her "my elected mother" and she offered encouragement as he sat at her feet while she painted.⁶ Appreciative, he bought her flowers, sang Italian songs, and read Dante aloud while camping in her studio.⁷ In 1919, they both exhibited in a London group show of contemporary French art.⁸

Modigliani (1884-1920) is affiliated with a post-Cubist style as a member of Picasso's circle. He is well-represented in many museums,

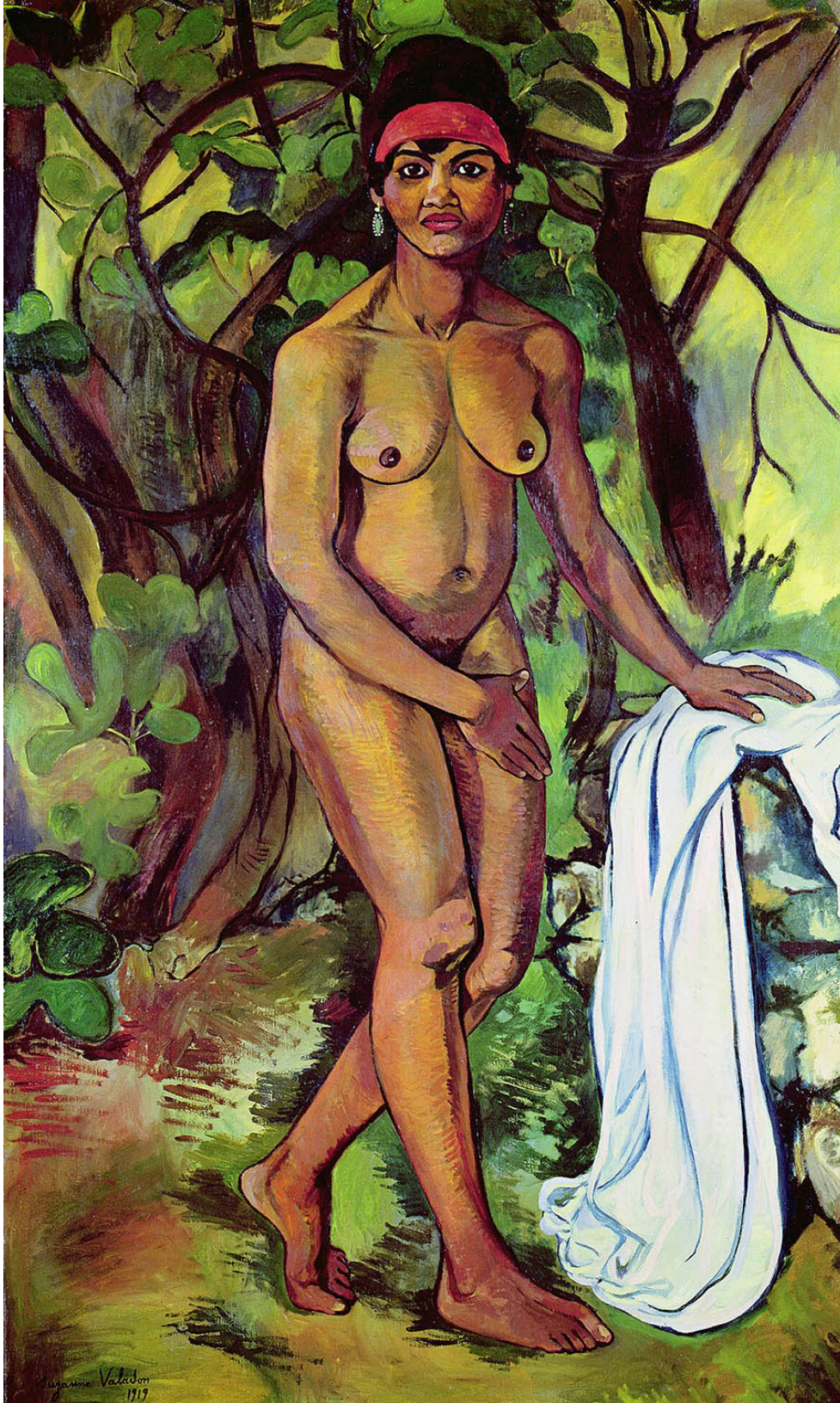


Figure 3. Suzanne Valadon, *Black Venus*, 1919, oil on canvas, 63" x 38 3/16." Centre Pompidou-Musée National d'Art Moderne/CCI, Paris on deposit to the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Menton, Gift of M. Charles Wakefield-Mori, 1939. Photograph: © 2021 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / Image © credit: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Menton, France/Bridgeman Images.

including the Barnes' permanent collection.⁹ A sickly child, he was raised in Italy by supportive intellectual Jewish middle-class parents. Versed in literature and obsessed with Renaissance paintings as a teen, he studied classical art in Italy for eight years, moved to Montmartre in 1906, then Montparnasse, finally settling in the south of France. Handsome and stylish, with the "emotional drive of a satyr,"¹⁰ Modigliani had a reputation for alcohol and hashish-enhanced capers, an abundance of lovers, and a chronic cough due to tuberculosis.¹¹ He painted prolifically until his demise at thirty-five of tubercular meningitis.

Modigliani Up Close emphasized his working methods, with various approaches to conservatorship and detailed didactics, including photographs of X-rays or infrared reflectography revealing underlying images with revisions.¹² Early on, Modigliani used second-hand canvases to exploit the preexisting paint surface for new works, scraping off freshly applied paint to reveal dried pigment underneath. He also experimented with different color grounds to achieve visual effects.¹³ While the exhibit mostly featured oil portraits on canvas, a second gallery included carved limestone heads; another showed female nudes. Many gallery walls were painted in cool blue tones to amplify Modigliani's use of unpainted blue-grey ground areas.

Visitors were greeted by explanatory wall text with an accompanying 1919 self-portrait. The first gallery featured some of Modigliani's early portrait paintings, in which evidence of his academic training as well

as influence by Cézanne and Toulouse-Lautrec proves visible. Generally, his highly stylized oeuvre captures a humanist interiority, rendering the body a flattened static vessel for the mystery of an individual life. There were no double or group portraits.

Modigliani's portraiture is not mimetic—or what we might describe as an "emotional read"—and there is a sense of personality and engagement. His subjects tend toward elongated oval heads that rhyme with long thin necks. Almond-shaped eyes are frequently blank like ancient stone faces that have shed their pigment. Some fill with pale blue, some are colorless; occasionally, there is an indication of irises and reflections of light; sometimes the entire eye is simply dark and mask-like. Lips are typically pressed together under an articulated philtrum; when a mouth is painted slightly open, it is as if the subject is inhaling.

For all his redundant stylization there are variations. For example, in *Self Portrait as Pierrot* (1915), the sad-clown persona offers a common theatrical trope symbolic of hiding one's feelings. This diminutive work depicts his head in three-quarter view, the long neck framed by white ruff. A dark shape on the back of his head may be a yarmulke. P-I-E-R-R-O-T is spelled out prominently below the collar and delicate contour lines denote facial features. Blue-green paint dabbed over the face and neck lie next to modulated pinkish flesh tones obscuring the left eye, giving the effect of skin lesions. Various approaches to manipulating wet pigment exemplify Modigliani's experimental methodologies.

Like Picasso, Modigliani was influenced by Iberian, ancient Greek, and African artifacts, as well as Egyptian and Khmer carvings owned by Paris dealers. Lacking formal training, he began sculpting after 1909 for approximately three years, probably stopping because of physical exertion and dust. His circle of eight carved limestone androgynous heads¹⁴ were encased in plexiglass boxes in the second gallery. Apparently, in his studio, at night, Modigliani staged the heads with candles, proffering a spectacle of shadows and light.¹⁵ Seen alongside his paintings, these sculptures give off an arresting presence while expanding an aesthetic discourse. For example, *Head of a Woman* (1912) features an architectonic elongated face and nose, arched brows, pursed round lips, and slightly curled hair atop a long neck, over a square base embellished with an arch. Carved from a single block of warm white-gray limestone containing fossil fragments, chisel and rasp marks on its surface offer a beguiling textural quality.¹⁶ Unseen drips of candle wax are confirmed by ultraviolet light used in analysis.¹⁷

Modigliani's beautifully painted nude women articulate a male gaze/sexist vibe that is hard to dismiss now. They seem to oppose the portraits that speak to non-objectifying notions of a sitter's psyche. Yet Modigliani loved women (lots of them) and the nude-y genre was highly marketable. The echo of Italian Renaissance masters he adored is evident without landscapes or mythological narratives. *Reclining Nude* (1917) pushes the slender model up against the picture plane,



cropping limbs as she twists forward with arched torso; armpit hair aligned with open lips (fig. 4). Her face is mask-like. Modigliani used a heavy application of paint and worked dark to light; fiber analysis indicates he polished the paint surface and used a brush-handle tip to score the hair.¹⁸

Brushwork remarkable for its painterly vocabulary is also visible in *Jeanne Hébuterne, Seated* (1918) (fig. 5). His last partner, the pregnant Hébuterne is rendered half-length, standing in front of a white-covered bed with a carved headboard and nightstand. Her stylized figure is frontal with long reddish-brown hair, pale, blue-filled eyes, red lips, long slender neck, hands folded in her lap. A turquoise-colored blouse and vertically striped sash tops a blue-

black skirt. Analysis determined the work is thinly painted, using a wet-on-wet approach with areas of dark outline. The bedroom setting, loosely choreographed brushwork, and limited palette impart a sense of domestic sweetness as the couple prepare for the birth of their daughter. Sadly, the following year both Modigliani and Hébuterne perished while expecting their second child.

