INTRODUCTION

Rethinking the Renaissance

CLAIRE FARAGO

The initial idea for this collection of essays arose out of my own interest in the sixteenth-century change in status of the visual arts in Italy. I wanted to learn whether and how extensive global commerce affected sixteenth-century Italian discussions of art. I soon realized that existing accounts of the history of western aesthetic theory do not consider contact with non-European societies to have been a contributing factor before the nineteenth century, so I began to wonder how complete our historical understanding really was. It never occurred to academics discussing the problem of the arts at the seventeenth-century Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, or to writers who popularized systematic classifications of the rules of the eighteenth century, to include non-Western styles of artistic production. Yet the history of the classification of the arts and categories for judging artistic excellence deserves to be studied from a point of view broad enough to take into account the extensive migration of visual culture long before global contact was initiated at the end of the fifteenth century, and even more so during the era we still call the Renaissance. Non-European art and artifacts were present in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and, after the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, great quantities of new material began arriving from the eastern Mediterranean basin, then Africa, the Americas, Asia, and elsewhere. During this period, the appearance of art increased dramatically in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. A few extraordinary records—such as Albrecht Dürer’s frequently cited admiration for Aztec gold- and silverwork—even attest to the appreciation of non-European objects as products of extraordinary artistic ingenuity. At the same time, the roles of certain kinds of artifice became the subject of violent controversy. What did new awareness of other cultures contribute to European conceptions of the arts during this initial period of global contact? And how did the exportation of Renaissance ideals and material culture from Italy to other parts of Europe and worldwide, fine in this environment of intensified cultural interaction?

I also had to ask why the contribution of non-European cultures to western aesthetics and to the theoretical literature on art that preceded it was not widely acknowledged when the discipline of art history was professionalized in the nineteenth century. The hierarchy of the fine arts, of course, but also the organization of the discipline in terms of national cultures suggest some preliminary answers. It is a complex matter, however, to examine the history of our modern categories of artistic production and aesthetic
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appreciation. The recorded wonders of architecture and portable artistry, even live specimens, that reached Europe during the Renaissance were given a variety of visual. My initial investigation of the history of the sixteenth-century state of the arts was in historiographical and cross-cultural terms opened up a vast interdisciplinary field of research that invited a collaborative approach. This volume, which pools the resources of specialists in many subfields of sixteenth-century studies, is the result of that collaboration.

Reframing the Renaissance tries to define a new program for the study of Renaissance visual culture focused on cultural exchange. The essays throughout are addressed to Renaissance specialists and the subjects will, we hope, interest an interdisciplinary audience concerned with the early modern period. The collection grew out of the awareness that any attempt to reimagine Renaissance art as a culturally and historically specific style that originated in Central Italy and was disseminated around the globe should carefully examine the art, reception, and power of specific kinds of objects and other objects of human manufacture. The first, historiographical section of Re Imagining the Renaissance, entitled “New Paradigms, New Approaches to the Renaissance,” identifies significant problems of ethnocentrism in past conceptions of Renaissance art. The second section, entitled “Renaissance Theories of the Image,” presents specialized studies of various conceptual frameworks in which visual representation functioned. The third section, “Early Collecting Practices,” treats an important source of information about sixteenth-century cultural exchange. The individual essays within the volume emphasize the essentially heterogeneous character of the many kinds of objects and activities we now loosely call art. The final section, entitled “Mediating Images: Developing an Intercultural Perspective,” discusses the vitality of cultural mediation of images of people and places, including the work of indigenous peoples, central Mexican and Mesoamerican images, and a negative ethnic stereotype prominently depicted in an Italian Renaissance religious fresco. The authors adopt traditional techniques of art history – formal analysis, iconography, connoisseurship – to study the asymmetrical process of cultural exchange.

Whose Renaissance? Revisiting “The Renaissance Problem”

Nearly every revolution of the Renaissance – this one is no exception – begins by acknowledging Jacob Burckhardt’s The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy/The Kultur der Renaissance in Italien, first published in 1860. Supplemented by Burckhardt’s historical guide to the visual arts in Italy and his other writings on art and architecture, this study – and writings by his immediate contemporaries including Michelozzo, Ruskin, and Turner – established the concept of the Renaissance as central to the discipline of art history. More than any other scholar, Burckhardt also established a role for visual evidence in the writing of cultural history. As a result of extensive interest in the social and intellectual history of the visual arts over the past thirty years, we have become increasingly aware that our modern distinctions of art matured out of the particular historical and cultural circumstances in which Burckhardt lived and wrote. Realizing that art defined as the object of individual aesthetic contemplation is a relatively recent concept, Peter Burke, in his own reassessment of the Italian Renaissance, recommends a shift in the focus of our attention to a wider range of “communicable events,” such as popular songs, sermons, graffiti, and rituals. Burke’s revisionist approach to cultural history revises the spirit of Burckhardt’s Civilization: both historians examine visual, popular images, and other cultural activities with regard to a wider range of purposes than the category usually implied by “work of art.”

Reframing the Renaissance also examines a broad range of communicative events. The present collection of essays tries to suggest, however, that much more is involved in rethinking the history of Renaissance art than finding one modern category for another, presumably less restrictive, one. The aesthetic system of the “fine arts” that designates the triad of painting, sculpture, and architecture emerged gradually over several hundred years. The triad of classification that distinguishes the “fine arts” from the liberal arts and from the sciences was codified only in the eighteenth century, on the foundation of an extensive body of theoretical and critical literature in French, German, Italian, and English, and institutionalized artistic instruction at the professional level. Burckhardt’s work was immensely influential in this Humanities model of culture. Yet his inclusion of popular culture to characterize the Italian national spirit in the early modern period, together with his famous characterization of the state as a “work of art,” presents a much broader concept of what constitutes a work of art than his predecessors in aesthetic theory had envisioned. The terms of his argument about the state as the product of reflection and deliberation would take us far afield from the present discussion. Yet it is worth noting in the present context that Burckhardt constructed a generalized concept of art by borrowing a metaphor from political theory and rhetorical philosophy. The concept that a work of art can be something produced for individual contemplation in any medium or style by any culture or period is even more recent. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Amerindian art was considered only to be of historical interest. Some of Burckhardt’s contemporaries challenged existing artistic norms associated with the revival of classical antiquity, being the first to suggest that the entire human race was engaged in the spiritual activity of making “visual art.” It has been widely claimed, however, that nineteenth-century art historians and theorists such as Semper, Riegl, and Feidler (who claimed that a work of art is the product of perceptual, regardless
of its stylistic conventions merely naturalized the Renaissance metaphor that art imitates nature. Most of the criticism has come from art historians who, justifiedly pointed to the
utopianism of this scheme. Yet they have considered the problems of privileging representational art only within the narrowly circumscribed limits of European art.

