POPA ALEXANDRU - Anul II Master pictură

I. Restanțe

Strategii de reprezentare plastică în pictura, anul II, semestrul I

I.a. Având în vedere proiectul de master se vor traduce integral si se vor comenta cele două articole de mai jos:

-https://3a.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/j.ctt13www4f.10.pdf (atasat)

- The_Limits_of_Byzantine_Art pdf. (atașat)

I.b. Se va prezenta un portfolio cu un argument teoretic referitor la ***componenta expresiv-gramaticală de culoare*** în lucrările aferente primului semestru, maximum 5 lucrări , bibliografie etc. Lungimea textului va fi de minimum 15 pagini.

TERMEN DE PREDARE 22 mai 2020

Adresa de predare- 3a@unarte.org

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II. Examene semestrul II

II.a. STRATEGII DE REPREZENTARE PLASTICA IN PICTURA

II.a.1. Se va traduce integral și se va comenta: *Wassily Kandinsky: the painter of sound and vision (atasat)*

II.a.2. Se va prezenta un portofolio referitor la modificările/ progresul expresiv cromatic al proiectului de master cu exemplificări din stadii ale proiectului.

II.b.PRINCIPII DE STRUCTURARE A CERCETĂRII ÎN ARTELE VIZUALE

Se va traduce integral si se va comenta: *Pictures for our time and place: Reflections on painting in a digital age (atașat).*

II.c. SINTEZE CONCEPTUALE ÎN EXPRESIA PICTURALĂ

Se va traduce integral si se va comenta: *Metromania or the Undersides of Painting (ataşat)*

II.d. DEZVOLTAREA PROIECTULUI MASTERAL

II.d1. Se va prezenta un portfolio cu stadii de lucru, schițe, documentație diferite cele cuprinse în semestrul anterior.

II.d.2. Se va prezenta un argument teoretic care susține progresul proiectului din primul semestru până în al doilea semestru. Proiectul trebuie susținut cu imagini ale stadiilor de lucru.

II.e. LUCRAREA DE DISERTAŢIE

-Se va prezenta portfolioul proiectul masteral, cuprinzând susținerea teoretică a proiectului,context, utilizarea elementelor de limbaj, tehnici, bibliografie, (minimum 30 de pagini cf. Metodologie disertație).

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2. General Iconographic Changes in the 14th and 15th Centuries

At different times, the subject of the re-emergence of hesychasm in the Byzantine world was related to new trends in the Palaeologan era of the 14th and 15th centuries in Byzantine and Slavic lands. Hesychasm supposedly affected the 'pre-renaissance' in Byzantium by stifling its development. Fruitful in itself, this hypothesis must be used with caution. Although it is possible that there were circumstances in which the monastic rigor of the 14th and 15th centuries was detrimental to artistic development, there is no stark contrast between the theology of Byzantine hesychasm and the most creative aspects of Palaeologan art. If the hesychast movement represents a consistent world view, then as well as a renewal of personal religiosity, individual prayer and a better understanding of Christianity, it is probable it could create an atmosphere of artistic creativity. The matter of the appreciation, collection and study of Byzantine art in the Palaeologan period and its relation to social and spiritual trends in Byzantium is, however, a complex topic, and it does not allow for a definitive answer.[1]

Two conflicting, but interwoven, cultural trends influenced the development of orthodox dogmas as well as artistic production during the Palaeologan period, namely, hesychasm and humanism. These tendencies in iconography did not, however, exclude the development of a plethora of private, complicated and interwoven trends as well.

The humanistic or descending (antique) trend of naturalisation (which had the characteristic of temporality) reduced the canon of icon painting and placed it in the ranks of secular painting. Hence, a love of the ancient past, the study of various works of ancient classical literature and art, and their imitation, characterised the Byzantine art of the late 13th and early 14th centuries.[2] The subject of this art, of course, was the church; the attraction to antiquity was only in style and form, for which the classical model became almost mandatory. Theatrical scenes appeared in mosaics and frescoes and iconographic programs expanded to contain complex allegories, symbols and allusions to the Old Testament, as well as texts of liturgical hymns. Complete theological preparation and intellectual erudition was a general requirement in the commission of iconographers and the contemplation of works of art. The form and content of frescoes reflected this renewed wave of reflection on classical ideas and subjects.[3]

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1 R. Nelson, *Later Byzantine Painting: Art, Agency and Appreciation* (Ashgate 2007).

2 N.L. Okunev, 'Арилье: Памятник Сербского Искусства XIII в', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, vol. 8 (Prague 1936); K. Specieris, *Изображения Эллинских Философов в Церквах* (Athens 1964).

3 J. Meyendorff, 'Humanisme Nominaliste et Mystique Cretienne a Byzance au XIVe Siecle', *Nouselle Revue Theologique*, vol. 79, no. 9 (Louvain 1957).

Many Byzantine paintings that were executed around 1300 bear an imprint of humanism, with their light and jagged architectural landscape, animated and graceful scenes, with frequent personifications and draped figures with expressive and elegant gestures.[4]

Parallel to this naturalist or descending trend in Palaeologan art, a second or rising trend arose in the art of the 14th century, informed by the spiritual and mystical tradition of hesychasm.

Hesychasm and Christian art of the 14th and 15th centuries

When hesychasm became a universally accepted doctrine in 1375, not only in monastic life but also in the Byzantine Church, art experienced changes that were different from those occurring at the beginning of the 14th century. The aim of this art was to contemplate transfigured flesh and matter, the shading of divine light, the fullness of ascent by the divine presence to ethereal heights where everything was perfect.[5] The spiritual ideal of a contemplative monastic life, as expressed in the theology of Gregory Palamas, supported the essence of Byzantine culture, in particular its doctrine of the transfiguration of human nature and the inseparable connection between heaven and earth. Palamite hesychasm denied Platonic spiritualism and taught the positive value of the body: its ideal was the transfiguration, not the destruction of the flesh (Figs 1–4).[6]

Even in this context, dramatic changes began to transpire in art that reflected changes in all parts of life.[7] First, the main trend of the new style, which reached a peak in the 14th century, was a gradual shift away from painting expressing psychological states. Small exquisite mosaics that were created during the early Palaeologan renaissance disappeared, and icons increased in size. Large images with full-length silhouettes were easy to read in the church's interior. Together with theological treatises and sermons, painted images expressed the essence of the doctrine of divine energy, a state of vision reserved for those in an advanced spiritual state of ascesis.[8]

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4 A. Grabar, *Byzantium: Byzantine Art in the Middle Ages* (Holland 1966) 84.

5 M.M. Vasic, L'Hesychasmedans l'Église et l'Art des Serbes du Moyen Age', *L'Art Byzantin Chez les Slaves, Les Balkans: Mélanges Théodore Uspenskij*, vol. 1 (Paris 1930).

6 C.N. Tsirpanlis, 'Byzantine Humanism and Hesychasm in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Synthesis or Antithesis, Reformation or Revolution', *The Patristic and Byzantine Review*, vol. 5, no. 12 (1993) 18–21.

7 G. Ruzsa, 'Une Icone Inconnue Representant les Apotres Pierre et Paul et la Question del'Hesychasme', *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik*, vol. 32, no. 5 (1982).

8 Vasic, *Жича и Лазарица: Студије из Српске Уметности Средњег Века* (Belgrade 1928) 163–237; L. Brehier, 'La Renovation Artistique sous les Paleologues et le Mouvement des Idees', in *Melanges Charles Diehl* vol. 2 (Paris 1930) 2.

Dense, bold, dramatic brush strokes that expressed emotion framed painting technique during this period. The surface was unusually lively and included expansive movement, finicky gestures with hands and fingers outstretched, conveying a striking specificity of character and personality.[9] Figures had sharp flashing eyes, thick red lips and fleshy noses. Overall, a movable light blazed a harsh glare on their faces and hands. All this created a unique imaginative and artistic operation, which was active and temperamental.

The religious art of Byzantine and Slavic lands at this time used expressive colours, which depicted high emotional states and also enhanced the mystical mood of the icon. The expression of the faces in these icons was more emotional than previously, depicting different mental states, from the lyrical to the dramatic. Especially strong was the attachment to dark blue hues. There was a tendency to create a deep mysterious glow to arouse heavenly associations in the viewer. Larger surfaces were painted in a spectrum of colours.