While Valadon's familiarity with philosophy, literature and poetry is undocumented, Modigliani was versed in all three. His study of Nietzsche, and his theory of "the will to power," is an important takeaway for Valadon and Modigliani's legacy.¹⁹ Nietzsche claimed that artists create to overcome human suffering. In part, the will to power insists that

Figure 4. Amedeo Modigliani, *Reclining Nude*, 1917, oil on canvas, 23 7/8" x 36 1/2." The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls Collection, 1997, 1997.149.9

an individual empowers the self—not by dominating the other—but by saying "yes" to life through overcoming personal hurdles. Both artists left a trove of images marking their triumph over misfortune. For Modigliani, the challenge was terminal illness; for Valadon it was sexism and poverty. Viewing their work allows us to hold time still for a bit, closely contemplate their striving, and perhaps say "yes" to the benevolence it offers.

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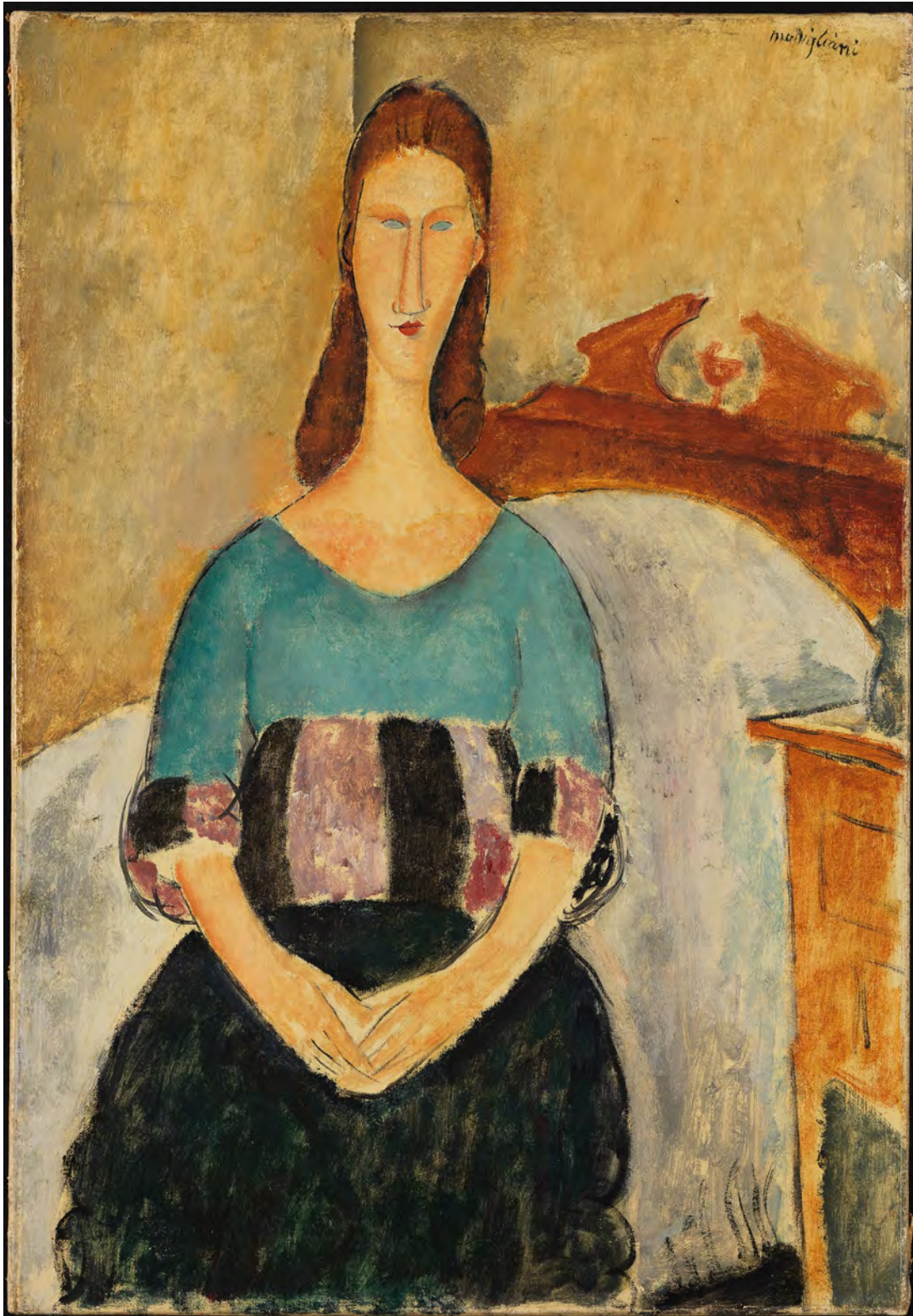


Figure 5. Amedeo Modigliani, *Jeanne Hébuterne, Seated*, 1918, oil on canvas, 21 5/8" x 14 15/16." The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Stella Fischbach, New York, to American Friends of the Israel Museum in memory of Harry Fischbach, B01.0855.

Endnote

1. *Suzanne Valadon: Model, Painter, Rebel* was curated by Nancy Ireson, Gund Family Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Collections and Exhibitions at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, PA; Ireson, ed., *Suzanne Valadon: Model, Painter, Rebel* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2021). There were fifty-four works created between 1890 and 1937 on view.

2. Valadon neither kept a journal nor wrote things down as general practice. Later in life she was known to have burned letters. Lacking documentation, what is known about her life is largely based on inconsistent verbal accounts.

3. Valadon's only child grew up to become landscape painter Maurice Utrillo. His paternity was officially acknowledged by Miguel Utrillo. Valadon refused to confirm or deny the authenticity of Miguel's claim.

4. Ireson, op cit., 78.

5. John Storm, *The Valadon Drama* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1959), 175.

6. *Ibid.*, 168 - 169.

7. *Ibid.*, 169.

8. Kenneth Wayne, *Modigliani & The Artists of Montparnasse* (New York, NY: Harry Abrams, Inc., 2002), 69.

9. The Barnes Foundation has a dozen Modigliani works in their collection but lacks any artwork by Valadon.

10. Storm, *The Valadon Drama*, 165.

11. Modigliani refused treatment for his tuberculosis and knew he had a contagious condition. He hid his diagnosis from his friends due to its social stigma. This raises questions about his moral obligation to those in his circle.

12. *Modigliani Up Close* was curated by an international team of art historians and conservators: Barbara Buckley, Senior Director of Conservation and Chief Conservator of Paintings at the Barnes Foundation; Simonetta Fraquelli, independent curator, and consulting curator for the Barnes; Nancy Ireson, Deputy Director for Collections and Exhibitions, and Gund Family Chief Curator, at the Barnes; Annette King, Paintings Conservator at Tate, London. The exhibit held fifty works and was thematically arranged.

13. Barbara Buckley, Simonetta Fraquelli, Nancy Ireson, and Annette King, ed., *Modigliani Up Close* (Philadelphia: The Barnes Foundation, distributed by Yale University Press New Haven and London, 2022), 3. The catalog contains exhaustive information about technical analysis of materials Modigliani used, including his canvases (noting stretcher types, thread counts, and grounds), carving tools, limestone blocks, and pigment analysis. More than fifty curators and conservators were involved in the research.

14. Modigliani's stones were sometimes sourced from building sites in Paris.

15. Buckley, Fraquelli, Ireson, and King, *Modigliani Up Close*, 16.

16. *Ibid.*, 100. Oolitic limestone, originally formed in shallow marine seas, is noteworthy for spherical grains and skeletal fossil fragments.

17. Buckley, Fraquelli, Ireson, and King, 102.

18. *Ibid.*, 138.

19. Wayne, *Modigliani & The Artists of Montparnasse*, 45.

Laurie Anderson: The Weather

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden | Washington, DC

September 24, 2021–August 2, 2022

For decades, Laurie Anderson has been a kind of storytelling polymath. At the forefront of “new media”—but ever mindful of the words above, told to her once by a cryptologist—her work defies

categorization and blends image, sound, and language. She has been nominated for multiple Grammys (winning one) for her work in the recording studio, charted new waters in the melding of electronic media and live performance on

If you think technology will solve your problems, you don't understand technology and you don't understand your problems.
—Laurie Anderson¹

Figure 1. Laurie Anderson, *Four Talks*, 2021. Installation view from *Laurie Anderson: The Weather* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, September 24, 2021–August 2, 2022, courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Ron Blunt.



some of the world's grandest stages, broadcast innovative music videos, hung paintings in major museums, and even held the prestigious Charles Eliot Norton Professorship in Poetry at Harvard University—where she delivered, hands-down, the best Zoom lectures this writer ever attended. If one constant rings through her practice, it is that she has a way with words.

The Weather, her recent career-spanning survey at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, took viewers through decades of Anderson's wide-ranging creative voice, completely encompassing a floor of the museum's windowless, cylindrical space. Curated by Marina Isgro and Mark Beasley, the exhibition hinged on a new site-specific installation of sprawling text and drawings the artist created in the summer of 2021. Accompanied by ambient sounds and four sculptures, *Four Talks* featured walls and a floor that mimicked a slate-painted room in Anderson's studio where she would draw "diagrams, stage plots, grocery lists, and song ideas," erasing them with a sock (fig. 1).² Bunched in places but winding and turning in others, Anderson's hand-written text moved viewers through the gallery in strange and unpredictable ways, almost as if they were falling and tripping over stories, quotes, and ruminations. Text and image switched from humorous musings over geopolitics—a battle over "who owns the moon?" or "some say empire is passing as all empires do...(others haven't a clue)"—to first person story-telling ("I dreamed I had to take a test in a Dairy Queen on another planet") and pithy quotes from famous figures (e.g.,

"Less like an object and more like the weather," by John Cage; "Civilization began when the first angry person cast a word instead of a rock," from Sigmund Freud).

When paired with the disorienting soundscape of gongs, thunder, inaudible vocalizations, musical instrumentation, crickets, passing trains, and the computerized voice of the large parrot sculpture *My Day Beats Your Year (The Parrot)* (2010/2021), the effect was like moving through a collective unconscious. As the narrative switched from interior monologue to external observations and shared memory, it also pointed to sculptures within the room. The story of the raven, the first animal sent out after the flood (who never returned), surrounded the massive sculpture *The Witness Protection Program (The Raven)* (2020). Just below *What Time Can Do (Shaking Shelf)* (2021), a narrative began with "Hope was a tchotchke sitting on a high shelf along with other fragile things."