In light of all the attention that art historians have paid to the history of our formal categories of art, it is surprising that no one has thus far drawn a connection to the issues raised by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and others, such as Samir Amin, concerned with the history of Eurocentrism. When Burke's analysis of the Italian Renaissance first became the "Renaissance problem" in historiography fifty years after the publication of The Civilization of the Renaissance, justification for his concept of periodization gravitated to the center of discussion. Then it was argued, largely on the basis of early humanist histories, that Burke's scheme was justified because early humanists like Alberti and Vasari had used metaphors of revival and rebirth to define their historical position as separate from the past. Today Vasari's humanist model of culture should make us ask different questions. Vasari's famous account of the birth of modern art (the "invenzione moderna"), the most complete history written during the Renaissance, follows the established humanist mode of historical change as a process of cultural decline and the revival of the ancient art of imitating nature arrested a long decline instigated by "barbarians" who practiced the Byzantine manner (maniera greca or maniera ecclesiastica "e
non antichi") in painting and the German manner (maniera toskana) in architecture. One could wish to dispute the historical influence of Vasari's humanist scheme, or deny the popularity of metaphors of rebirth during the period we still call the Renaissance. What counts as historical truth has, however, shifted considerably since the first contributions to the "Renaissance problem," and one is no better off. Vasari's praise of Italian artists at the expense of "barbarians" others once could have been unspecifically used as evidence justifying the concept of periodization. Gates and other critics like Edward Said have changed that contemporary scholarship keeps itself pure by not taking certain kinds of contexts into account. Said himself has been criticized for imposing his own binary oppositions (such as the oversimplistic concept of cultural domination and subordination). Yet his critique of the continued self-other relationship embedded in the Eurocentric construction of the Orient collapsed a richly contested field of theorizing about the complexities of cultural interaction. Writers like Said who adopt the position of the formerly colonized subject are entirely new voices in the discourse space of cultural history writing - and their ongoing contributions are radically changing our understanding.

This collection of essays accepts Said's challenge of examining the assumptions on which "Renaissance" art history is conventionally based, not by rejecting historical schemes like Vasari's art del disegno, but by making the history of our categories part of our subject of study. As the following essays, individually and collectively, make clear, the mechanisms by which we discern differences in other cultures and the values we attach to these differences are not linked in any stable union. Samir Amin, the author of a leading study on Eurocentrism, recalls that Eurocentrism as a phenomenon that emerged fully in the nineteenth century. According to its most sophisticated critics, the term Eurocentrism describes a complex set of dominant ideas associated with the rise of modern national identity, colonialism, and capitalism. Said, Amin, and other critics regard the academic practices they associate with Eurocentrism as misleading because they are based on the flawed assumption that "internal factors peculiar to each society are decisive for their comparative evolution" culminating in the achievements of European civilization. The Renaissance is regularly charged with providing the roots of these nineteenth-century practices. Emerging interest in the institutional history of the discipline is beginning to reintegrate art history into a broader field of investigation. To open a discussion of methodology here is not meant to discredit the vigorous scholarship that goes on within the established parameters of Renaissance art history, but rather to ask whether the categories into which our discipline is currently subdivided are really well suited to analyzing questions of intercultural exchange - significant historical questions that Said and many others have been pursuing and asking others to pursue in recent years. There already exists an established field of historical study, greatly elaborated by the Columbian Quincentenary, that examines the global expansion of Europe in the early sixteenth century. As might be expected, however, historians like Lewis Hine, John Elliott, Edmund O'Gorman, Anthony Pagden, and others have grounded their studies in terms of the "Hellenistic" and "Asian" approaches to the intercultural theory of which any aspect is still closely associated with the typological thinking of the nineteenth century.

Our understanding of Renaissance culture, fundamentally shaped by Burke's study of Italy, has been changed and enriched by generations of debate over its characterization of historical periods, of individuality, of the Middle Ages and, most recently, of its treatment of gender. Yet we still need integrated accounts that allow "the" voices that have contributed to European conceptions of art to be heard. In his polemical account of the Orient as part of the Western cultural experience, the narratives presented by Paul Cochrane. Kristeller, and Gates, respectively, can serve as examples. Kristeller examines only the dominant intellectual tradition with its roots in classical antiquity, while Gates dismisses western aesthetic theory out of hand for its racist elements. What is still missing are integrated attempts to define the issues that produced mutually exclusive narratives in the first place. Gates greatly enriches us with written language, historically speaking, has been a significant, ethnocentric marker of cultural difference. In his revised narrative of aesthetic theory, Gates encapsulates the need to pose differences with regard to mental capacities and aesthetic capacities on the basis of skin color. Hegel added a new feature when he claimed that, because Africans had not mastered the European art of writing languages, they had no history, and what Africans presumably lacked socially, they also lacked individually; the childlike nature of savages was due to their absence of memory. Yet written language (cursive in European terms - that is, by means of an alphabetic script) is not the only ethnocentric indication of cultural difference. In the western tradition,
other important criteria have been social organization that is, forms of government, civil codes and customs, educational system, and art forms or productions, including ritual and utilitarian objects, drama, music, and dance — what we loosely call art. All of these areas — language, societal organization, and art — have been, therefore, elements of humanistic education.

Many of the European practices that Gates and others associate with the rise of the slave trade and other economic conditions have a much longer history concerning the various roles of mental operations such as reasoning, memory, and the imagination in defining humanness. It is well known that during the same period when European painting, sculpture, and architecture first came to be defined as "theoretical" pursuits that depend on intellect and imagination, European images were exported on a global scale and affect also entered European collections from other parts of the world. These circumstances provided a particularly rich setting for the development of new cultural boundaries (inside and outside Europe) in which artistic production played an important role. We are, however, only beginning to formulate strategies for studying the contribution of fluctuating sixteenth-century senses of "art" to later ideas about cultural identity and aesthetic sensibility.