A prominent feature of this new style was heightening the emotion and expression while maintaining the dynamism of heightened spirituality. Thus, the gesturing of figures was impulsive, robes began to flap, and figures turned to the sides, suggesting a freer and more bold perspective.[10] The iconography was complex, some images were close to genre scenes, and the colour range was softer, lighter, and dominated by blue-grey and greenish-yellow hues. These stylistic devices were reminiscent of the humanist trends of the Palaeologan era. Restoration of the classicism of previous centuries, however, or its natural extension, was on a different basis.[11] The central goal of this art was not to imitate ancient models, but rather to reflect their unique beauty by saturating the figures with divine light.[12]

Byzantine art of the early 14th, and later, centuries did not engage in literal reproduction of classical elements. Over time, more expressive options appeared, and love for the classical past lost its value. The figurative scene evolved to be characterised by a number significant artistic nuances. The emission of light from one point or central compositional axis revitalised the dynamic centre of

9 N.K. Goleizovskii, 'Послание Иконописцу и Отголоски Исихазма в Русской Живописи на Рубеже XV–XVI вв,' *Византийский Временник*, vol. 26 (1965); idem, 'Исихазм и Русская Живопись XIV–XV вв', *Византийский Временник*, vol. 29 (1968); M.V. Alpatov, 'Искусство Феофана Грека и Учение Исихастов', *Византийский Временник*, vol. 33 (1972); G.I. Vzdornov, *Фрески Феофана Грека в Церкви Спаса Преображения в Новгороде* (Moscow 1976) 236–58; O. Vopovz, *Ascesi e Trasfigurazione: Immagini dell'Arte Bizantina e Russa nel XIV Secolo* (Milan 1996).

10 For the scholarly approach that locates the influence of hesychasm in the domain of iconography, see E. Bakalova, 'Към Вы і Роса за Отраженной! На Исихазма Върху Изкуството 1371–1971', in P. Rusev et al. (eds), *Търновска Кяижовна Школа* (Sofia 1974); T. Velmans, *La Peinture Murale Byzantine la Fin du Moyen Age* (Paris 1977) 54–57.

11 Velmans, 'Le Rôle de l'Hésychasme dans la Peinture Murale Byzantine du XIVe et XVe Siècles', in P. Armstrong (ed.), *Ritual and Art: Byzantine Essays for Christopher Walter*, (London 2006) 182–226.

12 E. Tachiaos, 'Hesychasm as a Creative Force in the Fields of Art and Literature', in D. Davidov (ed.), *L'Art de Thessalonique et des Pays Balkaniques et les Courants Spirituels au XIVe Siècle* (Belgrade 1987).

the icon. There was an aesthetic inversion (antinomian) in the painting, opposed to the canons of outer and inner beauty. It reflected spiritual peace, silence and exultation, and a combination of 'earthly' and 'heavenly' realities and, finally, a spiritual ecstasy, all fruits of the fruit of hesychast concentration. The sacred symbolism of colours emphasising the expressiveness and semantics of complex shades supported the mystical mood and inspiration of religious images. Icons were concise in detail; their semantic structure was centralised and had a transcendent vector to overcome emotional and psychological expression.[13] The process of spiritual rebirth was opened; the individual in transition was hypostatic. Many religious images created in a portable format (icons) reflected the increasing hesychast mood. They straightened the timelessness and allegorical physical space of Christian gnosis, with its address to inner peace, and metaphysical interpretation of the universe.

The religious art of the Palaeologan period marked an emergence of new iconographic subjects manifesting temporal and expressive elements in a figurative scene. The volume and the space of the buildings increased to have clear and rhythmic arrangements. The ancient mapping of the human figure changed, and it was accompanied by columns and soft drapes. Asymmetrical and small-scale facial features appeared in oblique view and were psychologically subtle. A soft rolling light illuminated the anxious facial expression, which gave an impression of the peace being unstable and unusually personal. The architectural forms were overly abundant and their bulk was drenched with energy, thereby reducing the space and dynamics of the figurative scene.[14]

Finally, the classical art of the Commnenian and Palaeologan periods acquired new features, such as enhanced spiritual focus, new religious symbolism, iconicity, and timelessness. All these elements referred to a new manifestation of the icon and its primary function — to be a prayerful mediator between humanity and God. The 'techniques and methods of such iconography were to be understood only in the context of the doctrine of the uncreated light.'[15] Nevertheless, iconographers had the liberty to uniquely embody doctrinal topics in paintings, which proves that canonical Orthodox art did not detract from the individual vision of the artist.

13 G. Peterson, 'The Parekklesion of St. Euthymius in Thessalonica: Art and Monastic Policy under Andronicus II', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 58 (1976).

14 Velmans, 'Infiltrations Occidentales dans la Peinture Murale Byzantine au XIVe et au Début du XVe Siècle, in V. Duric (ed.), *L'École de la Morava et son Temps: Symposium de Résava 1968* (Belgrade 1972).

15 P. Florensky, 'Иконостас', Собрание Сочинений, vol. 1 (Paris 1985) 221.

After the victory of hesychasm in 1375, idealistic tendencies became more pronounced. The sense of monumentality slowly diminished while the scenes came to have affinities with the portable icon. Works of art were complex and the architecture and landscapes assumed unprecedented importance.[16]

General iconographic changes in the art of the 14th and 15th centuries

One of the key objectives of Byzantine art in the 14th and 15th centuries was to communicate spiritual (invisible) realities by physical means. Contemporary scholars have yet to enunciate the way in which this aspect of Byzantine art was achieved.[17]

In order to discern hesychasm in art, it is important to define the new message that hesychasm brought to the age and to see to what extent it brought renewal and change into spiritual life in the Byzantine Empire and the Slavic lands. The paintings of Theophanes the Greek gave art historians pause, mainly because he came to Russia from Constantinople at the time the hesychast influence was at large.[18] Was Theophanes influenced by hesychasm or humanism?[19] There is an apparent contradiction. Similar problems appear when one surveys monuments, which have a number of contrasts. Such is the case in the Monastery of Ivanovo, Bulgaria (1341–1370).[20] There is a series of naked human figures in frescoes of Ivanovo (a rare detail in art of the Christian East) as well as tonal gradations, shadows, and white highlights that symbolise the rays of divine light.[21] A diligent art historian faces challenges when analysing artworks by either Manuel Panselinos, from the Monastery of Protaton (14th century), or Manuel Eugenikos, from the Church of Calendžicha (Georgia). The frescoes of Panselinos represent a fusion of both humanistic and hesychastic artistic traits. For example, the light illuminating Christ (as circumscribed by Panselinos) is simultaneously a natural illumination and a visual language for the participation (of Christ) in the divine light. The expression of the eyes shows the compassion

16 M. Chatzidakis, *Studies in Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (London 1972).

17 Bakalova, 'La Societe et l'Art en Bulgarie au XIVe Siècle, L'Influence de l'Hesychasme sur l'Art', *Actes du 14th Congress International des Etudes Byzantines II* (Bucharest 1975).

18 Tachioaos, 'Hesychasm'.

19 N.K. Goleizovskii, 'Заметки о Творчестве Феофана Грека', *Византийский Временник*, vol. 24 (1969) 139–143.

20 S. Dimitrieva, 'Rospisi Hrama Spasha Preobrazenija na Kovaleve (1380) v Novgorode', PhD thesis, Lomonosov Moscow State University (2003) 489–497.

21 Grabar, 'Les Frescoes de Ivanovo et le Art de la Palaeologes', *Le Art de la Fin du l'Antiquiti at du Moyen Age* vol II (Paris 1968) 842; S. Jordanov, *Skalniot Manastir Sv. Archangel Michael pri Selo Ivanovo* (Varna 2009) 70–72.

and mercy of a God who condescended to become human.[22] These features confirm the enduring importance of a coherent picture of the unity or synergy of the Byzantine world.

Nevertheless, a limited number of monuments, such as the Church of St Nikolas at Chilli, Tilos, contain paintings with such a distinctive style they could be interpreted only in the context of hesychasm. Inclusion of frescoes of eight monastics and 13 hesychast leaders in the middle zone of the church is a new element not found in art of the region. The technique is peculiar and the palette austere and limited. The facial features are rendered with swift, irregular and bold brushstrokes of white paint that was applied during preparation.[23] Arms and fingers receive a similar simplified treatment; modelled freely and concisely, they do not follow anatomical guides. The drapery is traced with thick white paint, which also covers large expanses of the body, creating the sense of plasticity through contrast between lit and shadowed areas. These troubled forms of lighting allow the painter to avoid excess in his rendering of movement and to select restrained poses. The same feeling animates the work of Eugenikos.[24]

Even though no particular hesychast influence could be assigned to a monument, icon or a subject, a set of iconographic changes occurred in the 14th century, which could only be interpreted as occurring in that context. No circumscription of a work of art represents the reciprocal influence of hesychasm on art more than a painting representing Palamas. Since the veneration of Palamas, took hold over the cities in which he lived and preached, that is Thessaloniki, Veroia and Kastoria, icons with his portrait appeared at the same time as his cult spread to these areas.[25] The Monastery of Christ Pantokrator, Vladaton (constructed around 1339), contains the earliest icon depicting Palamas. Brothers Markos and Dorotheos Vlates, two important supporters of Palamas, resided in this monastery.[26] The figurative scene of the Transfiguration, placed just below the image of Palamas, affirms the hesychast connection.[27] Another well-preserved example comes from the Monastery of Vatopedi (1371). Both images were created during the hesychast controversy (Fig. 5).

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22 S. Skliris, 'The Person of Christ and the Style of Icons, A Mystery Great and Wondrous', *Byzantine and Christian Museum. Exhibition of Icons and Ecclesiastical Treasures 28 May – 31 July 2001* (Athens 2001).