Seemingly random narrative details that read like so many asides, stories, observations, and declarations coalesced into a single, distinctive visual, sonic, and spatial experience—an effect Anderson also achieved in her pioneering and genre-bending work in music and on the stage. The Hirshhorn documented this history in recording and live performance—for which she is most widely known—in more historical galleries through video, photographs, posters, and some of her modified instruments, developed through experimentation and collaboration. These objects enriched but did not overtake the experience of visual artworks throughout the

show, which focused primarily on celebrating Anderson's studio practice. Broadcasting staccato beats throughout the adjacent gallery spaces, video documentation of *Drum Dance*, from her 1986 performance *Home of the Brave*, featured closeups of Anderson hitting her body to set off a wearable drum machine. Projected upon a black wall, Anderson appeared spectral, emerging from the ether much like her white drawings and text in *Four Talks*.

Theatrical lighting in darkened galleries similarly heightened the effect of Anderson's many video installation works, including *Habeas Corpus* (2015), a thirteen-foot foam sculpture of a seated figure hosting the projection of Mohammed el Gharani, one of the youngest detainees at Guantanamo Bay; and *Citizens* (2021), a row of nineteen tiny video portraits (including one of Anderson) staring into the camera as they sharpen a knife, each projected onto a small clay figurine—a monumental testimony and a lilliputian army preparing for battle. In another play of scale, Anderson and her dog appeared projected onto small figurines set in a corner in *From the Air* (2009) (fig. 2). Though the title comes from a song from her visionary album *Big Science* (1982), Anderson's tiny avatar spoke of anxiety about the unknown in parallel anecdotes, of her dog being terrorized by turkey vultures in the mountains and her downtown neighbors' trauma in the aftermath of 9/11.

Much of Anderson's recent installation work explores the anxieties of the twenty-first century's tense political climate. *Salute* (2021), a darkened hall filled



with ominous music of distorted anthems and clanging sounds, featured rows of eight red flags that performed a perverse animatronic dance as viewers walked down the central aisle, slightly curved from the Hirshhorn's round form. On the gallery wall, the lyrics of Anderson's major studio hit from thirty years prior, "O Superman," took on new meaning:

When love is gone,
 There's always justice
 And when justice is gone,
 There's always force
 And when force is gone,
 There's always Mom.

So hold me, Mom,
 In your long arms
 In your electronic arms
 Your military arms
 In your arms
 Your petrochemical arms
 Your electronic arms.³

Elsewhere, her words were more emotional and biographical, as in the wall text that accompanied her silent short video *The Lake* (2015) that tells the story of when Anderson's twin brothers almost drowned as she attempted to take their stroller over a frozen lake to look at the moon. "I remember the

Figure 2. Laurie Anderson, *From the Air*, 2009 (clay fabrication by Maria Dusamp). Installation view from *Laurie Anderson: The Weather* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, September 24, 2021–August 2, 2022, courtesy of the artist. Photograph: by Ron Blunt.

knitted balls on their hats as they disappeared under the black water.... I ran in the door and told my mother what had happened and she stood there and said, 'what a wonderful swimmer you are. And I didn't know you were such a good diver.'" In "A Story about a Story," (fig. 3) printed on the opposite wall in the same gallery, Anderson recalled a childhood back injury and a prolonged hospital stay, a story

she told many times the same way until, one day, the trauma and fear of the event actually resurfaced. “And that’s what I think is the creepiest thing about stories.... You try to get to the point you’re making, usually about yourself or something you learned. You get your story and you hold onto it, and every time you tell it you forget it more.”

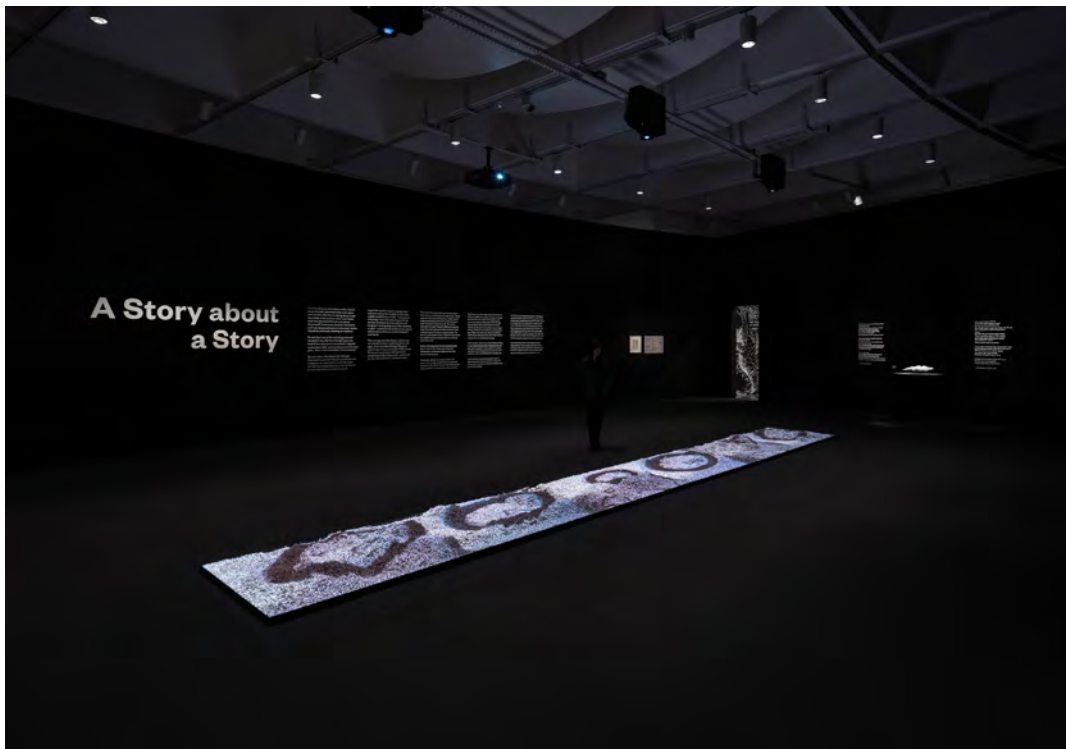
Appearing directly on the gallery walls, these stories denied the authorial voice of the curator and prompted a very different kind of reading by the viewer. They furthermore complicated the conceptual works appearing in the same space that appropriated text or disturbed the relationship between text and image. *Scroll* (2021), Anderson’s collaboration with the Art Intelligence Agency and the Australian Institute for Machine Learning, uses a neural network to generate text mimicking the Bible or

Anderson’s own voice—a prescient project as we grapple with the ramifications of ChatGPT two years later. A series of woven newspapers and crosswords, taken from different parts of the globe and produced in 2020, together with the video projection *Sidewalk* (2012), projected upon a pile of shredded pages from *Crime and Punishment*, explore the tension between the material of the page and narrative meaning. Some of Anderson’s more conceptual early works in photography were also included here. *Object/Objection/Objectivity (Fully Automated Nikon)* (1973/2003) features street photographs of men, eyes barred out for anonymity, with typewritten captions of the catcalls directed at the woman behind the camera. In *Institutional Dream Series* (1972-73), the artist slept in public places around New York City. Along with each picture of her sleeping are

descriptions of her attempts to nod off and the dreams she had when she did.

Eight of Anderson’s newer paintings hung in one of the only brightly lit spaces of this sprawling exhibition. All completed in 2021, they take on the scale of Neo-Expressionism, employing some of the same expressive contour lines as the immersive wall and floor drawings, but in earthy reds and browns. Their mood seemed ominous and angry, perhaps echoing the COVID years of their creation. Paired with titles like *Guantánamo*, *The Beach*, and *And I Too*, they also engage language and narrative in

Figure 3. Laurie Anderson, *Sidewalk*, 2012. Installation view from *Laurie Anderson: The Weather* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, September 24, 2021–August 2, 2022, courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Ron Blunt.





provocative and somewhat cryptic ways. Their formalism and this gallery's silence almost felt out of tune with the rest of the exhibition but, in a show that celebrates half a century of Anderson's expansive creative mind, they made sense. They flex that muscle of size and expanse in oil on canvas that has defined so much of the history of the American avant-garde yet maintain a consistent voice, where Anderson marches to the beat of her own drum.

In the exhibition's final gallery, historical artifacts and posters of Anderson's many performances surrounded *The Handphone Table*

(1978, recreated 2017) (fig. 4). Viewers were invited to sit in a chair and cover their ears, resting elbows on the table. A series of electronic sounds suddenly became perceptible through the vibrations of bones and head, something seen by others but experienced alone and in the body. This tension between public and private address, and the activation of the body through electronic manipulation, ran through the museum's spaces and Anderson's long practice, and rang in many viewers' ears long after the show's closing days.

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Figure 4. Laurie Anderson, *The Handphone Table*, 1978/recreated 2017. Installation view from *Laurie Anderson: The Weather* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, September 24, 2021–August 2, 2022, Collection of the Exploratorium, San Francisco, courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Ron Blunt.

Endnote

1. Quotation featured in site-specific wall painting and mentioned by Anderson in a 2022 interview on *60 Minutes*.
2. Laurie Anderson, *Snaux* (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2022), i.
3. Laurie Anderson, "O Superman," *Big Science*, Warner Bros., 1982.

Jamie Robertson: Make for High Ground

**Alabama Contemporary
Art Center** | Mobile, Alabama

May 12–July 15, 2023

Water—and the ways it can be used to address fluid histories and experiences, physically and psychologically—has been the impetus behind several recent art exhibitions across the U.S. This includes the Chapter

House’s virtual *but when you come from water*, the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey’s *The First Water is the Body*, the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art’s *Maya Lin: A Study of Water*, the Nevada Museum of Art’s *Water by Design*, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s



Figure 1. Jamie Robertson, *Waters I: Look for Me*, from the *Waters* series, 2021–ongoing, video. Photograph: Elizabeth S. Hawley.