The essays in this volume suggest some avenues for understanding archaizing cultural and aesthetic boundaries that interface with our ability to see the complexity of artistic interactions during the sixteenth century. The history of the category "work of art" is a significant part of our subject of inquiry. Considered as a whole, this volume "reframes" the geographical, cultural, chronological, and conceptual boundaries of the Renaissance in as it is usually defined. Part of the challenge of redefining the Renaissance in terms of cultural interaction is the manner in which newly emerging nations in the nineteenth century imagined themselves as antique. Why, asks Benedict Anderson, "when supposing 'antiquity' at a certain historical juncture, the necessary concomitant of novelty?" — why should awareness of a radically changed form of consciousness in the sixteenth century lead to the construction of a "nationalist" memory reaching back in time? Utilizing a "double vision" — to borrow a term from Joan Kelly — we explore the essays individually and collectively, looking "inside" and "outside" the frameworks traditionally associated with the Renaissance. The "inside and outside" that the problem of "national identity" poses for the study of Renaissance art is this: the history of the concept of national identity emerged along with the history that national identity framed. Considering nationalism in this light, scholars have helped to construct a modern idea of a nation as an enduring collective. A significant aspect of the problem of nationalism for historians of Renaissance culture, therefore, is to take into account the role of scholars who produced histories of national culture.

Theorizing Cultural Interaction

The 1992-93 season offered an unprecedented number of museum exhibitions concerned with the early phase of European expansion in a revisionist framework. Blockbuster exhibition formats were both archaic (the "splendors" of Mexico spanned thirty centuries) and synchronic (the theme "1492" suggested reasons to survey artistic production around the globe). As even the most spectacular of these exhibitions demonstrated, however, political and ideological issues that had been on the table in other fields, such as history, anthropology, literary, and film criticism, for two and three decades have not made a major impact on museum practice. It is worth predicting the negative implications of a display strategy, conditioned by curatorial neutrality, for exhibitions which claim to represent all cultures on equal footing. To give just one example, the role of introducing broader methodological concerns, cultural histories on what might be called the periphery of George Kubler's The Art of the Middle Ages, organized at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., becomes apparent when we compare the presentation of the Asian section with the European Renaissance section of the same exhibition. The inclusion and presentation of the European objects invited specific visual comparisons from the audience — an audience informed, moreover, by written materials giving the public access to the specialized scholarship in the catalogue. The Chinese objects, however, displayed in the manner of many older museums of Asian art were encased in large glass vitrines accompanied by the barest of labels, leaving viewers uninformed about the original cultural significance of the diverse materials gathered for aesthetic contemplation.

But I do not wish to lay blame for standard museum practices at the feet of any individual, or to deny the extraordinary visual experience that Europe 1492 and other Quincentennial exhibitions presented, nor to discount the important scholarly contribution that these exhibitions and their monumental catalogues made. My point is that there is a pressing need to revise disciplinary practices at a fundamental, epistemological level. The shortcoming of the collaboration among different subdisciplines of art history (and rather, lack of self-collaboration) for Europe 1492 as a whole was that it encouraged viewing practices rooted in European cultural imperialism. For did not American viewers learn a great deal about Europe, about which they were already relatively well informed, while the decontextualized presentation of objects categorized under cultural history as "Chinese" reinforced longstanding stereotypes of the exotic east in western eyes?

These problematic ideological implications were not lost on reviewers — even those from one another as Simon Schama and Homi Bhabha, who registered simultaneous responses to the exhibition. Bhabha charged that the major narrative message, namely the creation of a global culture around 1492, while it avoided the idea of progress by presenting a horizontal survey, failed to develop a "useful critical response" to cultural difference. Cultural parallelism as an exhibition strategy, Bhabha elaborated, promulgates a "spectatorship" and, therefore, the parallels begin to look "distinctly circular" when they are framed within a relatively uncomplicated western aesthetic realm. Why, he asked, had this exhibition failed to problematize the notion of the human?

Schama reached a similar conclusion concerning the failure of the exhibition to theorize cultural interaction; he charged the National Gallery exhibition organizers with refusing to consider the phenomenon of Columbus and the historical experience of his four voyages as a European encounter with other cultures. He concluded Schama, that many synchronic societies have managed to mutate into forms that reflect the possibility of a shared historical evolution, so why could the mingling of demons not have been the focus of more Columbus commentators?

These are good questions — but they have no ready answers. In the terms used by Thomas Kuhn to discuss the nature of scientific revolution, we find ourselves writing at
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The Grottesque in the Mirror of European Theories of the Imagination

From the mid-fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth century—the period broadly designated by the term Renaissance—as painting, sculpture, and architecture “rose” from their medieval association with the mechanical arts and productive sciences, they became associated with other theoretical branches of knowledge, such as optics, anatomy, and the arts of discourse. Whether the “visibility” of painting and the other two arts del dingue, sculpture and architecture, depended on their association with the mathematical sciences or with letters, however, their intellectualization was granted by a neo-Aristotelian model of cognition that privileges the role of vision above all the other special senses. In the course of the Renaissance, the visual arts put increasing emphasis on the distinctively human ability to think abstractly and to involve the visualizing powers of sight in combination with the imagination in the process of gaining a rational understanding of the created world and revealed knowledge of God.

Transformation in a neo-Aristotelian theory of the imagination that granted increasingly rational powers to the artist’s mental deliberations, together with the classification of human knowledge and the hierarchical scheme that had already been described in the historical notes of a hierarchy of the arts, Renaissance painting, sculpture, and architecture—defined as theoretically grounded pursuits associated with utility or perspective, or both, and based on experience—provided the normative standards against which non-Western cultural products were measured by Europeans for hundreds of years.