23 A. Katsioti, 'Ηεσυσηασμ ανδ τηε Ωαλλ Παιντινγσ ιν τηε Σηθρση οφ Στ. Νικολασ, Σηελι, Νικοσ'; *Αρσηαελογιcον Δελτον*, vol. 54 (1999) 327–342.

24 H. Belting, 'Le Peinture Manuel Eugenicos de Constantinople en Georgie', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, vol. 28 (1979).

25 G.V. Popov, 'Икона Григория Паламы из ГМИИ и Живопись Фессалоник Поздне-Византийского Периода', *Искусство Западной Европы и Византии* (Moscow) 197.

26 C. Mauropoulou-Tsioumē, *Vlatadon Monastery* (Thessaloniki 1987).

27 The image of Palamas is also represented on the opposite side of the same church, closer to the south parakklession which dates from the last quarter of the 14th century. Here Palamas is shown together with John Chrysostom, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory the Theologian and Gregory Archbishop of Thessaloniki (S.E.J. Gerstel, 'Civic and Monastic Influences on Church Decoration in Late Byzantine Thessalonike: In Loving Memory of Thalia Gouma-Peterson', Symposium on Late Byzantine Thessalonike, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 57 (2003) 236).

The story of conversion of the young Indian prince named Iosapath by the monk Barlaam of Calabria was another influential image.[28] Important monuments depicting this scene are in the north-west chapel of the Protaton Church on Mount Athos (1290), the Peribleptos Church in Ohrid (1294/5), and the Church of St George at Omorphokklesia near Kastoria.[29] The Cathedral of the Deposition of the Robe, in Moscow's Kremlin contains the important example of the possible influence of hesychasm on art. The fresco in question represents the story of the appearance of an angel to the monk Pachomios. This composition often accompanied that of Barlaam and Iosaphat (Fig. 6) in churches.

With illustrations of individual moments of the liturgy, abstract symbolic images of the *Sophia* (the wisdom of God), the Communion of the Apostles (Fig. 7), and many others appeared to reveal the meaning of the sacrament. These images represent a figurative transmission of the Biblical text of Proverbs (Prov. 9:1–7) and express two subjects. The image of an angel symbolises the concept of *Sophia*. Christ is also depicted as Wisdom, but in the guise of the angel of the great council.[30] Wisdom was one of the subjects discussed during the hesychast controversy, resulting in a symbolic image of *Sophia*.[31] The inconsistencies, which occur in the use of the image of the Wisdom prior to the 14th century, reflect the various interpretations of the notion of Sophia among church fathers. During the hesychast controversy, both hesychast and humanists used the theme of Wisdom in support of their cause. The supporters of Palamas, however, interpreted the meaning of *Sophia* in the context of their Christology, to support Palamite doctrine of Christ as the Wisdom of God (Fig. 8). The followers of hesychasm applied other iconographic features to express the meaning of Wisdom as a manifestation of God's action in the world.[32] An unusually shaped halo, which surrounds the angel of wisdom, clearly expresses this concept. Many Russian icons contain the image of the angel of wisdom, such as that from the Monastery of Kirillo-Belozerskii (1548), which is currently in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.[33] In this work, the angel stands in front of the temple with seven columns, all representing the

28 R. Janin, *Les Eglises et les Monastires des Grands Centres Byzantins Bithynie, Hellespont, Latros, Galesios, Tribizonde, Athines, Thessalonique* (Paris 1975) 386–388.

29 E.G. Stikas, 'Une Église des Paléologues aux Environs de Castoria', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol. 51 (1958) fig. 5; C. Mavropoulou-Tsioume, *Buzantinhv Qessa* (Paris 1927) pl. 55.1; Stikas, 'Une église des Paléologues', 100–112, figs 5, 6.

30 Meyendorff , 'L'iconographie de la Sagesse Divine dans la Tradition Byzantine', *Cahiers Archeologiques*, vol. 10 (Paris 1959).

31 Okunev, 'Арилье, Памятник Сербского Искусства XIII в'.

32 G. Florovsy, О Почитании Софии Премудрости Божией в Византии и на Руси, *Труды 5-го Съезда Русских Академических Организаций за Границе*, vol. 1 (Sofia 1932); Meyendorff, 'L'iconographie', 10.

33 Meyendorff, 'Wisdom-Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme', *Studies on Art and Archeology in Honor of Ernst Kitzinger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, vol. 41 (Washington D.C. 1987) 391–401.

'home' of *Sophia*. The symbolic representation of Wisdom affirms the opposition between the concept of *Sophia* as the wisdom of God and the concept of *Sophia* — the wisdom of the philosophers.[34]

In contrast to the hesychasts, the humanists, lead by Barlaam, have identified wisdom with the divine essence. Hence, two opposing concepts of divine wisdom prevailed in Byzantine and the Slavic lands, which contributed to the growth of this representation during the second half of the 14th century.[35] Consciously or unconsciously, however, the image of wisdom breached conciliar decrees. Similar violations occurred when iconographers used symbols to represent the Eucharistic story. In particular, Canon 82 of the Trullo Council eliminated symbols as a substitute for the direct image of the incarnate word of God: 'Honouring the ancient imagery and the shadow, as signs of destiny and truth … , we prefer grace and truth, accepting them as judges do when fulfilling the law.'[36]

Other iconographic changes evolved in the late-14th century and many compositions were either reintroduced or redeveloped. The compositions of the Akathist Hymn, the Prayer of John Chrysostom and the Heavenly Ladder[37] became frequent. Moreover, there was an increase in the number of images representing monks, hermits and stylites, as well as images of other followers of the hesychast tradition.

New objects of art emerged in the 14th century showing images of prominent saints, such as John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Athanasius the Great. An image of Athanasius at the Church of the Archangel Gabriel in Lesnovo (1341–1348),[38] accompanied by an angel, the personification of divine wisdom, is an important exemplar of this trend, as noted by Velmans. The most interesting detail is the head of the saint touching the angel's halo, suggesting the saint's participation in divine energies. The presence of this creation within the church stems from the desire to provide a visual narrative

34 Palamas defined Wisdom as an attribute of God common to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, through which God created the universe. In addition, he only approved signs that Old Testament prophets used as symbols for depicting higher realities, such as the Scythe of Zechariah (Zech. V, 1–2) and the Axe of Ezekiel (Ezek. IX, 1–2); reference to the image of the Divine Wisdom has been found in several Palamite texts (Meyendorff, 'Spiritual Trends in Byzantium in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries', in P. Underwood (ed.), *Kariye Dzami* (Princeton 1975) 103–106).

35 Dimitrieva, 'Rospisi Hrama Spasha Preobrazenija', 489–497, 495.

36 H.R. Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Second Series of Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 14 (1956) http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.txt (accessed 20/02/2012).

37 E. Miner, 'The Monastic Psalter of the Walters Art Gallery', in Weitzmann et al (ed.), *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend*, (Princeton 1955) 2.32.–53; A. Cutler, 'The Marginal Psalter in the Walters Art Gallery: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Walters Art Gallery*, vol. 35 (1977).

38 G. Millet & T. Velmans, *La Peinture du Moyen Age en Yougoslavie: Serbie, Macédoine et Monténégro*, vol. 4 (Paris 1969) 49.

of a Palamite doctrine, the topic of the wisdom of God. The placement of this representation on the spandrels of the dome, however, was an unusual feature; it replaces the usual decoration of the dome with images of evangelists.

Also, the proliferation of paintings of healing miracles reflected the hesychast atmosphere of the Palaeologan period. It relates directly to the anthropological teaching of the hesychast, which perceives the body and soul as an integrated whole.[39] The union of the divine and human nature in Christ reveals and recreates authentic humanity, which is in fact, divine humanity. Christ grants the possibility of participation in that which frames his life: true humanity and true divinity in a single hypostasis.[40]

The image of Theotokos (the Mother of God) the Life-Giving Spring (Fig. 9). appeared in the 14th century due to the changes in liturgy and the introduction of a new liturgical office in honour of the Virgin Mary in 1335. It is difficult, however, to ascertain whether hesychasts contributed to this vast outpouring of Marian piety.[41]

Palamas expressed a personal attachment to the Virgin Mary, and he devoted several sermons and hymns to her; he often called the Virgin the source of life.[42] The first images of the Virgin as the source of life appeared in the middle of the 14th century, shortly after new liturgical services were composed in her honour in 1335, following the introduction of the Marian month. In this work, Theotokos assumes a frontal pose and emblem of Christ is visible on her chest. The meaning of the image is clear: salvation and eternal life were available to the Virgin after she willingly became an instrument of the incarnation. A few iconographical variants of the Virgin as the source of life exist and are distinguished not only for their iconographical subtlety, but also for a refined pictorial interpretation of the subject, indicating the high degree of freedom that Byzantine artists used in structuring holy images.[43] It is superfluous to question whether the above-quoted representations exhibit theologically explicable differences. Diversity of poetic formulations, both in poetry and in painting, arises from theological reflection on a topic; it is a result of subtle contemplation about its place, role and meaning within the economy of deliverance. According to Maglovski, this composition (*the Theotokos of the Life-giving Spring)* in art coincided with discussions during the hesychast controversy on the nature of light Three types

39 T.B. Roussanova, 'Painted Messages of Salvation: Monumental Programs of the Subsidiary Spaces of Late Byzantine Monastic Churches in Macedonia', PhD thesis, University of Maryland (2005).