Water Memories, to name a few.¹ The works on view in these shows address a range of historical and contemporary concerns: bringing to the surface violent diasporic ruptures and environmental devastation as well as the nourishing of cultural connections and sustainable futures.

The Alabama Contemporary Art Center (ACAC) added to this current by showcasing the work of Houston-based artist Jamie Robertson in *Make for High Ground*, a joint curatorial effort between ACAC curator Allison Schaub and the artist, whose proposed solo show was selected for the ACAC's Independent Projects.² This multi-media installation examined the socio-political and spiritual relationships between Blackness, water, and memory. Using video, text, and photography, Robertson interrogates how water functions as a capaciously cleaving force, evoking violent separations even as it maintains relational ties.

The show centers on Robertson's *Waters* (2021-ongoing), a series of three videos that specifically approach the socio-politics of waterways from the perspective of the Gulf South and the histories and experiences of Blackness therein—an aspect of the work that differentiates *Make for High Ground* from the aforementioned exhibitions, most of which take broader approaches to geography and identity. Located in the Gulf port city of Mobile, the ACAC served as a fitting venue for the videos, which highlight historical events occurring in this city as well as Galveston, Texas, and Biloxi, Mississippi.

Waters I: Look for Me focuses on Robertson's home state of Texas and considers the infamous Storm of 1900 in Galveston, a massive hurricane that remains the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. This Category 4 storm caused a surge of over fifteen feet that led to extensive flooding, destroyed more than 3,600 buildings, inflicted over \$20 million in damages (well over \$600 million today), and killed at least 8,000 people in the city limits of Galveston alone. Like all three videos, *Waters I* was projected on the wall of the ACAC's Gallery D—a dark, low-ceilinged, windowless space that lends itself to screened and projected work. The piece commences with, and takes its title from, a 1928 Marcus Garvey speech that includes the lines, “in death I shall be a terror.... Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God's grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died.” Robertson includes this text to recast the storm as a form of vengeance for diasporic Black communities.³

As the letters fade, crashing waves appear, enveloping the viewer's field of vision. The camera angle dips above and below the waterline as roiling white, foamy waters wash over colored filters, morphing from green to blue to yellow and back again. Audio of the waves plays overhead while a disembodied voice asks, “Did you hear them?” before describing “a terrible shout” and “how the land gave way to the sea.” The visual and auditory effect is dizzying, giving a sense of the chaos of the storm. As the frothing waters recede in the video, historic photographs

depicting Black survivors amongst the wreckage fade in and out (fig. 1). Robertson seeks to honor those who lived through the storm and, in its wake, assisted in rebuilding Galveston. Her decision to focus on these positive representations of Black figures is significant; accounts of the era draw from racist tropes in conjuring up specters of Black looters in deeply racialized terms that are familiar to anyone who followed mainstream media reporting in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.⁴

Waters II: Memories with Bones highlights the history of the *Clotilda*, the last known slave ship to arrive in the U.S., carrying 110 West African captives. Though the importation of enslaved Africans had officially been banned in 1808, the practice continued illegally, and the *Clotilda* reached Mobile in 1860. The captain then had the ship taken up the Mobile River, where it was scuttled and burned to destroy evidence of the illegal slave trade. When the *Clotilda*'s survivors were freed in 1865 by Union soldiers, thirty-two of them pooled their resources to found Africatown, a community three miles north of downtown Mobile.

Waters II features the calmer currents of the Mobile River, with the sky above seen from beneath the gently moving water; for much of the video, the camera is in the position of the sunk *Clotilda* at the bottom of the riverbed. A Toni Morrison quote appears at the start of the piece: “All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was.” Text and audio throughout the video cite Igbo proverbs and translated West African sayings that further connect



water with memories. Particularly powerful are the words “The Mobile River remembers the shape of the Clotilda” and “Its skeleton lies there, buried in silt,” which materialize in white letters barely legible against the flowing waters. At one point, a ghostly black woman in a white dress appears, and the artist, similarly attired, walks over to stand beside her, their inverted figures projected along a pier (fig. 2). The women embody inextricable links of Black experiences, past and present, hovering along the currents. The video then broadcasts

the names of Africatown founders one by one across the screen: Kupollee, Rose Allen, Omolabi . . . As the piece concludes, the camera lens comes up from the depths of the river and breaks the surface, a visual echo of the Clotilda’s narrative: the ship was rediscovered in 2018, giving historical credence to the memories that Africatown residents have long held.⁵

Waters III: A Question centers on the wade-in of April 24, 1960, in Biloxi, Mississippi. This was a peaceful protest organized by local physician

Figure 2. Jamie Robertson, *Waters II: Memories with Bones*, from the *Waters* series, 2021-ongoing, video. Photograph: Elizabeth S. Hawley.

Gilbert R. Mason, Sr., who led 125 Black men, women, and children in taking a stand against the segregated public beaches of Mississippi. The event turned violent when white segregationists attacked the demonstrators with pipes, chains, and rocks, firing shots over their heads. Police stood by, refusing to intervene. The absurdity of segregated beaches and the violence



of that day are underscored by Robertson's video. After an opening view of a contemporary recording of the pier along the waterfront of this Biloxi beach (fig. 3), the camera lens dives into the water and turns upwards from the depths as words from the piece's central question appear one by one against the currents: "How" - "do" - "you" - "segregate" - "water?" At this last word, the video turns blood-red as a silhouetted photograph of the wade-in flashes across the screen and a score of jarring instrumental sounds evokes the blows suffered by protestors. The words appear again and again, faster each sequence, with the brutality of the wade-in underscored by intermittent scarlet filters. At the end

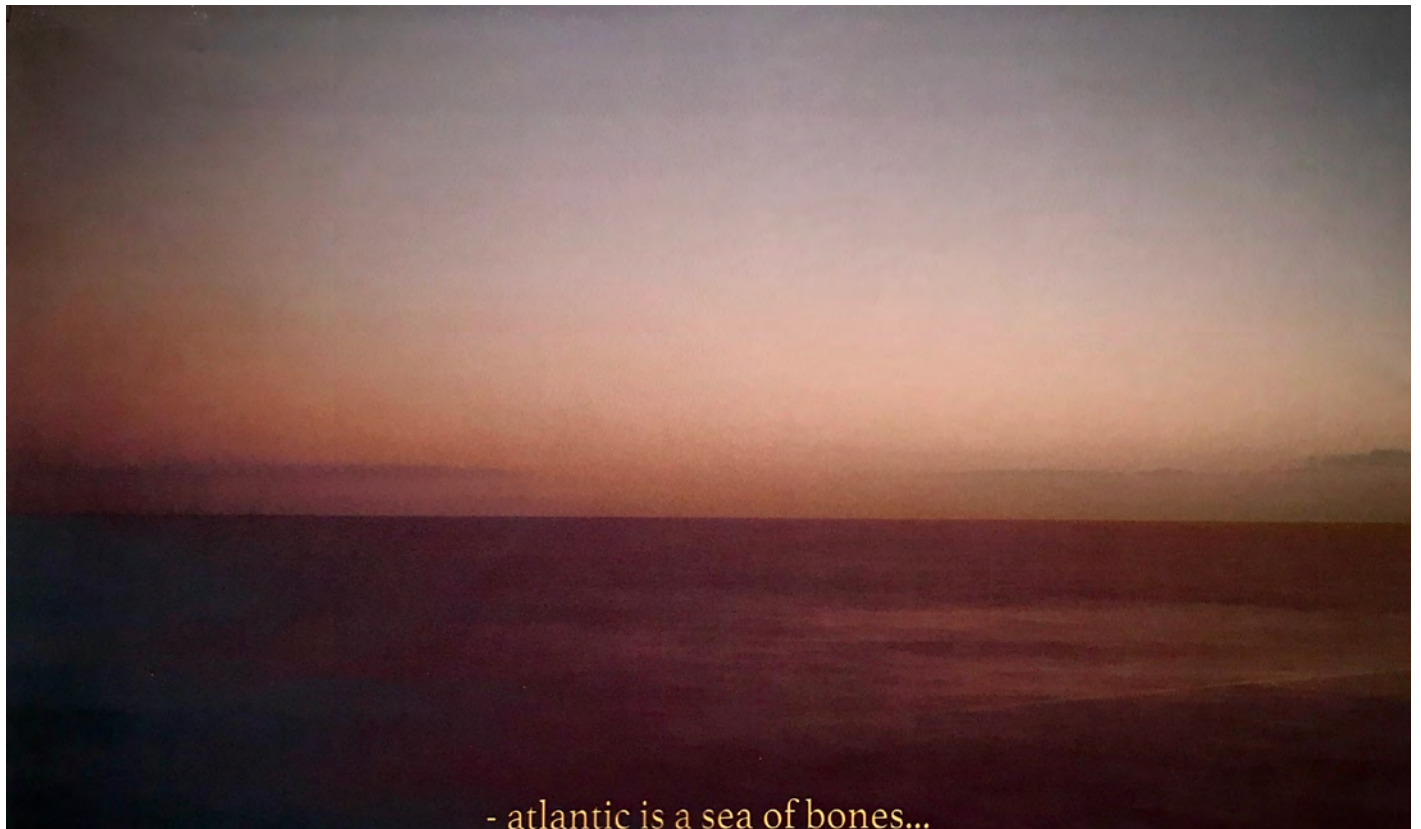
of the video, a peaceful shot of waves lapping against the beach appears, calling gulls replacing the beating soundtrack. Mississippi beaches were finally made accessible to all community members, regardless of race, by 1968.⁶

The three videos were projected large-scale on three separate walls, one after the other; as one video was playing, the other two walls were blank. The installation thus compelled the viewer to move about the gallery, echoing the video suite's traversal of time and space. A sheet of clear plastic was laid out on the floor in front of the projections and as the video played, its imagery was reflected below, as

Figure 3. Jamie Robertson, *Waters III: A Question*, from the *Waters* series, 2021-ongoing, video. Photograph: Elizabeth S. Hawley.

if over a body of water. The effects of this installation strategy cued the viewer to the ways these historical events are interconnected, even as they represent discrete occurrences; they are waves of the same storm.