It is important to bear in mind that the word art did not yet mean what it does today in a broad sense, to mean anything more than skill, as demonstrated in a historical tradition, or procedure, and such as it was the equivalent of terms like method or compendium. Both skill and procedures were associated with artists’ mental activity, their ability to invent new things out of their imaginations. The evolving definition of art is only one thread in a complex weave of changing attitudes towards human knowledge during this period, but perhaps a concrete example can clarify the negative implications glimpsed in the new sixteenth-century understanding of art for non-European cultures. To anticipate a point raised by W. J. T. Mitchell in the Epilogue, the notion of an African spade or an African throne to the Sistine Ceiling, what would have been the appeal for European audiences of the late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century ivory Sopi Porcelain scabbard with an Italian provenance reproduced in the Frontispiece?

Certainly, a sixteenth-century Italian (or any humanist) collector would have appreciated this magnificent object, commissioned from Sopi artists by Portuguese traders, for its precious material, skillful carving, and especially the figures as products of the artist’s fertile imagination. But at the same time, the figures’ elongated proportions and disproportionally large heads may have signified the artist’s deficient knowledge of anatomy and ignorance of classicizing principles of proportion. Consequently, the maker of this object, should the Sopi artist’s identity have been considered at all, might have been characterized as possessing an active but irrational imagination, accompanied by the rational powers exemplified in contemporary Italian and Italianate productions, where evidence of scientific knowledge in anatomy and perspective was manifest in the work.

For European audiences, the value of African-Portuguese ivory and similar objects
might even have diminished had the amusing, grotesquely proportioned figures (amusing and grotesque in European eyes) that in became vehicles of carnivalesque cultural practices instead of decontextualized signs of otherness and of universal artistic ingenuity. The native inhabitants of Sierra Leone, as Suzanne Blier has recently shown, such images belonged to an entirely different conceptual framework. The large seated figure at the top, despite its negroid physiognomy, was probably meant to represent an ancestral spirit incarnated in the form of a Portuguese trader (since both were white in the Sapi imaginary), the art that was never to have had access to a living Portuguese model. The creation of this hybrid object as a container of salt was foreign to the Sapi culture, but the severed head and the main figure’s seated posture can be connected specifically with Sapi burial traditions. By contrast, the same scene is likely to have encouraged European fantasies of decapitation and cannibalism among “savages”—to judge from the popularity of such stories in sixteenth-century travel literature. Sensationalizing fantasies may even have prompted the commission of the object, although we are likely never to know as the records survive. This lack of documentation—which is characteristic of the entire class of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century African-Portuguese images—further suggests that these hybrid cultural products were valued primarily as exotic collectors’ items, as representations of Sapi belief, by the Europeans who sought them and assimilated them to their own frames of reference.

Taking part in a complex exchange culture, exotic objects did not carry just one set of connotative meanings. A wide range of artists, regardless of their origins, may have evoked similar responses from European audiences. It seems to me that we have not considered the complex discourse field about artistic invention that may have encouraged such generalizations. The artist of any work of art was most often evaluated as part of a context between nature and art but, whatever the narrative framework, the artist’s invention was always conceptually accompanied by the nuanced respect of both the subject and the particular viewing audience. In this three-way relationship between subject, artist, and audience, the intentions of the artist were considered manifest in the work of art. That is, as early as the sixteenth century (and much earlier, in fact), European viewers thought it was possible to read the mentality of the artist out of his artistic productions. Artistic invention, conceived in sixteenth-century terms as any kind of artistic invention by the artist, is a historical, culturally specific category for assessing the epistemological status of a work of art as well as its maker. Grotteschi—the word refers literally to a kind of painted embellishment composed of playful, monstrous figures in ancient painting and architectural ornament—had long been associated with the active powers of the imagination. In the circle of Michelangelo, grotteschi were regarded as emblematic of the procedure of invention in architecture, where the parts are composed in a way not to be found in nature. Such compounds, according to Vincenzo Danti, defined an entirely new genre of the art of design, separate from painting, sculpture, and architecture, the arts that can “imitate or truly portray all things that can be seen.” Grotteschi were associated with irrational mental activity, the active imagination unrestrained by human reason. The centrality of pure artifice to discussions of artistic invention is suggested by the circumstance that in 1563 the Council of Trent adopted a theory of images which effectively reversed all unnecessary embellishments in sacred images. The religious doctrine of sacred images decreed by the post-Tridentine Church redirected previous appreciations of artistic license: too much artistic freedom manifested as too great a display of art was perceived as a threat to ecclesiastical authority. Reformed styles of optical naturalism were often considered outward signs of the truth-telling power of images.

In the sober religious climate of the latter part of the sixteenth century, the subject of grotteschi gravitated to the center of discussions about art in Italy. Under pressure to justify and reform devotional practices, writers who once might have praised grotteschi, aputas, and other pure facies as inventions intended solely to delight and amuse the viewer, emphasized other possibilities in the age-old European contrast between the fictions of human imagination and the mysteries of divine revelation. One interesting exchange which suggests that non-European objects directly affected these considerations took place in 1582 between Archpriest Gabriele Paleotti, author of a famous treatise to reform contemporary painting (discussed in another context in Chapter 6 of this volume) and Grotesque painter Ulisse Aldrovandi, who shared a close friend Ulisse Aldrovandi, a naturalist and collector of American material, a professor at the University of Bologna. Paleotti’s discussion of grotteschi (some fifty pages in the modern edition of his treatise) points to a crisis in representation that led to the creation of new cultural boundaries and new discussions of art.

In observing how old categories stretched to fit new situations, we can begin to understand how non-European art might have contributed to the theoretical and critical discussion of the sacred in which never directly mentioned in Paleotti’s discussion of grotteschi in terms of the Platonist problem of distinguishing between truth and the semblance of truth in artistic representations are the greatest challenge laid down by the limits of artistic license, based on the premise that capricious fantasies which have no counterpart in the real world are inadmissible. But what if the capricious fictions of poets and painters actually existed? How is it to be distinguished between appropriate fantastic grotteschi and such vivaciously naturalistic representations? Was it really or ontologically? The standard authorities Paleotti summoned to define appropriate ornament could not have imagined the world that the paleontologist at the end of the sixteenth century, Paleotti, apparently holding Aldrovandi’s arguments, tried to make room for representations that could be capricious fantasies, but should not be considered as such because they actually do exist in nature.