40 J. Breck, 'Reflection on the Problem of Chalcedonian Christology', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 2 (1989).

41 Velman, 'L'Iconographie de la Fontaine de Vie dans la Tradition Byzantine a la fin du Moyen Age', *Synthronon: Bibliotheque des Cahiers Archeologiques*, vol. 2 (Paris 1968) 121.

42 A. Kniazeff, 'La Theotocos dans le Offices du Temps Paschal', *Irenikon*, 1 (1961) 30ff.

43 D. Medakovic, 'Bogorodica Zivonosni Istocnik u Srpskoj Umetnosti', *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, vol. 5 (Belgrade 1958).

of images bear the title the Virgin as the source of life: the Virgin Orant with or without the Christ-child, and with a legend; the Virgin Orant (other, later types as well) with the fountain and a legend; and, finally, the Virgin Orant with Christ painted 'as a fountain' on her chest, without a legend.[44]

Two striking Serbian examples are those of Lesnovo (1349) and Ravanica (1387).[45] They reveal one of the many mystical names for Theotokos, most notably the 'Spring', expanded at Lesnovo to 'the Spring of Life', and later to 'the Life-Giving Spring' in Ravanica. The Lesnovo example constitutes an iconographical minimum which developed further and reached its fullest form in Džefarovic, in a printed icon of 1744.[46] Unlike the Lesnovo type, the one from Ravanica, along with examples from the Afendico, Mystra, from 1313–1322 and the Chora church, Istanbul, 1340–1375, belong to the type where the epithet is the only iconographical connection with the fountain depicted. The example from Ravanica testifies to this, with its contrast of a dark, but starry, night on which an image of Oranta is depicted; the title reads Theotokos, the Life Giving Spring.[47]

The appearance of this figurative scene also testifies to the role of Theotokos in salvation, a representative of those who acquired true vision of light. According to the teaching of Palamas, she has, in fact, brought the light into the world.[48] Besides the two iconographical types which occurred in Serbian and Macedonian painting, there is an older type which has no legend. In the Patriarchate of Peć, there is such example, created in 1330.[49] The image of the *Virgin, the Spring of Life*, from the church of St Cosmas and Damian, Ohrid, which bears the inscription 'not made by hand' dates to 1340. From 1365 on, this Mariological composition found a place in the apses of the churches. The

44 J.D. Maglovski, 'The Virgin as the Fountain of Life: Gems of a Late and Post-Byzantine Motif', *Zbornik Matice Srpske za Likovne Umetnost*, vol. 1, no. 32–33 (2002).

45 Okunev, 'Lesnovo', in P. Lemerle (trans), *L'Art Byzantin Chez les Slaves: Mélanges Théodore Uspenskij*, vol. 1 (Paris 1930) 252, pl. 35; J. Babić, 'Портрет Данила II изнад Улаза у Богородичину Цркву у Пећи', *Данило II и Његово Доба* (Belgrade 1991).

46 T. Starodubcev, 'Богородица Живоносни Источник у Раваници-Питања Порекла Слике' (unpublished paper) accessed 5/06/2011, in situ (Belgrade 2011).

47 G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'Iconographie de l'Evangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe Siècles d'Après les Monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont Athos* (Paris 1960) chpt I, 95; P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami* (New York 1966) 207; V.J. Djurić, *Манастир Раваница и Раванички Живопис 1381–1981: Spomenica o Šestoj Stogodišnjici* (Belgrade 1981) 53–60.

48 The examples from Afendico, Mistra (1313–1322), and the Chora church, Istanbul (1340–1375), belong to a type where the epithet 'spring' is the only iconographical connection with the depicted fountain (Maglenovski, *Theotokos-Zivonosni Istocnik: Dragulj Jedne Kasne i Postvizantiske Teme* (Belgrade 2003) 188–192.

49 M. Tatic-Djuric, 'Image et Message de la Theotokos Sorce de Vie', *Association Internationale d' Etudes du Sud-Est Europeen Buletin*, vol. 19. no. 23, 1–2 (Bucarest 1993). This example, which has no legend, precedes an unpublished example from the Church of Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid, more or less of the same type (Velmans, 'Le role de l' Hesychasm', 192–195).

image of the *Virgin the Spring of Life* from Psaća is one of those paintings placed in apses; it bears no inscription, but it exhibits the iconographical features of the type.[50]

The intellectual climate prevailing in the Church in the middle of the 14th century, and for which the hesychasts were partly responsible, made an impact upon the growth of the composition 'Jesus Christ the King of Kings'. In this figurative scene, Christ wears imperial robes, and he is surrounded by the Virgin and other saints. The main examples are found at the Church of St Athanasius, Kastoria (1384), the Monastery of Theotokos, Trescavec[51] (1342–1343), as well as at the Church of the Transfiguration, Kovalevo (1380),[52] and the Dormition Church, Kremlin. According to Millet, this creation depicts Palamas's interpretation of Psalm 44, 9 and gives a narrative prefiguration of Christ as King and Theotokos as Queen. Similarly, a text written by patriarch Philotheus Kokkinos, a known hesychast proponent, described one of Palamas's dreams in which the saint had a vision of Christ as King surrounded by a group of servants (St Demetrius being one of them).[53] Even though Djurić and Grozdanov disputed this hypothesis, claiming that Palamas could not have had such a public influence before 1347, the influence of hesychasm was widespread before 1347 under the guidance of Gregory of Sinai.[54] Furthermore, Palamas's teachings spread to monastic circles long before he was sent to prison. Finally, it is difficult to ascertain the date of creation of frescoes in the few monasteries containing these themes.[55]

The addition of song VI of the *Akathistos Hymn* at the end of the 13th century informed its representation (Virgin Olympiotissa, Elasson, for example). The purpose of this image was to reject the changes brought by the Western doctrine of *filioque* (Fig. 10). In addition, the aim of this representation was to validate the double nature of Christ (human and divine) as well as to confirm the role of the Virgin Mary in the incarnation. The *Akathist Hymn* at the Trinity Church, Cosia, symbolises Palamas's concepts regarding the role of the Virgin in the history of salvation. She is endorsed with a complex mandorla that is commonly reserved for Christ. While the neighbouring Church of Panagia Kanakaria, Lithrankomi, (6th century) contains precedents for this image, such models are rare.

50 Velmans, 'Fontaine', f. 11.

51 S. Smolčić-Makuljević, 'The Treskavac Monastery in the 15th Century and the Programme of Fresco Painting of the Nave in the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God', *Zbornik Matice Srpske za Likovne Umetnosti*, vol. 37 (2009).

52 D.M. Fiene, 'What is the Appearance of Divine Sophia?', *Slavic Review*, vol. 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1989).

53 A. Xyngopoulos, 'Seint Demetre le Grand duc Apocafkos', *Ellenica*, vol. 15 (Thessalonica 1957).

54 C. Grozdanov, 'Христос Цар, Богородица Царица, Небесните Сили и Светите Воини во Живописот од XIV и XV век во Трескавец', *Културно Наследство* (1985–86) (Skopje 1998).

55 V.J. Djurić, *Византијске Фреске у Југославији* (Belgrade 1974) 218; C. Grozdanov, 'Христос Цар', 7–11.

An interesting example is in the illustrated program of *Stichera for Christmas* (6th century). The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid, from the 13th century, contains a similar figurative scene.[56]

The metaphorical title of the Virgin as '*kandilo svetlonosno*' (light-emitting lamp) used in XI Ikos (part of the hymn) advanced the Mariological cycle in the churches of Decani, Matejce, Koxija as well as in manuscripts of Thomas's Psalter and the Escorial. All these artistic creations contain an image of Theotokos with a candle placed above her head or behind her neck. In some Byzantine lead seals, the body of Theotokos assumes the shape of a candle, and the space around her is painted bright red to symbolise the bright light that comes from 'tongues of fire' (divine energies).[57]

Finally, due to the spread of hesychasm in Byzantium, the pictorial representation of the Eucharist incurred alterations. In principle, the composition commonly known as the Communion of the Apostles, which was usually placed in the apse of the church, was a symbol of the liturgy, celebrated by Christ and the angels in heaven. This was frequent in the middle of the 14th century, when the figure of Christ in this work recalls in a concrete way the parallelism between the heavenly and earthly Church, as in Decani and Matka (1496–1497).[58] Despite the presence of this image in the apse, the dome was decorated with a related composition, the Divine Liturgy. Both compositions refer to the service celebrated in heaven, yet each has a different context: Communion of the Apostles was a liturgical version of the Supper; the Divine Liturgy, on the other hand, illustrated the sacramental rites as acts of God.[59] Many fathers of the Eastern Christian tradition affirmed the parallelism between the two offices (heavenly and earthly liturgy), but Nicolas Cabasilas advanced this doctrine even further.[60]

In terms of symbolism, important novelties were the introduction of complex mandorla, the appearance of eight rays of light, the appearance of the Ό Ὢν ('I am who I am') monogram on the halo of Christ, and the introduction of three-dimensional rainbows. Other significant features were the use of zigzag

56 G. Babic, 'Le Iconographie Constantinopolitane de l'Catiste de la Vierge i Valachie', *Zbornik Radova Vizantiskago Institute* (Belgrade 1973) fig. 13.