The videos appeared in a gallery to the left, while the right was devoted to photographs and an installation produced to accompany the *Waters* suite, as well as vinyl lettering of the Garvey and Morrison texts that appear in the videos. These excerpts were joined in this part of



the exhibition by Lucille Clifton's poetry, lines from which appear juxtaposed against photographs of waterways. One particularly poignant image featured a calm sea at dawn or dusk, with the line "atlantic is a sea of bones" appearing at the lower edge of the piece (fig. 4). The work recalls *Waters II*, and the ways Robertson characterizes the *Clotilda* as a skeleton, personifying the ship itself as representative of its enslaved passengers—and those who suffered the same ordeal. Other lines of text appearing in *Waters II* read, "The Mobile River holds memories of them" followed by "As well as the many others like them," indicating, like the photograph, that local memories flow into deeper historical currents.

Make for High Ground—the title of which comes from another Clifton poem published in the collection *How to Carry Water: Selected Poems of Lucille Clifton*—is a powerful solo show by an artist whose dedication to Black lives, experiences, and memories in the Gulf South comes through in her lyrical yet searing works.⁷ The only limitations of the exhibition were installation and information-based: the audio was difficult to hear over the gallery's AC system, and information on the events referenced by the *Waters* videos was sparse.

Yet the refusal to provide a complete narrative and pristine viewing experience might also be interpreted as a conceptual strategy. As the title wall text asks: "If so much racialized violence and Black

Figure 4. Jamie Robertson, *Clifton: atlantic is a sea of bones*, 2023, inkjet print. Photograph: Elizabeth S. Hawley.

history has been lost to the history books, how might we remember?" Waterways offer a means to fluidly connect fragmented experiences and memories that are incomplete due to physical and epistemological violence. Asking viewers to sit with partial, half-heard narratives, and ruminate on the reasons that they exist as such, is a potent way of pointing to the fact that history has never been neutral, and it frequently obscures the experiences of marginalized communities. Requiring that interested viewers do further research, moreover, may be a way of refusing the burden of education so often placed on Black

community members who are expected to explain complex issues of identity, history (or lack thereof), and experience to others. Robertson steers events of the past into the gallerygoer's present; leaving how deeply they choose to wade in up to them.

Elizabeth S. Hawley
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Endnote

1. *but when you come from water*, virtual exhibition at the Chapter House, <https://www.thechapterhouse.org/2021-but-when-you-come-from-water>, April 1–May 31, 2021; *The First Water is the Body*, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, New Jersey, October 9, 2021–January 23, 2022; *Maya*

Lin: A Study of Water, Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Virginia Beach, Virginia, April 21–September 4, 2022; *Water by Design*, Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, Nevada, August 20, 2022–March 19, 2023; and *Water Memories*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, June 23, 2022–April 2, 2023.

2. More on the ACAC Independent Projects can be found on their website: <https://www.alabamacontemporary.org/opportunities/independent-projects/>.

3. Robertson emphasizes this aspect of the video on her website: <https://www.jamievrobertson.com/waters-suite>.

4. On the racist coverage of the Storm of 1900 in Galveston and its aftermath, see Patricia Bellis Bixel and Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Galveston and the 1900 Storm: Catastrophe and Catalyst* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000). See also Andy Horowitz, “The Racial Strife That Can Blow in With a Hurricane,” *Washington Post*, August 25, 2017, [https://](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/08/25/hurricane-harvey-threatens-more-than-you-think/)

www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/08/25/hurricane-harvey-threatens-more-than-you-think/.

5. The Clotilda was rediscovered in large part thanks to the efforts of journalist Ben Raines, whose book on the process of locating the wreckage, the history of the ship, and contemporary descendants of the Clotilda and Africatown informs my reading of Robertson's works. See Ben Raines, *The Last Slave Ship: The True Story of How Clotilda was Found, Her Descendants, and an Extraordinary Reckoning* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022).

6. On the history of the Biloxi wade-ins, see Gilbert R. Mason and James Patterson Smith, *Beaches, Blood, and Ballots: A Black Doctor's Civil Rights Struggle* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

7. Lucille Clifton, *How to Carry Water: Selected Poems of Lucille Clifton*, ed Aracelis Girmay (Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2020).

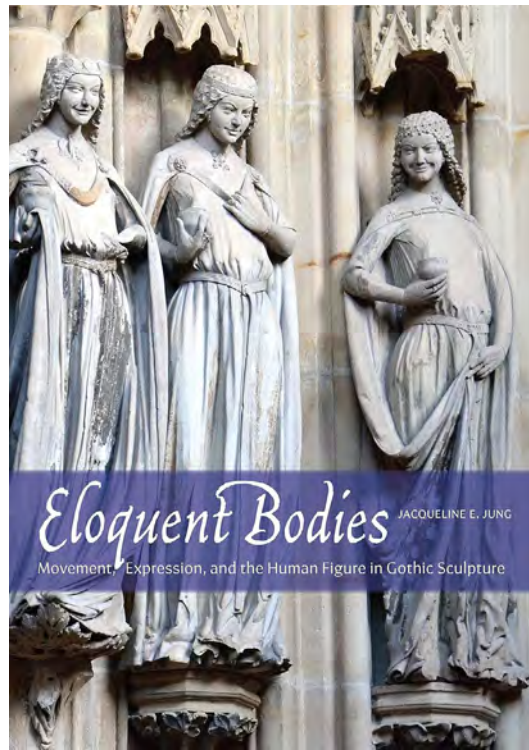
Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture

Jacqueline Jung

Yale University Press, 2020. 340 pp., 211 color, 322 b/w. \$75.00 (cloth). ISBN 9780300214017

In a band of writings published over the past twenty years, Jacqueline Jung has established herself as an exceptionally perceptive, ambitious, and creative medieval art historian. *Eloquent Bodies* is an impressive synthesis and extension of much of that work, as it offers a richly provocative series of interpretations of the celebrated Gothic sculptural programs at Strasbourg, Magdeburg, and Naumburg. Rooted in a rigorous attention to embodiment—both to the gestures as well as poses of the depicted figures and the reactions of active, mobile, physical viewers—Jung’s book posits compellingly fresh ways of thinking about works whose meanings *had seemed* largely settled. At a few points, admittedly, her argument feels limited by the regional and discursive boundaries that were once typical of medieval art history as a discipline. For the most part, though, this is a thoughtfully written, meticulously executed, and emphatically interdisciplinary work whose impact will surely be extensive.

To a certain extent, many of Jung’s central claims will be familiar to readers aware of her earlier scholarship, for the book’s core is based upon articles



and book chapters published between 2006 and 2018. But this is no mere reprise or compilation; rather, it is a consciously designed work of its own. Jung begins by emphasizing the importance of sensitive, active *beholding* in the presence of Gothic statuary. Where Romanesque carvings may have valued frontal axiality and a formal, aloof quality, Gothic works often anticipate and reward oblique views and nuanced, empathetic responses. That is a general claim, of course—but Jung then devotes the rest of this book to a vibrant exploration of its local repercussions.

Specifically, Jung leads us toward and through transept portals at Strasbourg, Magdeburg, and Erfurt Cathedrals, then around the west choir at Naumburg Cathedral, linking her sensory reactions to the historical contexts in which the sculptural programs took shape. These readings are exemplary in their patient attentiveness, and

they repeatedly yield intriguing, if speculative, results. For instance, she points out that the Strasbourg *Dormition* offers a series of progressive effects, as one approaches the south portal: a dynamic effect entirely appropriate to its dynamic subject matter. But Jung also notes that many visitors approached the portal from the west, meaning that the nearby figures of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* came into view only gradually, and in distinct ways. Where *Ecclesia* reads as resolutely columnar—and thus as part of the church which she figuratively represents—*Synagoga* strikes Jung as more autonomous and embodied: precarious, in a word. And if such a claim reads as subjective, her subsequent contention that the reliefs and statues combine to present a sequence of shifting of images “that beholders must piece together as they move toward the threshold” is at once valid and valuable (90).

Her discussion of the Pillar of Judgment, just inside the south portal at Strasbourg, is also compelling. The larger figures in the upper registers of the massive pier project outwards more emphatically, in a clear concession to the awkwardly acute angle and considerable distance from which we view them. But Jung also notes that we are fixed by the intense gaze of John the Evangelist and addressed by the angels' trumpets, which implicitly summon the elect to a final judgment. As we make our way around the pillar, we then see three figures looking to our right, and towards a climatic image of Christ. Usually shrouded in shadow, the sculpture of Christ strikes Jung as both theologically apt (only partially perceptible in its articulation of divine mystery) and as art historically clever (in its subtle reference to earlier images of Jupiter in comparable Roman pillars found in the region).

In turning to Magdeburg, Jung focuses on ten large sculptures in the north transept portal, which depict the wise and foolish virgins. Their story, detailed in the Gospel of Matthew, centers on motion and relative access—only the wise are allowed into the bridal chamber—but was also seen by medieval theologians as a parable that taught good comportment and moral behavior. Noting that the transept may have been the site, in the early 1300s, of a public ritual involving the temporary expulsion of sinners, Jung proposes a reflective reading, in which the sculptures meaningfully relate to the situation of worshippers who are admitted, or denied, entry into the church. Moreover, she urges a close

attention to the nuanced renderings of the virgins, whose physiognomies and apparent emotions suggest a varied spectrum of grief and joy, soliciting both compassion and emulation. Such emotions, then, are appropriate in a diegetic and an extra-diegetic sense, and the virgins are at once models *of* Biblical actors and models *for* a medieval audience standing on the church's threshold.