The exchange of ideas about grotteschi and other capricci in Italy further suggests how unbridgeable images, regardless of their own origin, significance for the cultures that produced them, became emblematic of the opposition built into the western definition of art as licentious. It is often difficult to imagine that Aldrovandi’s material collection of American artifacts and natural specimens did not contribute substantially to Paleotti’s theoretical considerations. Aldrovandi countered Paleotti’s arguments by offering that the painter, out of scientific necessity to document objects, like those in his own collection, sometimes employs vivid colors and other forms of artifice (that the Council of Trent explicitly rejected for their “sensuous charm”). These visual documents contribute to human knowledge, sometimes they even write written authority. The idea that Paleotti and
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Aldrovandi exchanged about the nature of representation, while exceptional in providing historians with direct connections between American artifacts and theoretical discussions of art in Italy, were not unique. These and many other such constants of cultural transmission that wanted to be assessed suggest that non-European art played an important role in the conceptualization of European perceptions of the perception of art. For texts can document how exotic objects, regardless of their cultural origins, resonated for European cultures in similar ways.

Visual homologies made it easy to project ideas specific to one culture on to another, as many of the contributions to this volume elaborate. Anthony Pagden has named the mechanism for translating variants of experience under these circumstances in literary texts the “principle of attachment” that leads to misrecognition. In the process of detaching a motif from its original cultural context, Pagden explains, interpretation also encourages positive beliefs in a universal category of humanity. At present, we need to learn more about the various ways that the so-called visual arts have contributed to this complex process of collective identity formation.

The term “hybrid image” used throughout this study to designate certain types of culturally complex objects is indebted to contemporary colonial discourse analysis. Harriet Bhabha, who has developed a concept of hybridity as a “problematic of colonial representation,” maintains that, when the colonial subject misses the forms of the dominant culture, the resulting hybrid images introduce slippages and excesses of meaning. The doubled form or hybrid repeats the fixed and empty presence of authority by articulating it with differential knowledge and performances that take the form of multiple or contradictory belief. These hybrids pose a threat to “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary power. Bhabha shifts the study of cultural intervention away from determinate frameworks of interpretation, and the discontinuity of hybrid images in this volume are indebted to his model. Yet there are also problems with Bhabha’s description of cultural authority. Historically, hybridity is far from being a neutral concept. The possible effects of human hybridization were debated at length by nineteenth-century racial theorists. The overdetermined language of polygeny is inscribed (unintentionally, to be sure) in Bhabha’s negative view that the “imitation” (i.e., the hybrid) “weaken[s]” and “deforms” cultural authority. The studies of hybrid images which follow here do not take issue with Bhabha’s underlying critique of cultural authority, but they focus on a different problem: the selection of essays stresses the ability of the hybrid to revise and reconstitute cultural identity. Consequently, our understanding of “hybridity” is different.

To restate this difference in the nineteenth-century language of racial theory, the anti-evolutionist anthropologist Franz Boas introduced the concept of fertile hybridization at the turn of the twentieth century. Fertile hybrid images, accordingly, produce a surplus of meanings—that is, the same image can be interpreted in many ways and no single interpretation is authoritative, just as is the case in Bhabha’s model of hybridity—but they exemplify the notion of culture as a constantly emerging form of collective identity. As always in a state of transformation. A hydric metaphor can illustrate the difference between the two representations of culture, Bhabha’s critique of cultural authority and our critique of existing models of cultural identity: universal authority is emptied out by hybridity. Identity is overflowing for the same reason—it is multiple and contradictory.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Studies in the Migration and Reception of Visual Culture

A responsible history of the dramatic transformation in the status of painting, sculpture, and architecture in the early modern period—and a better understanding of why the arts were hierarchically classified at all—must take many factors into account: the formation of critical literary practices, the rise of academic artistic theory and training, the emergence of aesthetic theory, the institutionalization and professionalization of the discipline of art history, the origins of museums and the history of collecting, the changing function of images—from devotional icons, for example, to objects of aesthetic contemplation. As anthropologists James Clifford observes, the corpus of texts we produce and reproduce about culture constitutes what we call culture. The following studies, some reconstructing forgotten European frameworks for the reception of visual culture, others reconstituting the contributions of dispersed indigenous cultures to composite collective identities, acknowledge the powerful assimilative mechanisms of individuals and cultures. These mechanisms, Stephen Greenblatt argues, “work like enymes to change the ideological composition of foreign bodies.” Our model of diversity is based less on autonomy and cultural purity and more on interrelations and the roles of contact and intersection. The following subsections of the Introduction briefly introduce the principal arguments of the contributors and set them into the conceptual framework of the volume.

New Problems, New Paradigms: Revising the Humanist Model

The three historiographical contributions to this section continue the line of inquiry begun in the Introduction by addressing the manner in which Italian Renaissance art came to occupy a normative role in the history of art. The authors stress that the humanist model of cultural opposition was applied to a wide variety of historical situations. Anthony Cuclet leads off with an examination of the humanist model of cultural opposition that made Byzantium into Europe’s inferior other over a four-hundred year period of historical writing. In Chapter 6, “The Pathos of Distances: Byzantium in the六六e of Renaissance Europe and Modern Scholarship,” Cuclet challenges the attempt to treat the orthodox Christian East as emerging from the same classical mold as the West, because this interpretative framework, initiated by early humanist writers, does not evaluate Byzantine culture on its own terms. Judging Byzantine cultural products by Renaissance standards has emphasized factors of minor significance over matters of central importance to Byzantium. Cuclet calls for a better interpretative model, one that scrutinizes the “liminal position” attributed to qualities of Byzantine art that do not fit the classical mold of hybridity.

The construction of East and West as antithetical subjects was considerably assisted by the process Cuclet describes. What justifies this crude binaries today? The presence of Byzantine art in Europe, especially in Italy, is considerable. The contribution of Byzantine art (and Byzantine theories of images) to European art and Western aesthetics urgently demands reexamination in light of the obvious fact that, when Italian humanist writers and artists associated themselves directly with their ancient Greco-Roman roots
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(because the term "Renaissance"), they neglected to mention prolonged cultural interactions with Byzantium (and elsewhere) that had taken, and continued to take, place on house soil.