57 J. Cotsonis, 'The Virgin with the Tongues of Fire on Byzantine Lead Seals', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 48 (1994).

58 G. Millet & A. Millet, *La Peinture du Moyen Âge en Yougoslavie: Serbie, Macédoine, et Monténégro*, vol. 3 (Paris 1962) fig. 116.

59 F.E. Brightman, 'The Hystorica Mystagogica and Other Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy', *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 9 (1908) 255–256, 390–394.

60 This composition is interesting as it represents figures of officiating prelates accompanying the procession of angels to emphasise their mystical union, the effect being that behind the liturgy, which takes place in the bema, is its model, which takes place in heaven. A. Jevtic, 'Recontre De la Scholastique et de l'Hesychasme dans l'Oeuvre de le Nilus Cabasilas', *L'Art de Thessalonique et des Pays Balkaniques et les Courants Spirituels au XIVe Siècle Recueil des Rapports du IVe Colloque Serbo-Grec 1987: Éditions Spéciales: Balkanološki Institut*, vol. 31 (1987) 149–157; D.P. Miquel, 'L'Experience Sacrementelle selon Nicolas Kabasilas', *Irenikon*, 2 (1965) 130.

patterns on murals, consisting of red and blue bands within a circular band, fanlike highlights on figures, and the use of monochrome colours (red, ochre and dark shades of blue). The painted surfaces were illuminated with white strokes (on the face, neck and hands) representing the rays of the divine light. Given the widespread changes in style and iconography arising in the 14th and 15th centuries, it can be affirmed that iconographic trends during Paleologan era were shaped by mystical spiritual currents, one of them being the Byzantine hesychasm. Detailed analysis of three compositions of the Transfiguration, the Anastasis and the Trinity will provide evidence for this assertion.

Figure 1. ***The Dormition of the Virgin*****, c. 1105–1106, fresco, west door of the nave, Church of Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (Cyprus)**

Figure 2. ***The Dormition of the Virgin***, **c. 1294–1295, fresco, west wall of the nave, painters Eutychios and Michael Astrapas, Church of St Clement Ohridski (Church of the Virgin Peribleptos), Ohrid (Macedonia)**

Figure 3. ***The Dormition of the Virgin***, **c. 1265, fresco, west wall of the nave, Monastery of Sopočani, Raška (Serbia)**

Figure 4. ***The Dormition of Virgin***, **c. 1321, fresco, west wall of the nave, Monastery of Gračanica (Serbia)**

Figure 5. ***Gregory Palamas***, **c. 1371, fresco, eastern wall of the nave, Monastery of Vatopedi, Mt Athos (Greece)**

Figure 6. ***Barlaam and Iosaphat*****, c. 1400, fresco, painter Andrei Rublev, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, Gorodok, Zvenigorod (Russia)**

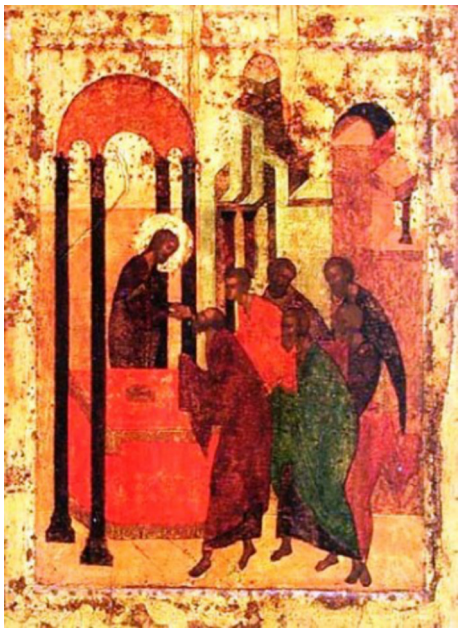

Figure 7. ***The Communion of the Apostles*****, c. 1425–1427, tempera on wood, 87.5 x 67 cm, Cathedral of the Trinity, Trinity-Sergius's Lavra, Sergiev Posad (Russia), inv. no. 3050**

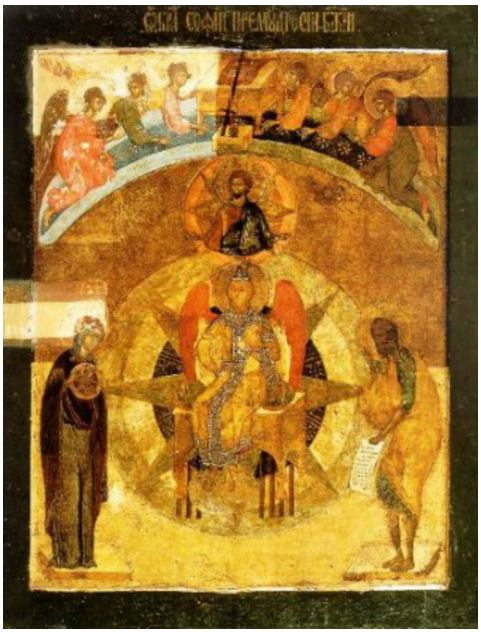

Figure 8. ***The Wisdom of God (Sophia)*****, mid-15th century, tempera on wood, 69 x 54.5 cm, Church of the Annunciation, Kremlin, Moscow (Russia), inv. no. 480 соб**

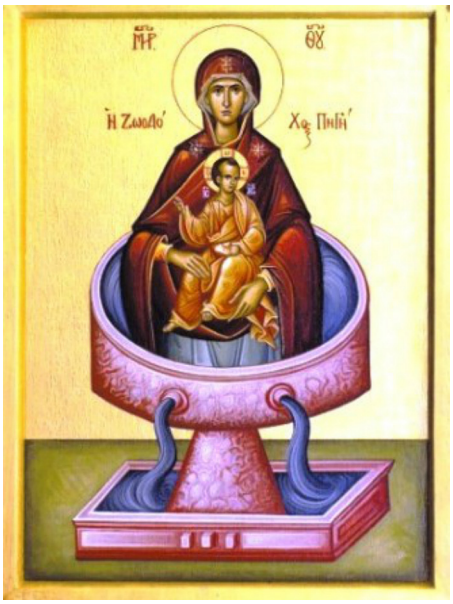

Figure 9. ***The Theotokos of the Life-giving Spring*****, c. 2012, tempera on wood, 69 x 54.5 cm, painter Anita Strezova, private collection (Sydney)**

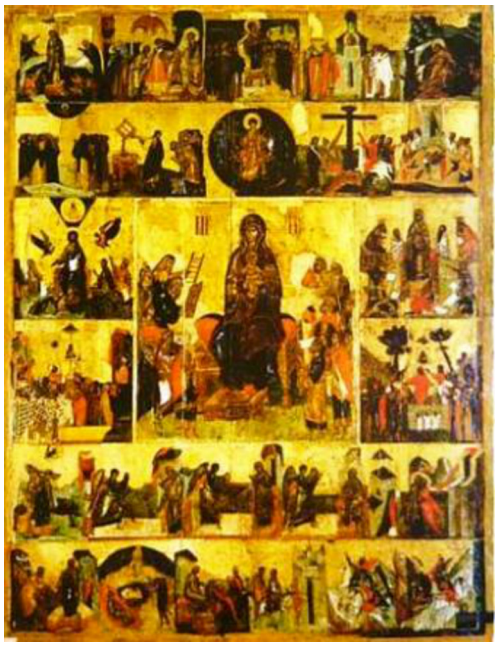

Figure 10. ***The Akathistos Hymn*****, 14th century, tempera on wood, 198 x 153 cm, Cathedral of the Dormition, Kremlin, Moscow (Russia)**

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Contents

would display, all the better to serve an illiterate audience for whom visual signs worked better than verbal clues (Gerstel forthcoming). In traditional art history, style is considered to be an expression of the artist, whereas, at least in Byzantium, it may be more useful to see it as operating in the field of the consumer, nearer, in short, to the domain conventionally described as iconography. The desire to discover artists' identities led originally to the belief that the ligatures (for Demetrios, Theodore, Michael and so on) found on glazed pots of the fourteenth century represented the names of their painters. Now it is understood that these abbreviations are more likely to refer to saints put there at the client's request, or at least bought because these letters evoked the names of favorite holy protectors (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999: 22 with figures 6, 7).