Having thus established the potential value of close, embodied readings, Jung embarks on a sustained analysis of the Naumburg donor figures: a section that she terms openly experimental. In some ways, these two chapters are quite conventional, as they offer a detailed characterization of the political and ecclesiastical contexts in which the sculptures appeared. But Jung goes on to contend that the figures are unified by a series of mirrored poses and a dialectical logic. Extending that idea, she compares it to the *sic et non* structure employed by scholastic rhetoricians. Astute readers may be reminded of Erwin Panofsky's famous essay on Gothic architecture—but Jung's gambit is a clever one, as it offers a means of articulating the central ambiguity of the sculptures. Are they allusions to specific historical figures? Renderings of elevated, embodied virtues? Signs of a desired allegiance between court culture and bishop? Ultimately, Jung feels, we cannot know, for “these bodies speak eloquently, but it is not clear about what” (209). There is, here, no clear totalizing meaning. Rather, the program is effectively polyfocal and unresolved, with any reading of it bound to be necessarily provisional.

Throughout, Jung's prose is girded by a remarkable corpus of images.

This volume features more than 500 photographs, many of which Jung took herself in a deliberate attempt to supplement the elevated and artificially lit images typically produced by professional photographers. Working from the ground and from incrementally altered angles, Jung developed a visual demonstration of her claims: a compelling record of a roving, inquisitive eye. However, in a very candid section of the introduction, Jung ruminates on the ways in which photographs can misleadingly frame subjects and flatten space, well aware that photos can distort as much as they reveal. Moreover, our reliance on contemporary technologies has contributed to the development of viewing habits utterly distinct from “the fluidity of sensory perception, the sharpness and depth of memory, the layered and complex interpretive range that people in the age before print seem to have had” (6). Photographs are thus a potent but partial aid, illustrating important qualities but entirely foreign to any medieval period eye.

That abiding tension—between a respect for historical context and an embrace of modern tools—characterizes Jung's analysis in a second sense, as well. Certainly, she is attentive to relevant period evidence, drawing fluently on archival sources, ecclesiastical documents, and a large body of secondary historical scholarship. But Jung is also always aware that textual sources can only carry us so far (and can be used in very selective ways)—and so she enthusiastically draws, too, on a range of more recent theoretical models. This is doubtless the first analysis of Gothic sculpture to allude to cinematic

montage, astronauts' sense of proprioception, and Mitchell Schwarzer's notion of a *zoomscape*. Still, while such references are obviously anachronistic, they serve to underscore Jung's central conviction that only a combination of extended onsite looking, dutiful research, and flexible analysis can yield a satisfyingly nuanced account of embodied looking.

Approached from this angle, the potential objection that late medieval visitors to Strasbourg would not have thought in these exact terms (*proprioception?* *zoomscape?*) loses much of its force. Jung knows that the surviving primary sources simply do not permit confident generalizations regarding local viewing habits. Compared to, say, Byzantine examples, Gothic records of response are "less invested in evoking the buildings' perceptual effects beyond their awesome size and magnificence" (32). Nevertheless, the sculptures themselves seem to urge, or at least support, a haptic visuality and an eye to embodiedness. We are missing something important, in short, if we fail to attend to oblique views of the Strasbourg *Dormition*, to our merely partial view of Christ on the Pillar of Judgment, or to our precise position in relation to the wise virgins of Magdeburg. To Jung, at least, the rich polysemy of the works ultimately depends upon such self-awareness.

That is a fair assertion—but is it really a new one? Not entirely, as Jung fully realizes. "This aspect of sculpture," as we read on the opening page, "is so familiar in the literature on Baroque and modern art that it hardly would bear repeating, but

scholarship on Gothic sculpture since the 1920s rarely acknowledges this vital element of design and repetition." Hmm . . . since the 1920s? Well, in 1927 a provincial priest named Franz Stoehr criticized the use of scaffolds in a photographic campaign at Strasbourg, objecting to the creation of inappropriately elevated viewpoints. In a 1928 article, moreover, he emphasized the value of a *di sotto in sù* reading of the *Dormition*, stressing the physical position of an embodied viewer. But if Stoehr's work offers a precedent, it is merely partial and limited in scope. Jung builds on his implications but has crafted an undeniably richer and more far-reaching account . . . if not always far-reaching enough.

While Jung is certainly correct that historians of Baroque and modern art have long advanced kinetic and haptic readings of specific sculptural works, she seems uninterested in several significant related analyses of medieval and Renaissance works that could enrich her study. Consider, for example, O.K. Werckmeister's remarkable 1972 study of the lintel of Eve, at Autun, in which he contended that the figure's form was echoed by penitents directly beneath the portal; their prone position meaningfully echoed Eve's. Or take John Shearman's 1992 book *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, which made a convincing case for what Shearman called an increasingly transitive relationship between spectator and artistic subject matters. At two points in her study (186-7), Jung also deploys the term *transitive*—but, disappointingly, Shearman's work is never mentioned, and finds no place in her ample bibliography.

In the end, these omissions don't indicate that Jung's thinking is narrow. To the contrary, in a brief but energetic conclusion, she gestures towards a variety of possible paths future scholarship might take. Among other things, she suggests a need for further work on the ensembles at Münster Cathedral and Paderborn Cathedral—each of which evince an interest in physical presence—and on the animated imagery found in Central Europe and Spain. In three dense paragraphs, moreover, she does acknowledge some of the ways in which art historians have begun to reconsider Romanesque and Gothic Italian sculptures from an embodied perspective. Unfortunately, as she notes, medievalists have tended to view Italy as a land apart. While flirting briefly with the possibility of transalpine cultural exchange, Jung ultimately declares that the work of the Pisani occupy a path "that leads us away from this book's focus" (279).

By focus, Jung means her primary subject matter—which, she gamely acknowledges, "hews to the traditional shape of the German Gothic canon" (276). Focus is also an optical term, reminding us of her methodological contribution, which is anything but conventional or myopic. At the end of her book, Jung writes, by "always taking into account where we stand as beholders and thinkers, we can let the works speak forth in various cadences" (283). The point resounds, and this book is ultimately an inviting testimony to a leading scholar's commitment to standing, beholding, and thinking in novel and rewarding ways.

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Poussin's Women: Sex and Gender in the Artist's Works

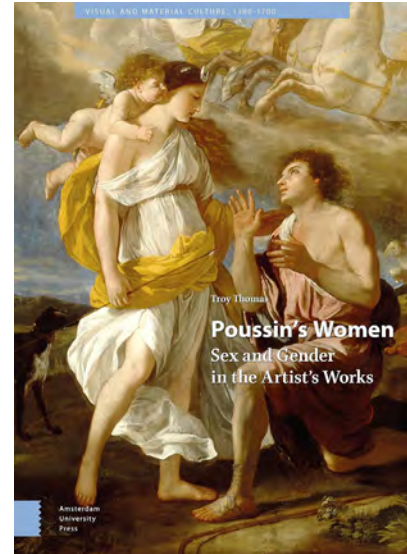
Troy Thomas

Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
386 pages, 106 color illustrations. \$150.00 (cloth), \$140.00 (eBook).
ISBN 9789463721844; e-ISBN 9789048552382

Around 1630, Nicolas Poussin painted the canvas *Echo and Narcissus* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), depicting the tragic demise of the lovers as recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Scholars have long noted Poussin's innovative rendering of the Ovidian myth as a key moment in the development of the artist's mature style and poetic approach to subject matter—particularly the bold handling of Narcissus, whose spot-lit corpse lies splayed in the foreground of the shallow landscape, a motif derived from earlier Venetian prototypes. Opposed to such conventional focus on issues of style and iconography, Troy Thomas instead develops a novel exegesis of the painting, centering the fate of Echo in his new book *Poussin's Women: Sex and Gender in the Artist's Works* (2020). In Thomas's view, Poussin intended the picture just as much as an elegy to the nymph Echo who, having arrived too late to halt the transformation of her beloved, is so consumed by grief that she seemingly melts into the rocky outcropping where she reclines in the background. Leveraging this unusual detail of Echo's dissolution,

Thomas brings into sharper focus the implications of the nymph's own transformation, a feature of the painting usually marginalized by the male gaze. Echo's loss of voice—and body—is thus interpreted as an allegory of the patriarchal silencing of women's voices and agency that occurred in seventeenth century France and Italy.

This fresh interpretation of a prominent Poussin canvas is representative of the numerous and sensitive case studies Thomas conducts through the lens of women's and gender studies in his volume. His agenda is welcome and addresses a gap in current scholarship on Poussin. Surprisingly, it is merely the second book-length monograph to critically examine Poussin's representations of women, preceded only by Phillippa Plock's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation *Regarding Gendered Mythologies: Nicolas Poussin's Mythological Paintings and Practices of Viewing in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (2004). Thomas casts a wider net than Plock by undertaking a systematic assessment of how depictions of women in the artist's overall *oeuvre* construct a discourse on female gender and sexuality. In the author's view, Poussin's



representations of women parallel the sexist realities they faced in French society and politics, an arena where the descent into voicelessness was a fate commonly inflicted upon them.

Although engaged with specialist debates, Thomas's arguments in this handsomely illustrated volume can, for the most part, be followed by general audiences, since ample space in every section is devoted to exposition of each painting's theme. More judicious editorial choices, however, could have been exercised in some places: single paragraphs often stretch to over three pages long, while the figure illustrations begin only after roughly one-hundred pages of text. In both cases, readers are left somewhat breathless. Yet once crisp, color-correct images of Poussin's paintings, drawings, and supporting

illustrations appear, they enliven Thomas's discussion, bolstering its appeal to undergraduate as well as graduate students engaged in the study of early modern art and humanities disciplines.

Poussin's Women belongs to a larger vein of feminist inquiry in art history, inaugurated by Rona Goffen's groundbreaking volume *Titian's Women* (1997), refocusing attention on the oft-overlooked female figures populating Old Master and modernist paintings. Similar feminist studies applying methodologies from gender and women's studies—to Vermeer, Renoir, and nineteenth century female portraiture in France—have yielded rich insights into the visual culture involving women, real and painted, in Dutch and French society.¹ Scholarship to date has paid little attention to the topic of women in Poussin's art and Thomas's study thus seeks to fill a major lacuna in research on the artist.