Thomas DiCosta Kaufmann makes a similar case for the manner in which the humanist model of cultural opposition has affected studies of Renaissance style outside Italy. In Chapter 2, "Italian Sculptors and Sculpture Outside of Italy: Chiefly in Central Europe: Problems of Approach, Possibilities of Reception," Kaufmann argues that the transformations of Renaissance style in central Europe and elsewhere outside Italy have been inadequately conceptualized, above all due to the nationalist interests of initially mostly German art historians. Kaufmann presents evidence of similar transformations of Italianate forms that occurred in places widely separated by geography and culture. He proposes a modern anthropological model to track the diffusion of these forms through interaction and circulation, and to account for the mediating conditions of active reception, even rejection, of the imported style in differing local circumstances.

My own contribution, Chapter 3, "Vision Itself Has Its Own History: "Rape", 'Narren, and Renaissance Art History," also examines nationalistic categories constructed by sixteenth-century German-speaking art historians, but the focus of this study is the paradigmatic role played by Renaissance art in theories of artistic change. The argument develops the premise that Wilthaun, Riegl, and other art historians participated in an interdisciplinary debate centered on cultural theories of cultural evolution that was disrupted by two world wars, the interwar, in the increasingly hostile nationalistic climate of social democracy. Pandolfo and his peers refuted the Enlightenment concept of universal culture that their immediate predecessors like Riegl questioned. By neglecting the broader cultural context in which theories of artistic change developed, we inadvertantly reproduce the nationalistic biases of our predecessors without understanding that their arguments were meant to counter prevailing ethnocentric assumptions of the day.

The next section of Reframing the Renaissance turns to the primary evidence for the function, reception, and power of specific kinds of visual representations in the sixteenth century.

Renaissance Theories of the Image

Sixteenth-century European appreciations of naturalistic images are grounded in an Aristotelian theory of the imagination which holds that the mind transforms sense impressions into internal images which are stored in the memory and become the basis for higher forms of thought. The next five essays deal with the reception of various kinds of naturalistic images in the sixteenth century. All the authors emphasize that lifelike images were thought to be powerful mnemonic tools working on the imagination.

Since Burckhardt associated the Renaissance with the revival of optical naturalism culminating in Raphael's late work, it is only fitting to open this section with a reassessment of Raphael's pivotal role in defining Renaissance classicism. Jan Bell, in Chapter 4, "Revisiting Raphael as a Scientific Painter," compares four centuries of Raphael criticism, arguing that modern aesthetic appreciations of classical style, cast in terms of formal order, are symptomatic of an epistemological break with Aristotelian theories of images that emerged in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Our understanding of naturalism should encompass a range of meaning consistent with its earlier historical use because (here Bell draws conclusions similar to Cudler and Kaufmann) visual qualities that fit the sixteenth-century stereotype of classicism overemphasize certain qualities while neglecting the scientific innovations in Raphael's treatment of color, shadow, and atmospheric effects — visual effects that find support in recent physiological theories of perception.

The next two essays, by Alessandro Nova and Pamela Jones, examine ways in which "esthetic" responses (i.e., appeal to the mind through the senses) was incorporated into sixteenth-century religious practices in Italy. In complementary studies dealing with institutional attitudes towards sacred images in Italy, both authors indicate that the modern category of "high art" is inadequate to circumscribe the functions of sixteenth-century images because our secular approach to style has obscured the manner in which naturalistic detail in devotional images was intended to elicit emotional responses from the viewer. Their researches corroborate Cudler's view (in Chapter 3) that the kind of relationship between viewer and the Divine established through the medium of the icon indicates fundamental cultural differences.

In the western Church, contact with the Divine is mediated through human intercessors. Nova's Chapter 5, "Popular Art in Renaissance Italy: Early Response to the Holy Mountain at Varallo," studies documentation for the late fifteenth-century reconstruction of Jerusalem on Monte Varallo in the Piedmont, founded by the Franciscan Order. Here a popular pilgrimage site throughout the sixteenth century. The narrative tableaux at Varallo featured lifelike figures embellished with "real" details such as actual hair, clothing, furniture, and clothing that are conventionally regarded today as appealing to an uneducated audience. This interpretation, Nova argues, does not explain why Sacro Monte was patronized by a fashionable, sophisticated Milanese aristocracy. Current scholarship is using the main point: pilgrimage sites document a sixteenth-century form of material culture that offered a participatory religious experience to all ranks of society, regardless of taste and education.

Nova cites the early sixteenth-century humanist Giovanni Morone's enthusiastic recommendation that the dramatic episodes at Varallo were completely artistic (made "without art"). Does this mean that period writers could consider artistic representations in general to be artistic, or that poses served with actual clothing and hair were "artless" in a way that painted representations could never be? Based on a close reading of the textual and material evidence for Varallo, Nova concludes the latter but the following chapter, which examines slightly later statements about painting, makes one suspect that deeper issues about the nature of imitation were routinely implicated in sixteenth-century discussions of "art." Our modern, secular readings of Renaissance discussions of lifelike images in art need to be reconsidered carefully in light of the functions of religious images. What constitutes the effective imitation of a living, divine presence was always highly charged issue for the Church implicating both art and audience — long before the Council of Trent in 1563 tried to legislate what kinds of artistic license exceeded the limits of religious decorum.
Pamela Jones' essay, Chapter 6, entitled "Art Theory as Ideology: Gabriele Paleotti’s Hierarchical Notion of Painting’s Universality and Reception," is significant for documenting the emergence of consciously aestheticizing attitudes and a hierarchy of viewing practices based on education (and, therefore, on class). In the tense atmosphere of discussion about the limitations of art critic Paleotti’s widely disseminated Dialogue ou Sacred and Profane Images (Italian edition, 1562; Latin edition, 1594) was how to justify aesthetic enjoyment of landscape and other non-religious elements. He argued that elite viewers, unlike the uncultivated masses, would not be seduced by artistic embellishments designed to delight the senses. To what extent, Jones wants to know, did post-Enlightenment theories of the image succeed in creating a category of designated "literary persons" at the bottom of the viewing hierarchy, a hierarchy that might have assimilated laborers, peasants, women, and perhaps all the native inhabitants of "new worlds," in a single category?