Whether we characterize the impulse that led to these inscriptions as one generated by a social or, more narrowly, a visual community, the driving force lies always in the second part of the term (Cutler 2002). Once in place, that is, in use, a work of art in a notable situation could serve as a call for emulation. Observed by the attentive, its characteristics would be heeded and might become prescriptive. In these cases its use points as much to social practice as to religious devotion.

This is no less true of the style of an image than of other aspects of its being. We have seen that for the Byzantines this style was always one of realism, a theological as much as an aesthetic concept and one that effaced concern with its originality. In the medieval West, on the other hand, this latter category on occasion came to the fore. Interpreting Suger's building activity, Panofsky suggested that the abbot of Saint-Denis was acutely conscious of the stylistic distance between the existing Carolingian basilica and the new or "modern" structures that he added (Panofsky 1979: 36–7). Whether or not Suger was in fact aware of this difference, I know of no parallel attitude expressed by a Byzantine patron or later commentator with regard to a building or other object. More interesting than the precise date of an artifact, the identity of its maker or sponsor, and even its "source" or "model," is the question of why this should be.

FURTHER READING

On makers, see Cutler 1994. Cormack 1999 discusses artists; see also the entry in *ODB*, "Artists." On users, Nelson 1989 and 1999. On viewers and viewing Byzantine art, Nelson 2000.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Limits of Byzantine Art

Antony Eastmond

In 1997 and 2004, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York presented two major exhibitions devoted to the art of the Byzantine world. Following on from the *Age of Spirituality* (New York, 1977; Weitzmann 1977), which had looked at late antiquity, *The Glory of Byzantium* (New York 1997; Evans and Wixom, 1997) was devoted to the Middle Byzantine period (843–1261). The second exhibition, *Byzantium: Faith and Power* (New York, 2004; Evans 2004), concentrated on the empire's final centuries (1261–1453, although the exhibition also looked at the empire's legacy in Europe down to 1557). Both exhibitions have come to be seen as landmarks in the study of Byzantine art, their catalogs as key surveys of the state of knowledge of the art of the empire across these two periods. These catalogs both opened with maps showing the geographical scope of the loans to the exhibitions and the cultural sway of the empire in the periods covered by each exhibition. These maps provide two different ways of conceptualizing the nature of art on the fringes of the Byzantine world, and its relationship to art produced at the heart of the empire.

The two maps bear the same title, *Byzantium and its neighbors*, and both cover approximately the same geographical area, stretching from Spain in the west to Russia in the north, from Iran in the east to Egypt in the south (but extending to Ethiopia in the earlier map). However, they were conceived very differently. That for the *Glory of Byzantium* emblazons "BYZANTIUM" across the center of the map, locating the empire over a swath of territory from the heel of Italy to eastern Anatolia, and surrounds it with a hierarchy of lesser demarcations of space: two areas are marked out in an intermediate-sized font: "Latin West" over western Europe, and "Islam" over the Middle East, and around these, other areas are labeled in a still smaller font: Scandinavia, Bulgaria, and Kievan Rus' to the north, Georgia and Armenia to the east; and Cyprus, Syria, and Egypt to the south. These various labels are difficult to classify. The two larger areas to east and west are blanket terms that are easy to understand, but very hard to define. Both "Latin West" and "Islam" cover a bewildering variety of changing dynasties, states, and fiefdoms, with many languages,

histories, rivalries, and traditions; they are united only by approximate ties of common heritage or religion. The inclusiveness and vagaries of the labels hint at distinct alternative cultural traditions that lie beyond the remit of an exhibition of Byzantine art. The other eight smaller labels are equally complex, lying somewhere between geographical, political, religious, and ethnic signifiers, but their size suggests a dependence on the empire around which they lie. If nothing else, the map demonstrates the difficulties inherent in trying to summarize any relationship between people and geographical space in the historic past.

Perhaps in reaction to the problems posed by the first map, that for the later exhibition, *Byzantium: Faith and Power,* omitted these labels completely; it placed no divisions or other labels between the cities noted on the map, from Granada, London, and Belozersk in the west and north to Ardabil, Shiraz, and Tripoli in the south and east, leaving the reader to estimate the true extent of the empire, and the relationship of these cities to it.

The reasons for these changes in cartographic practice are many. At least in part they were determined by the problems of showing the fluctuating frontiers of the empire on a single map, and the uneasy relationship between the modern idea of nation states and the medieval reality of fuzzy frontiers and dispersed populations. However, it is likely that modern political arguments between nation states about their historic size and relationship to the Byzantine empire also played a part: the label for Armenia in the first map, for example, is placed approximately over the territory of the modern state, although in medieval times its population was spread over a much wider area (compare Hewsen 2001, fig. 1). Moreover, any such map must make decisions about what labels to include or to exclude (why, some pointed out, was Serbia not marked on the earlier map, even though many of its monuments were pinpointed?).

As well as raising important questions about the nature of the Byzantine empire, the two maps also ask us to question what we understand Byzantine art to be. The earlier map, acknowledging the political diversity of the empire, implies a series of distinct ethnic or geographical blocks whose artistic interaction with the Byzantine state at their center could be analyzed (although the centering of the map on "Byzantium," and the employment of varying font sizes already implicitly suggests a hierarchical relationship). The latter map promotes the idea of a Byzantine *oikoumene* (Christian commonwealth) in which barriers are not significant, and implies that the common artistic trends that can be found across the region are more important than the political, ethnic, or other boundaries that divide.

Both maps ask us how we wish to define Byzantine art. Is Byzantine art coterminous with the frontiers of the empire (assuming we can work out where those are at any one time)? Is it art made by Byzantine artists, whether at home or abroad? Or does Byzantine art require a very different definition? Given that the majority of the art that survives is religious, should we define it in theological terms: art produced by those states that formed part of the theological communion of the Orthodox world (this then includes the states of the Balkans, Russia, and Georgia, but suggests a more awkward relationship with the non-Chalcedonian churches of Armenia, Syria, and Coptic Egypt)? Or is it vaguer still: a more embracing concept that includes all

art produced under the general cultural sway of the empire and its religious world view? Of course, as the definition becomes broader, we have to wonder what is left of the term "Byzantine art" that is in any sense meaningful. As we move away from the heartlands of the empire, and in particular away from Constantinople, and look towards the frontiers of the empire, these questions become more pressing: at what point does Byzantine art stop being "Byzantine" and become "Georgian" or "Russian" or "Coptic" instead? Does the use of a different script or language on images with a common iconography mark a clear enough division to exclude these works of art from Byzantium? Or do the various (and varying) common iconographic, stylistic, or functional features of the art produced in all of these regions at different periods tie them in to a common history with Byzantine art?

These questions are important for the ways in which we conceive artistic production in the Byzantine world. Each decision to include or exclude works of art from the canon of Byzantine art changes our overall conception of what Byzantine art is, and of how it can be studied and understood. In what follows I consider some of the consequences for the decisions about inclusion and exclusion that art historians have made on the ways in which Byzantine art has been studied. It is worth stating at the outset that I would argue that we should use as broad a definition of Byzantine art as possible, so as to include all the art produced around the edges of the empire (as well as those made across the widely spread and often divergent provinces within it), but I acknowledge that this has a cost in terms of the coherence of any one narrative of Byzantine art.

Byzantine Art, Nationalism, and Theology

Attempts to study Byzantine art in ways that do not rely on simple (and often simplistic) definitions that center on the geographic frontiers of the empire, or on the identification of Byzantine artists, seem to be more inherently sympathetic to the nature of the empire and its art. Studies that allow for the inclusion of Sicilian or Serbian art, or that of Kievan Rus' or the states of the Caucasus suggest the permeability of all the cultures that surrounded Byzantium. They underline the political, cultural, and spiritual weight that the empire bore throughout its lifetime, and the degree to which it established the artistic agenda that its neighbors followed, adapted, or, more rarely, avoided. It is clear, for example, that if the mosaics set up in the 1040s in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Kiev (Logvin 1971) are viewed alongside those produced at the same time within the empire, as at Nea Mone on Chios (Mouriki 1985), then the programmatic, iconographic, and stylistic debt of the Kievans to the Byzantines is very apparent. However, working on an assumption that all the neighbors of the empire shared essential artistic principles raises a different set of issues that need to be considered. These are most apparent in each neighbor's own tradition of art historical scholarship, which often seeks to emphasize the differences between Byzantine and locally produced art. Sometimes this is determined by a nationalistic agenda: attempts to use the art of the past to promote a distinct national present. Given that most of the Christian neighbors of the empire are in ex-communist or former Soviet states, the historic

legacy of their political situation in the twentieth century is evident. Both under communism and post-independence, there is a clear trend towards identifying difference, whether to replicate the political divide of the Iron Curtain before 1989, or to accentuate the historical roots of the fractures between the Orthodox peoples of the ex-Soviet world after the collapse of the USSR. Armenia, for example, lent to neither of the Metropolitan Museum exhibitions, although they have been very generous donors to foreign exhibitions devoted specifically (and solely) to Armenian art (London, 2001; Paris, 2007; see Nersessian 2001; Durand 2007). And Georgia, which lent to the *Glory of Byzantium*, did not lend to its successor in 2004. We can only speculate about the reasons for these decisions not to lend, as so many factors are involved, varying from museological concerns, including the condition of the objects and the wish lists presented by the exhibition curators, to broader cultural and political issues, such as the Russian attacks on Georgia in August 2008, which prevented loans travelling from Tbilisi to the Royal Academy exhibition *Byzantium 330–1453*, after the completion of the catalog (London, 2008; Cormack and Vassilaki 2008). Nevertheless, decisions not to lend do also fit in with more general political concerns and changes in both Caucasian countries, in which a desire to assert an independent artistic identity that is not dependent on a central Byzantine reference point is evident. In contrast, the generous loans from Serbia to the London exhibition in 2008 suggest a very different desire to be seen to be part of a major European artistic and cultural tradition after years of political isolation.