A scholar of seventeenth-century art and theory, particularly the careers of Poussin and Caravaggio, Thomas is well-equipped to plumb such questions and approaches his study with commanding knowledge of Poussin's activities and *oeuvre*. His previous articles on Poussin focused on several important discoveries about the artist's textual sources for his paintings, ideas further developed in the present study. His principal goal, however, is revisionist: to expand the methodological approach to the artist's drawings and paintings by applying a blended feminist and psychoanalytic lens as a challenge to claims that Poussin's images celebrate the best aspects of ancient and pagan cultures. Thomas also seeks to recover how their original

audiences perceived the women depicted or, as he puts it, "to foreground understandings of them that respond to the perceptions of contemporary audiences [...] to perceive more deeply and critically the artist's own points of view and those of his contemporaries" (49).

This emphasis on *Rezeptionstheorie* is admirable, though hindered by the relative dearth of substantive extant Seicento accounts of Poussin's paintings—save the theoretical lectures on his art delivered by the likes of Philippe de Champaigne and Charles Le Brun at the French Académie Royale. Curiously, however, Thomas does not make use of these. Otherwise, neither Poussin's contemporaries nor the artist discuss his art in any detail, apart from Poussin's famous letter on the musical modes to his patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou. As Thomas admits, Poussin left virtually no trace of his views toward women. As such, one of the revelations of Thomas's study is that Poussin's art does not express a unified view of women; they variously operate in his works as predators, killers, heroines, and voyeurs—but just as often as dupes, victims, lovers, and sex objects. In this way, Thomas wishes to demonstrate how closely Poussin's fluctuating vision of women mirrors the reality women faced in French society in his time—the central claim of his book—as their rights underwent dramatic shifts over the course of the Seicento. In Thomas's view, Poussin's paintings embody these shifts and serve as a litmus test for women's mercurial, though ascendant, status in society.

Poussin's Women is organized into three main sections. The first

outlines the suitability of gender and identity studies for analyzing Poussin's art. Thomas refers to numerous texts from third-wave feminist art historians and gender theorists, though somewhat obliquely and not linked concretely to aspects of Poussin's art with the level of depth and clarity one might expect. Thomas categorizes an array of well-known historical, biblical, and mythological subjects by the artist that feature women according to what he identifies as either virtuous or evil protagonists: Phocion's widow, Coriolanus's mother, Queen Zenobia, Esther, Rebecca, and the Virgin Mary are held up as heroines; while Armida, Diana, Aurora, Medea, Sapphira, and Venus are cast as villains.

Section two explores Poussin's paintings against the cultural and social frames shaping attitudes towards women in seventeenth-century France and Italy. Drawing upon much recent scholarship on the evolving legal and civic lives of women in early modern Europe, Thomas underscores several poignant gender tropes emerging in visual and literary culture that he argues can also be discerned in Poussin's paintings. For instance, the burgeoning discourse of the *femme forte*, *querelle des femmes*, and "topsy-turvy world"—inverting normative power dynamics between the sexes—all gained momentum during the mid-seventeenth century. These are variously linked to three paintings celebrating womanly virtue made in the wake of the civil uprising known as the Fronde, namely, the *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion* (1648, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool); *Esther before Ahasuerus* (c.1665, Hermitage

Museum, St. Petersburg); and *Coriolanus Entreated by his Mother* (c.1650, Musée Nicolas Poussin, Les Andelys). While reading such paintings in light of shifting attitudes towards female valor is entirely viable, it would be more convincing if Thomas could connect such early feminist debates to either Poussin or his circles—given the lack of evidence that the artist, or any of his patrons and collectors, ascribed to such views, or attended any of the progressive Italian or French salons where such agendas were advanced.

Section three, which comprises the bulk of the book, pivots to a series of in-depth examinations of women represented in Poussin's paintings and drawings, clustered into seven categories: predators, the lustful, lovers, killers/transgressors, victims (killed, assaulted), victims (voiceless, deceived), and heroines/great ladies. Here, Thomas's extended, systematic approach proves incredibly valuable, since it reveals, in a glance, the range of multi-valent and conflicting roles women perform in Poussin's *oeuvre*. However, the descriptors Thomas invents, while useful shorthand for the various inflections of female identity Poussin depicts, remain highly subjective and originate from a somewhat shaky psychological basis rooted in modern rather than seventeenth-century phenomena. The reader may wish for labels more aptly grounded in early modern nomenclature, since it is unclear whether any of Poussin's audiences would have used the above descriptors.

Given the author's concern for gender discourse and its subversion in French society, it is somewhat surprising that only cursory analyses

are conducted of Poussin's two versions of *Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes*, in Boston (c.1649) and Richmond (1656). Although Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and Michel Foucault's theories of gender construction (referred to as "Michael Foucault" throughout the book) are cited in the first chapter, surely a concerted framing of these *Achilles* paintings using the above texts could have redoubled Thomas's thesis. This loaded theme—replete with transgressive female agency, cross-dressing, and scopophilic women in Poussin's handling—ostensibly derived from culturally specific experiences familiar to Poussin's audiences. Thomas does not mention it, but the choice of subject for the Richmond picture must have been dictated by its patron, Charles III de Blanchefort, Duc de Créquy, who was heavily involved with the French royal court ballet, where male transvestism was not only rife but celebrated.

In this regard, one problematic facet of the methodological assumptions in *Poussin's Women* is the tendency to invest Poussin with an unwarranted (and ahistorical) degree of agency in determining his imagery. Only rarely did Poussin's patrons give him complete freedom in selecting subjects, as Jean Pointel possibly did with *Eliezer and Rebecca* (1648, Paris, Musée du Louvre). As many scholars have, Thomas takes the biographer André Félibien at his word, reporting that Pointel only specified a theme and not a subject. The author concludes that the picture showcases "womanly courage," despite the fact that Pointel's only criterion was that it feature an array of female

beauties—hardly a proto-feminist agenda. In truth, the full scope of the commission can only be known through the letters from Pointel to Poussin, which sadly remain untraced.

In other passages, Poussin's choice of subject is interpreted as indicative of the artist's own feminist outlook. Thomas reasons that, "By choosing to depict these stories in his paintings in the first place, Poussin reveals more than just his interest in selecting tales with dramatic conflict; he takes the side of the women, standing against male prejudice, misogyny, brutality, and lust" (231). Such assertions conflating the painting's theme with Poussin's own stance toward women drift into hazardous terrain by seeking to reconstruct authorial intention, endowing the artist with an untenably fervent feminist outlook. In reality, the Ovidian source material of many of the mythological pictures under discussion provided the misogynist *mise en scène* and tone Thomas wishes to ascribe to Poussin.

Nevertheless, in many instances, Thomas achieves inspired readings of Poussin's imagery by utilizing the type of psychoanalytic methodology mentioned above. Writing of his *Mars and Venus* (c.1627-28, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts), Thomas compels us to recognize anew exceedingly subtle glances and gestures between the figures that mark the lovers' dalliance as "a battle of minds (an erotic *psychomachia*) between the masculine and feminine positions" (193-94). Rather than overturn traditional interpretations of the painting, Thomas's sounding of such gender dynamics amplifies the resonance of the dramatic *affetti*

for which Poussin was lauded in his own time.

In undertaking a study akin to Goffen's volume on *Titian's Women*, Troy Thomas sets himself a difficult task. Unlike Titian, Poussin never painted pictures in which solitary women or groups of women comprise an autonomous subject. Instead, women always appear as part of a larger narrative crowd; thus, isolating them from a wider cast as the topic of critical inquiry remains somewhat artificial or disingenuous. Thomas's systematic appraisal of how women operate in these scenes therefore proves less revealing and more limited than he purports. Although admirable in its aims and framework, *Poussin's Women* ultimately falls short of achieving a viable new direction in Poussin studies, given the methodological missteps mentioned.

What does emerge from this study, however, is how, more broadly, the identity of women in seventeenth-century France—painted or real—remained largely yoked to men, their power in society always contingent and dialectical. The identities Thomas affirms for Poussin's women range so widely because, as he shrewdly uncovers, the civic and legal status of women at the time was itself evolving and fluid. If refined, this framework might yield more robust results applied to Seicento artists in Poussin's ambit whose work has more existing data (Domenichino, Guido Reni, Andrea Sacchi, and Philippe de Champaigne) and would be a fascinating extension of Thomas's work.

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Endnotes

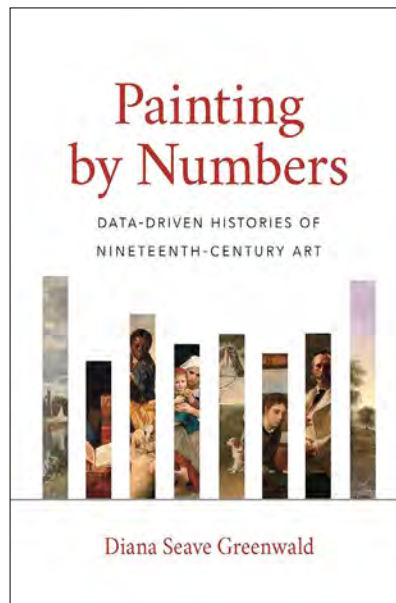
1. Marjorie E. Wieseman, ed., *Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France, 1814-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Ann Dumas and John Collins, *Renoir's Women* (New York: Mullen, 2005).