Styles of scientific naturalism were intended to communicate with viewers through the supposedly universal language of sight. But the actual reception of naturalistic images outside Italy presents a very different view of the negotiations circulating among patron, artist, and viewer in the early colonial period. The last two essays of this section, by Pauline Watts and Thomas Cathcart, cross disciplinary, geographical, and cultural boundaries to ask how the same European theories of images were translated to Latin America. Both authors examine records of crosscultural exchanges by exploring the translation of classical and Christian values in Latin America at a time when visual communication was considered an absolutely necessary instrument to overcome the language barrier. In Chapter 7, "Languages of Gesture in Sixteenth-Century Mexico: Some Antecedents and Transmutations," Watts discusses a wide range of colonial texts to reconstruct performative aspects of a purportedly universal language of gesture and expression grounded in classical-Christian theoretical theory. Watts finds that the negotiated Christendom of state spectacle and religious drama record an active process of indigenous reception and adoption of European humorous and staging conventions.

Like Watts, Cathcart investigates how the narrative aspects of images with mnemonic functions were used to circulate two unrelated cultures. Chapter 8, "Beyond the Walls: Colonial Empires and the Art of Crosscultural Transition," examines prime source material for slippages between the western sign and its colonial significance. The single common thread among all the categories of visual evidence that Cathcart examines — including indigenous colonial paintings and contemporary European prints — is that they are unexpected. Cathcart finds that, regardless of their conception of representation, colonial images were judged to contain truthful information if they gave evidence of a prior oral dialogue.

It could be argued further that Mexican calendrical illustrations were judged to contain "truthful" information because astronomical calendars had scientific status in Europe. To state this in the broader terms of Cathcart's argument, the relationship of the Mexican calendrical drawings to prior evidence, and the relationship between the legal pictorial evidence and prior testimony, are based on the same assumption of demonstrability. Indeed, Cathcart speculates that the Mexican writer Diego Valadés speculated the reliability of the Mexican calendar in his Relacion de las cosas (1739), written in Rome and published three years before the institution of the Gregorian calendar, as an intentional allusion to the impending reform. In other words, Valadés defended the truth value of Mexican images in terms that could be recognized by Europeans. This process of cultural exchange, Nahua pictorial traditions were assimilated in a European frame of reference.

Early Collecting Practices

The third section continues to examine the construction of new epistemological categories and the tearing down of old ones as people and things migrated on an unprecedented scale. A rapidly growing field of publications on the history of collecting suggests that private museums constitute a distinct form of documentary culture that preserves a rich form of our cultural knowledge about the conditions of cultures that are no longer in the history of the visual arts. The three essays included here discuss the policies, practices, and techniques of collecting in some unusual areas. The objects considered occupy a liminal position in the history of the visual arts in that they were initially sources of personal and intellectual delight for European audiences, but were later excluded from aesthetic systematicatization of the fine arts. Even the present great interest in the early history of collecting tends to marginalize these early collecting practices, treating the objects as mere curiosities of the "minor arts" or relegating them to the history of science — thus reproducing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetic categories and viewing practices that are anachronistically applied to the material under consideration.

One of the dominant themes to emerge from the three studies included here is the central role played by the Aristotelian parallel between nature and art across a broad spectrum of collecting activities. Martin Kemp, in Chapter 9, "Wrought by no Artist's Hand: The Natural, the Artificial, the Exotic, and the Scientific in some Artifacts from the Renaissance," emphasizes the inadequacy of any rigid system of classification to account for contemporary motivations behind the making and viewing of objects. From his study of various examples of human craftsmanship that incorporate natural objects (such as fruit, shells, and deer antlers), Kemp argues that these "natural artifacts" intentionally defied stable classification and interpretation of meaning. As Kemp discusses hybrids of nature and art invented by Wenzel Jamnitzer, Bernard Palissy, and others in the context of the intellectualization of the crafts, he finds that their display pieces were meant to confer status on a wider range of patrons than we usually assume. These objects were originally ordered by princely rulers, university scientists, courtly craftsmen-engines, even city councils (as the illustration of the Uppsala cabinets in Figure 9.18 attests), who displayed not only their power but also genuine utility before God's magnificent creation.

The process of appropriating objects from cultures acculturated and colonized by European conquest, in Claudia Lazzaro and Eline Quiriones' essay, also developed new ways of thinking about culture. Lazzaro, who takes a semiotic approach to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century images of animals, finds that the display of wild and domestic creatures produced a new category of culture against which the familiar could be defined. In Chapter 10, "Animals as Cultural Signs: A Medieval Menagerie in the Crono at Castello,"
Lazzaro discusses in detail the gardens of Cosimo I de' Medici, begun in 1537 and developed in the 1560s, as a convector of political messages beyond its ostensible construction of humanist allegory. Paradoxically, imported natural specimens functioned (alongside their domestic counterparts) as cultural signs grounded in the humanist revival of classical antiquity; live animals and their pictorial representations were used to symbolize the political dominance and power for European rulers in a variety of cultural settings. As sixteenth-century collections of exotic were formed, new information was incorporated within taxonomic frameworks inherited from classical antiquity, which were often stretched beyond recognition in the process. The classical framework of Renaissance culture translated alienity into terms that were in use for centuries.

Keppel and Lazzaro both focus on the European reception of foreign material completely decentralsied from its original cultural context. In Chapter 11, "Collecting Cultures: A Mexican Manuscript in the Vatican Library," Quiniones-Keber addresses a different side of the asymmetrical cultural exchange when she examines a highly prized, sixteenth-century illustrated manuscript known as Codex Vaticanus A. This hybrid document preserves the record of a lost Aztec screenfold book as it was copied into a European-style codex and provided with an extensive Italian commentary. In the process of physically rearranging the native book format, the compiler of Codex Vaticanus A also framed Aztec culture in European values. Quiniones-Keber argues, however, that the codex is more than a record of cultural appropriation because it preserves an anonymous Italian patron's attempt to understand a completely foreign culture. In her view, the failure of this early effort to "get things right" is a moral lesson for contemporary art historians because it shows how unrealistic it is to aim for a prejudice-free understanding; we always understand the other by analogies to ourselves.