The absence of any art from Armenia in the two New York exhibitions may also have been influenced by theology. The Armenian Church never signed up to the canons of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held at Chalcedon in 451, and so has not been in communion with the Greek and other Orthodox Churches for more than 1,500 years (although, of course, the Armenians regard their own church as "Orthodox"—see Finneran in this volume). If the Churches are theologically separate, then it becomes a legitimate question to ask whether the art should also be considered separately. This equally concerns the other non-Chalcedonian Churches of the eastern Mediterranean, notably the Syriacs and Copts. Most superficial formal comparisons of Byzantine and Armenian works of art, if placed side by side, suggest to the art historian that there are many common iconographic and other traits that the two Churches' art share, but it is equally possible to argue that the historic antagonism between the Churches, and their different interpretations of the meaning and function of art in worship mean that each can only be satisfactorily studied in isolation from the other. In some cases, it is clear that the theological divide did result in a clear artistic division as well. In the early tenth century, Armenian rulers were politically dominated by the Islamic caliphs in Baghdad rather than their Christian Byzantine neighbors to the west, and this affected the forms of art that were produced, most evident in the Islamic influences visible in the decoration of the church of Aghtamar on an island in Lake Van (now in Eastern Turkey), which was built for the Armenian king Gagik of Vaspurakan (915–21) (Jones 2007). But even at times of greater rapprochement, the Armenians maintained particular local artistic traditions, such as the erection of khatchkars (commemorative stones carved with crosses) that find no comparison in Byzantium (Azarian 1973).

Filling Gaps

To apply the most basic, reductionist interpretation to Byzantium itself, it would be possible to define Byzantine art as, simply, the art produced within the frontiers of the empire, an area that changed enormously over the millennium of the empire. However, this approach, while producing a clearly delimited and defined corpus, would have some important consequences for our understanding of Byzantine art. It would mean that for many periods we would have a considerably reduced array of objects and materials to study. Indeed, for reasons of historical survival it has long been clear that art historians have to look beyond the frontiers of Byzantium to tell the story of the empire and its art. It would now be unthinkable to exclude the mosaics of Sicily or Venice in accounts of the art of the twelfth century (Demus 1948; Demus 1984). Mosaic has long been considered the pre-eminent Byzantine artistic medium, and the monuments around Venice and Palermo constitute the largest, most expensive, and finest ensembles of figural mosaic anywhere in the Mediterranean. On those grounds, these churches appear in all the recent surveys of Byzantine art as a means of demonstrating the nature of monumental mosaic decoration in the twelfth century. If excluded, we would be limited to the mosaics of Daphni and a few other isolated panels and fragments for the history of this crucial century. The inclusion of the Italian mosaics, then, allows for a more continuous narrative of monumental art to be produced; but at what cost? One important danger is that the insertion of these monuments may distort our picture of Byzantine art. This was, after all, art produced outside the political frontiers of the empire, indeed by enemies and rivals of the empire, and so may represent a different direction of development of the art from that of the lost monuments of the empire. How, then, can this art be dealt with? Recent surveys of Byzantine art have produced different solutions. Robin Cormack in his *Byzantine Art* (Cormack 2000: 182) included the Italian monuments by suggesting that they can be seen as a Western "response" to Byzantine art; whereas John Lowden in his *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Lowden 1997: 314) presented them as a "puzzling" adaption of the art of Constantinople. In each case, however, there is an implicit idea that it is possible to see beyond the Venetian or Sicilian mosaics in order to recreate or re-imagine the now lost Byzantine original works of art to which they are seen to respond or adapt. Their inclusion is as intermediaries that allow access to the prototypes (an interesting analogy to the way in which Byzantine icons themselves are seen to function to give access to the original through copies). Such ideas raise many methodological problems about how the "distorting mirror" of the intermediary can be overcome: can we ever be sure that the postulated picture of Byzantine art that emerges from these lavish Italian reflections is a true one?

A similar situation occurs in histories of the thirteenth century, which turn from Italy to Serbia to provide a narrative for the development of monumental art. Now, in the continuing absence of large-scale works from Constantinople, art historical surveys turn to the churches of the newly created Serbian monarchy, such as Studenica (1208), Žiča (1230s) and Sopoćani (1260s) (Djurić 1967). The thriving

Serbian state and the churches its rulers built were only possible because of the collapse of Byzantine political control after the fall of Constantinople to the Fourth Crusade in 1204, and these churches are often presented as the "missing link" between the late Komnenian period and the birth of Palaiologan art at the end of the thirteenth century. Art historians have made a compelling case for tracing the stylistic thread that links the twelfth century to the fourteenth through Serbia; but it is only achieved by viewing the monuments selectively. The architecture of the buildings that contain these paintings owes much more to Romanesque building in Italy than to Byzantium, but this is less often noted. The inclusion of the Serbian churches depends on a divorce between the differing elements that make up the churches as a whole. The relationship to Byzantium is a necessarily selective one.

In all these cases, the "Byzantine" element that has been highlighted is one of style. It centers entirely on the formal appearance of the works of art, the nuances of dress, pose, and gesture, the development of drapery folds, the representations of space, and the continuation of particular iconographic models. In contrast, elements that concern the overall programs of the paintings and the ways in which they fit in to the architecture of the buildings, their iconographic peculiarities, and the functions of art within the buildings, are given less emphasis. In particular, the political uses made of Byzantine art by these different foreign rulers must be minimized. The justification for this approach is that in all these cases it has been argued that the monuments were created by Byzantine artists. Nevertheless, through this categorization of the monuments, historians have chosen to prioritize a particular version of art history, which concentrates on the origins of the iconographies, styles, or artists involved. It is an art history that is more concerned with creation than reception.

It was this approach to art history with its interest in the origins of artists that allowed Otto Demus to proclaim that Monreale, the great cathedral built on the hills above Palermo by William II between 1174 and 1182 is "not so much a Sicilian as a Byzantine monument." (Demus 1948: xix). Thus, the presence of what he concluded to be Greek artists took precedence over the location of the art in a Latin-rite Benedictine abbey-cum-cathedral in a Norman Romanesque basilica, and over its patronage—it was paid for by William II in the same years that he launched waves of attacks on Byzantine coastal territories and set his eyes on the conquest of Constantinople itself. It was also more important than its function: the clergy who worshipped in the cathedral did not share the Orthodox interpretation of the efficacy of images of their Byzantine counterparts. The discussion of all the Italian and Serbian churches mentioned above shares the same distinction between creation on the one hand and function and meaning on the other.

The disjunction exactly parallels a division in the study of art produced within the empire itself. In the 1960s, a series of articles and books (notably Beckwith 1961; Demus 1964) promoted a definition of Byzantine art as "the art of Constantinople." These have had a continuing impact on the study of Byzantine art, in which art produced outside the capital is frequently dismissed as provincial or archaizing, both implicit critiques measured against a metropolitan art seen as progressive (see also Holmes in this volume). This has been most evident in the study of the church known as Tokalı Kilise in Cappadocia, a Byzantine province in central Anatolia, some 500 km

east of Constantinople. This rock-cut church was excavated and painted at the start of the tenth century, but then massively extended and given new paintings in the 930s. The style of the paintings in the two parts of the church is radically different: that in the old church is strongly linear, with bold outlines to the figures, a style used in many other churches in the region; whereas that in the new church employs much more subtle modeling, and its figures, although very tall, are more naturalistically rendered. This style finds its closest comparison in work carried out by highly accomplished manuscript painters, working for senior court officials in the imperial capital. There is a clear disparity between the two parts of the church, and that in the new church has been hailed as rare evidence of "metropolitan" monumental art of the tenth century (Epstein 1986). Such an epithet for the paintings necessarily downplays the iconographic content of the new church's decorative program which remains rooted in local Cappadocian traditions. The emphasis of art historians has firmly been on the stylistic rather than iconographic or other aspects.