Painting by Numbers: Data-Driven Histories of Nineteenth-Century Art

Diana S. Greenwald

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. 256 pages, 55 color, 9 b/w illustrations, 14 tables. \$37.00 (hardcover). ISBN 9780691214948

As with many academic fields, quantitative analysis and other methods associated with the digital humanities have become important analytical tools for art historians. If recent activity surrounding digital art history offers any indication, their significance will only grow. Annual conferences held by CAA, SECAC, and other arts organizations regularly dedicate sessions to digital art history. Collectives such as Lev Manovich's Cultural Analytics Lab have produced visualizations of MoMA's photography holdings and those of other museum collections.¹ In a 2020 article, "The Art Market as System: Florence Levy's Statistics," Anne Helmrich argues for an even older reliance on quantitative methods in art history, noting that Levy (1870-1947) used similar analog approaches in her study of the art market.² A proponent of digital analysis, Diana S. Greenwald's *Painting by Numbers: Data-Driven Histories of Nineteenth-Century Art* provides a useful synthesis of digital methods and conventional art history methodology. Combining quantitative data and economic theory with formal analysis, archival research, and other traditional art



historical approaches, Greenwald offers new interpretations of individual works of nineteenth-century art while also re-assessing the canon itself.

Trained as both an economic historian and an art historian, Greenwald's scholarly intervention is primarily methodological, applying both quantitative analysis and economic theory to the interpretation of art. She critiques the art canon with quantitative data drawn from the hundreds of thousands of paintings documented

in nineteenth-century exhibition catalogs and other textual sources. Recognizing the impossibility of evaluating such a massive body of data, she uses these texts to instead address the issue of sample bias, arguing that visualizations of exhibition catalogs and other forms of quantitative analysis can correct an overemphasis on the so-called masterpieces while providing a more comprehensive overview of artistic output (49). She introduces economic theory as a meaningful interpretive framework for studying art history, by contextualizing the activity of individual artists within discussions of labor, resources, and other economic concepts. Greenwald describes the resulting synthesis as a "data-driven history of art," intending to supplement rather than replace conventional art historical methods (4).

Divided into five chapters, *Painting by Numbers* functions less as a comprehensive monograph on a specific artist, subject, or geographic locale than a discussion of data-driven art historical analysis as a scholarly approach, followed by a series of case studies demonstrating the author's methods.

Geographically, examples focus on the northern hemisphere, with

chapters about France, the United States, and Great Britain. The first chapter describes Greenwald's methodology, offering a literature review of art historical projects rooted in quantification, with Jules Prown's "The Art Historian and the Computer" an especially notable precedent for data-focused approaches. The second introduces three art-historical datasets—created by Greenwald during master's and doctoral research—upon which the book's remaining case studies rely: *The Whiteley Index to Salon Painting*; the *Historical American Art Exhibition Database* (HAAExD); and the *Royal Academy Exhibition Database*, based on the Royal Academy in London. In each case, she discusses the history of the dataset's creation, providing a summary of the information included and pointing out potential biases or omissions (26, 35). An appendix at the end of the book supplies additional information on the three datasets as well as how Greenwald developed them in consultation with freelance data analysts. She offers readers a thorough overview of her methodological interventions and how to implement them in art historical research.

The remaining three chapters show Greenwald's data-driven method in action, with each chapter focusing on a different dataset. Though these case studies appear self-contained, analytically, they share an overarching interest in the impact of limited resources in relation to who is chosen for the art historical canon, not only in terms of money but especially in time for travel and balancing professional with domestic obligations. The

third chapter concentrates on *The Whiteley Index* and landscapes featured in the nineteenth-century Paris Salon. Greenwald posits that the limited income of artists encouraged them to pursue residencies and colonies near their homes in Paris, practical decisions that not only shaped the content of the Salons but subsequently the art historical canon itself.

The fourth chapter looks at American women artists by addressing the discrepancy between the frequency of female participants in the National Academy of Design (NAD) exhibitions and the paucity of women in the permanent collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which routinely acquired works from the NAD shows. Using theories of economic labor as her primary framework, Greenwald argues that the limited number of women in nineteenth-century museum collections reflects not only the sexism of cultural institutions but a shortage of time stemming from domestic duties, a situation which continues today. The final chapter focuses on art exhibited at the Royal Academy and asks why depictions of the London metropole appear more frequently than the British Empire's more distant territories. Examining the work through an economic lens, she notes how both the time and money required to travel restricted the number of artists capable of relocating away from London to paint.

What makes Greenwald's work robust is how well it synthesizes quantitative analysis with conventional art historical research. Her ability to alternate between macro and micro scales of art recalls

quantitative work from literary historians such as Matthew Jockers. His 2013 book *Macroanalysis* offers both a bird's eye view of literary output, for a particular time or place, and zooms in on specific texts to provide more focused case studies. On the macro level, Greenwald interprets a prodigious amount of information, but she skillfully deploys such visualizations as bar graphs and charts, helping readers parse the data, while introducing visual qualities of often unillustrated exhibition catalogs and related texts. She works proficiently on the level of individual works of art, applying an economic lens to reassess the visual elements of specific paintings. Using economic theory as a primary interpretive framework, she offers a means of contextualizing the careers of individual artists within broader social trends, reminding viewers that artists function within the confines of economic structures, even as they express unique creative views.

As a text, *Painting by Numbers* is well organized and well written, allowing readers to easily follow Greenwald's methodological demonstrations. The case studies begin on the macro level before working their way down to individual artists or works, with succinct summaries at the end of each chapter. Greenwald is careful to point out the limitations of these methods. When describing the development of the datasets, in the second chapter, she emphasizes the limitations of her data—from the lack of illustrations to inconsistencies regarding titles, dimensions, and other information—providing readers

with a better understanding of the potential biases in her sources. Rather than regard quantitative analysis as a replacement for more conventional art historical research, she also argues that “Data-driven art history is . . . at its best in conjunction with traditional qualitative methods, including archival research and formal analysis” (49). Her assurances that data-driven methods are meant to supplement rather than replace traditional art historical research suggests Greenwald’s awareness of the potential flattening effects of, for instance, data-driven art. Rather than reduce paintings to numbers, she instead offers data-driven art as a means of providing more comprehensive samples from which scholars can choose individual works to interpret.

The fourth chapter offers a particularly effective demonstration of Greenwald’s methods in action. As with the other case studies, she begins from a macro view of art, before scaling down to an individual level, by sharing quantitative data, interpreting it through an economic lens, and then applying that lens to individual works or artists. Following her own suggestion that data-driven art works best from quantitative observations, she begins her analysis by noting the discrepancy between the frequency of women artists exhibiting at the National Academy of Design exhibitions, and the paucity of paintings from nineteenth-century women artists in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Although she agrees that sexist cultural norms influenced the lack of women artists in museum collections, she then uses economic

interpretations of labor to posit that a lack of time stemming from domestic obligations also detrimentally affected the careers of nineteenth-century women artists. Specifically, she argues that women, usually working from home to better accommodate childcare, often lacked the time and studio space to produce large history paintings or portraits, the genres that museums were most likely to collect during the nineteenth century. Additionally, she observes that in the absence of full-time dealers, nineteenth-century artists sold their works by cultivating relationships with prospective buyers, a significant social expense that many women lacked the time or propriety to do (87).

After establishing these broader social and economic trends, Greenwald focuses on the career of Lilly Martin Spencer (1822–1902). Through an analysis of archival correspondence, the author observes that despite being one of the most successful professional women artists in nineteenth-century America, Martin struggled to balance a painting career with domestic obligations (108). Eschewing conventional interpretations of sentimentality, Greenwald instead astutely notes that paintings like *Victory at Fredericksburg* display Martin’s efficiency as an artist, with references to traditional art historical subjects, such as still life or the Madonna and Child, incorporated into her contemporary genre scenes (109–110). *Painting by Numbers* brings a fresh perspective to both Martin’s career and the work of nineteenth-century women artists, showing how they

endeavored to produce work within economic and domestic confines. Given recent studies on the detrimental impact of the pandemic on the professional careers of women as they assume domestic obligations stemming from working or studying at home, the book’s observations remain all too relevant.³

Although Greenwald’s text is not intended to be comprehensive, the collaborative aspects of her work would benefit from a more in-depth discussion. While she does acknowledge the labor of freelance data analysts in the creation and interpretation of the three datasets, in Appendix A, this section would have a greater impact on readers if it had been introduced as early as the second chapter, rendering it a centerpiece of the author’s methods rather than an afterthought. As Anne Burdick and fellow authors argue, in their seminal text *Digital Humanities*, collaboration is crucial to effective digital humanities scholarship because it enables interpreting vast amounts of data while also challenging the conventional model of solitary research and publication.⁴ Spotlighting the partnerships Greenwald developed while creating her databases essentially demonstrates the importance of collaborative scholarship to art historians interested in digital approaches.

Overall, Greenwald’s text offers a dynamic demonstration of the potential offered by quantitative analysis. It is intended as a conversation opener rather than the final word, providing readers with tools, potential research questions, and guiding examples to inform

their research. Rather than replace conventional methods, as the author effectively demonstrates, large datasets can supplement traditional interpretive approaches by expanding the pool of works for analysis and broadening the contexts for the works art historians choose to interpret. In essence, Greenwald aims to create a bigger picture for art historians, through both large pools of data and economic theoretical frameworks. While not all readers will necessarily be interested in an economic approach to art, this book

nonetheless demonstrates how visualizations and other datasets can enrich scholarly inquiries. Scholars and students at all levels of familiarity with digital humanities should find value in the text, whether they incorporate data-driven methods into their research practices or not. For scholars embarking on quantitative inquiries, *Painting by Numbers* offers a valid and capable demonstration of its methodological potential.

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Endnote

1. Nadav Hochman and Lev Manovich, "A View from Above: Exploratory Visualizations of the Thomas Walther Collection," in Mitra Abbaspour, Lee Ann Daffner, and Maria Morris Hambourg, eds., *Object:Photo. Modern Photographs: The Thomas Walther Collection 1909-1949* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2014): 1-6.
2. Anne Helmreich, "The Art Market as a System: Florence Levy's Statistics," *American Art* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1086/712752>.
3. Michel Martin, Hanna Rosin, Jamila Michener, and Margaret Brower, "Pandemic Sets Back Women's Progress in Workforce," NPR February 14, 2021, sec. Business, <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/14/967917836/pandemic-sets-back-womens-progress-in-workforce>.
4. Anne Burdick, Jeffrey Schnapp, and Johanna Drucker, *Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), vii.