Mediating Images: Developing an Intercultural Perspective

The preceding sections of the anthology as described here have already begun to consider how European artistic ideals formed in the semantically complex environment of the sixteenth century. The case studies included in the final section of the book are concerned entirely with the multivalent signifying power of hybrid images. Linguists argue that the potentially endless process of reproduction and transformation of meaning in language is arrested by the conundrum of a "community of native speakers." One of the most basic problems with the linguistic paradigm of community consensus, however, is its under-conceptualization of what happens when there is no homogeneous audience of native speakers to arrest the potentially endless transformations of meaning. The conditions of reception and the strategies of interpretation are different in each of the following studies, but every case emphasizes that hybrid images signify in multiple, open-ended ways.

Cecilia Klein, like Quiniones-Keber, recollects traditional techniques of formal and iconographical analysis to detect tensions between coexisting cultures manifested in hybrid colonial objects. Readers can decide whether these two authors really hold mutually exclusive points of view, or whether they focus on different aspects of the same situation. Quiniones-Keber emphasizes the limits of true cultural exchange (while putting an early attempt to overcome ethnocentrism), in Chapter 12, "Wild Woman in Colonial Mexico: The Encounter of Europeans and Aztec Concepts of the Other." Klein emphasizes the extent of cross-cultural communication (while utilizing the ethnocentrism of European missionaries during the early contact period). Klein situates her argument against extreme reconstructionist readings like Stephen Greenblatt's Marvelous Possessions which deny the possibility of real epistemological exchanges across the cultural boundaries of completely unrelated societies. This attitude, Klein maintains, is yet another pernicious form of Eurocentrism because it dispenses with any serious attempt to understand the indigenous colonial experience---such writing dismisses the ways that representation actually operates in a colonial context. Supporting her argument with extensive evidence from both European and Pre-Columbian sources, Klein documents the native tradition of Cihuatoc as it converged with European ideas of wyrm, demonic women under asymmetrical conditions of cultural exchange. As the Nahua supernatural was progressively forced into a Christian mold, the native Cihuatoc, patroness of women in childbirth and guardian of long life and prosperity as well as death, was reshaped in terms meaningful and familiar to Europeans.

The reception of hybrid visual symbols and its implications are also the focus of Dana Leibovitz's study of maps made by native peoples in early colonial Mexico. In Chapter 13, "Colonies and Cartography: Shifting Signs on Indigenous Maps of New Spain," Leibovitz argues that the ways in which signs are used on indigenous maps---their lack of homogeneity, the accommodation of European signs through doubling and/or substitution, and the resistance to European introductions---never supplied their viewers with an unambiguous image of the actual world. Her study emphasizes the complexity and indeterminacy of the totality of visual representation and its colonial policies. Leibovitz recognizes that the way we read maps and other symbolic representations largely determines what we understand about colonization yet it is equally important to bear in mind that the transformations of European and indigenous pictorial symbols are only partially sustained by political motives and events.

The extent to which the original conditions of reception can be reconstructed from the surviving documents is also central to Jonathan Ries's examination of the fundamental historical paradigm for the subordination of all other cultures to the Renaissance. the encens of Jews and Muslims within Europe. In Chapter 14, "Luce Signorelli's Rule of Antichrist and the Christian Encounter with the Infield," Ries recovers asymmetrical cultural interactions with the traditional tools of iconographical analysis. This interpretative strategy enables him to draw connections between Signorelli's representation of a famous Jew in the Cappella Nuova frescoes, Orvieto Cathedral, of 1499-1504, and textual evidence of the post-Spanish, anti-Semitic views of Pope Alexander VI. Ries finds that Renaissance humanist culture created false and persistent ethnic stereotypes---an aspect of Christian humanism that has been eluded from previous art historical accounts.

The final essay is a challenging reflection on the manner in which western writers have constructed the human subject. In the Epilogue, entitled "Iconology, Ideology, and Cultural Encounter: Panofsky, Althusser, and the Scene of Recognition," W. J. T. Mitchell examines the process by which social and cultural hierarchies are naturalized by visual regimes. He compares Panofsky's iconological method with Louis Althusser's Marxist critique of ideology by constructing an imaginary encounter between them.
Mitchell finds that the problematic assumption, so familiar to the Renaissance, that there is a universal ("natural") form of representation still haunts us. The closing essay serves as a striking reminder that no interpretive paradigm is universally valid — however universal its claims might be, every theory is the product of specific historical circumstances.

In opening this collection of essays, I would like to remind our readers of another anthology, one that has been an inspiring model of scholarship for me: the 1976 anthology in which I think I can speak for all of my contributors in hoping that we live up to our chosen namesake at least in this one respect. In the introduction to Reclaiming the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe, editors Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers wrote that:

Although the representations of Renaissance culture perceived and created in the present volume of essays are by no means complete or in perfect harmony with each other, they do reflect a collective effort to see, and talk, across several sets of boundaries. These include the boundaries that inhibit communication between scholars of different generations, different academic disciplines, and different methodological schools within a single discipline.

Reclaiming the Renaissance also represents a collective effort to bridge generational, disciplinary, and methodological distances. Yet no matter how consistently we interrogate the field of our disciplinary knowledge, we still answer to a "finite system of constraints," as Derrida says. It will be easy to criticize our anthology for being too ambitious, for neglecting Spain, over-emphasizing Central Mexico, ignoring the Irish, slating cultural exchanges within Europe, not dealing with the Reformation — for any number of valid reasons that, as editor, I can defend only by saying, yes, write those chapters! To get stuck in such a debate at all, however, is to misunderstand this volume. It will take more to revise our histories of Western art than eliminating anachronistic terms, enlarging the canon, or reducing the complexity of historical events to a few metacategories. Beyond the objects of visual culture are historical theories of human agency that the contributors to this volume emphasize throughout — problematic notions of how the human subject has been constructed that have traditionally been written out of the history of an art altogether. It is worth reconsidering whose Renaissance is at the foundation of the discipline. While the official observance of Columbus’s landfall has passed, many questions that five hundred years of intensive cultural interaction raise still need to be addressed. The authors of Reclaiming the Renaissance join voices in encouraging our readers to define many additional subjects worthy of study.