It is evident that the historical weight of art historical discourse on Byzantine art has been primarily concerned with the creation of works of art, and with their formal appearance. This derives from an interest in artists, the predominant concern of "mainstream" Western art history from Vasari onwards. This might appear an odd priority in the Byzantine world since we know so little about artists. Very few are named in sources, fewer have left their names on what they created, and none have careers that can be traced (although for a recent attempt to create such a biography, see Cormack 2007: 69–81). Where attempts have been made to identify artists on the basis of stylistic analysis, there have been many disagreements: this is particularly the case for objects made on the edges of the empire, where different communities have co-existed. It has been most apparent in the Crusader kingdoms of the thirteenth century. One icon in the collection of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in Egypt, showing St Sergios and Bakchos, has been variously ascribed by different scholars in the fifty years since it was first published to the Knights Templar (Weitzmann 1966), an Apulian artist working in the Levant (Weitzmann 1984: 148–9), a Cypriot artist (Mouriki 1985–6: 69), a Syrian artist working on Cyprus (Mouriki 1990: 119), a Cilician Armenian artist working for Antioch (Piatnitsky et al. 2000: 252–4), or a Crusader artist working in Acre (New York 2004: 374–5). Art historians have tended to seek the "origins" of the artist as a means of understanding the work of art, rather than consider how these icons could have functioned for the different communities that may have seen them.

Art historians have also substituted patrons for artists, and used them to discover the intentions and meanings of works of art. Thus, for Monreale, art historians have looked to William II to discern the political and dynastic meaning of the cathedral, and to his Cluniac Benedictine monks to understand the theological messages and arrangement of images throughout the building (Dittelbach 2003; Borsook 1990: 51–79). This further problematizes the inclusion of art beyond Byzantium's political frontiers within the canon of Byzantine art, since it places the meaning of the art ever further away from the artists, and ever closer to rulers, aristocrats, and clergymen who did not regard themselves as "Byzantines" or "Romans," even if they sought to usurp Byzantium's political authority.

This raises questions about the whole process of the creation of Byzantine art: how much weight should be placed on patrons, and how much on the artists who actually executed the works? If more emphasis is given to those who commissioned, rather than created, works of art, then the argument in favor of including these monuments as part of the history of Byzantine art must be weakened: the (Byzantine) artists merely execute their (non-Byzantine) masters' commands. Of course, the interaction between patrons and artists is usually more complex than this: artists interpret the commissions they are given and seek to express them through the artistic forms that they have been trained to use. Moreover, if patrons abroad did seek out Byzantine artists and craftsmen, the reasons for that choice must also be taken into consideration.

Portable Art

So far, this discussion has concentrated on monumental art, art in a fixed location. However, a second problem with defining the limits of Byzantine art occurs when we turn to smaller-scale, portable objects. There are a number of groups of small-scale objects for which we have little information about provenance, production, or use. Whole classes of objects can, as a result, be moved in or out of the category of Byzantine art, depending on how art historians choose to classify them. One key case here concerns Middle Byzantine ivories. Of the two hundred or so surviving medieval Byzantine ivories made in the tenth and eleventh centuries and cataloged by Adolf Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1934), about 30 have long been seen as problematic. Although they broadly follow the model of ivories known to have been made in Constantinople, concerns about their style, technique, iconography, and quality have raised doubts about whether they should really be counted as Byzantine works of art at all. This dubious status has been given a geographical expression: it has been argued that they must have been made on the fringes of the empire, with southern Italy proposed as the most likely site; hence they are known as Italo-Byzantine ivories (Keck 1930). Standing outside the mainstream of Byzantium, they are often excluded from studies of Byzantine ivories (Cutler 1994).

The exclusion of these probably Italian ivories runs counter to the inclusion of the Italian monumental mosaics we have already encountered, even though both were made in a similar cultural ambit. Just as the mosaics were included because of their exceptional quality, so the ivories are excluded because of their perceived inadequacies. This has served Byzantine art history in a number of ways: it has promoted a vision of Byzantine ivories as a more homogeneous group (suggesting a simpler narrative for the development of the craft, with workers and patrons all sharing common aesthetic and functional goals), but also as a uniformly high-quality craft. Byzantium emerges as the center for good art, with poorer products consigned to the periphery. Low-quality art has here been physically removed from the heartlands of the empire. To reintegrate such ivories back into the mainstream of consideration would require

a reformulation of our expectations of what Byzantine art is: more diverse and more heterogeneous.

A similar argument has been constructed around the production of Byzantine enamels, with variations in quality being explained in geographical terms. Low-quality enamels are explained either as being made in the provenances of the empire (or in foreign centers such as Georgia), or as being made in Constantinople but destined to be given as diplomatic gifts to unimportant neighbors of the empire (Redford 1990; Wessel 1969: 115–16). Gradations of quality have led to a bewildering variety of distinctions: the twelfth-century Ezstergom reliquary, which surrounds its fragment of the True Cross with enamel scenes from the Passion, has been portrayed as showing an "advanced provinciality of style" (Beckwith 1961: 111).

Recent discussion has sought to move away from the question of provenance to consider art with shared meanings across the Mediterranean (Hoffman 2001) or art produced in multiple locations (Redford 2004). These discussions have sought decisively to move debate on to questions of reception and away from creation.

Conclusion

So far, this essay has tended to concentrate on all the reasons why, perhaps, we should produce a narrow definition of Byzantine art. It has noted the need to consider the local circumstances behind the production of every work of art—that it is more effective to judge Sicilian art in terms of its place in Sicilian society than to see it is a reflection of Byzantine art. Equally, it has noted that attempts to identify the origins of artists, and to use artists as a means to define art, can be a complex and not necessarily helpful way of viewing the works of art produced in the eastern Mediterranean. Despite this, however, I would argue that it is essential that as broad a definition of Byzantine art as possible is employed by art historians, one that includes the empire's non-Chalcedonian and Latin neighbors, and that seeks to integrate art of lower quality, or of provincial origin. Admittedly such a policy works against the production of a single narrative history of Byzantine art, but it allows a much more dynamic vision of the working of art to be produced.

A broader approach allows us to see how central core ideas about the nature and value of art in Orthodox societies could be developed and change in different parts of that wider Orthodox world. This then allows as much emphasis on what 20 years ago would be dismissed as "archaic" or derivative art as on the modern and progressive. Bringing all the outside art in also allows for the art at the center to be better understood; to understand the core values of art in Byzantium, the saints, and media it chose to support, as well as those which it neglected. It is less homogeneous and more dynamic, versatile, and complex.

A wider approach also brings to the fore some of the strengths of Byzantine art. This is most apparent in the fourteenth century, when the different regions of the eastern Mediterranean were more politically divided than ever before. Yet at exactly the same time, they were more closely tied artistically than ever before. The

volumetric, angular Palaiologan style that emerged in Constantinople and the Balkans in the late thirteenth century spread over the following century so that it can be found everywhere from Genoa in the west (Nelson 1985) to monasteries in Georgia in the east (Amiranashvili 1980). In no two places is it exactly the same, but its widespread dissemination speaks to the enormous spiritual power of Byzantine art forms and reveals the real power of the Byzantine *oecumene*. The danger remains in such a globalizing approach of homogenizing all the art and underplaying regional differences. It also smacks of an imperialist, colonialist view of art, in which the outlying regions copy the center, suggesting a one-way route of artistic transmission. Nevertheless, there is much to be gained from considering the flexibility and adaptability of Byzantine art: an attempt to provide visual access to the divine that could be exploited and appreciated by such a diverse range of cultures, political societies and variations of Christian beliefs.

FURTHER READING

It is the recent exhibitions in New York and London that have most effectively sought to explore the relationships betweem the art of Byzantium and that of its neighbors: *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era,* AD *843–1261*, eds. H. C. Evans, and W. D. Wixom (New York, 1997); *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans (New York, 2004); *Byzantium*, eds. R. Cormack and M. Vassilaki (London, 2008). For narrative histories of Byzantine art that exploit the art of the empire's neighbors in different ways, compare the treatments in Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 2000), John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London, 1997) and Thomas F. Mathews, *The Art of Byzantium: between Antiquity and the Renaissance* (London, 1998).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Icons and Iconomachy

Leslie Brubaker

More than the word "Byzantine" itself, "iconoclasm" and the related "iconoclast" are widely encountered in modern English usage: even beer mats celebrate the "iconoclast" antics of the free-thinkers who patronize a well-known brand of lager. More's the pity, then, that the Byzantines themselves rarely used the words: "iconoclast" is occasionally found as a pejorative from the early eighth century onwards, but "iconoclasm," which is a Greek compound meaning "image (icon) breaking (clasm)," is a sixteenth-century invention that has only become firmly attached to the Byzantine image debates since the 1950s (Bremmer 2008: 13–14). What modern scholars call the period of Iconoclasm, the years between c.720 and 843 when the role of religious imagery was debated by members of the Orthodox Church, the Byzantines referred to as iconomachy—the image struggle. As we shall see, their terminology is far more accurate than ours.

The beginnings of Iconomachy

The image debate apparently began in the 720s. We first hear about in three letters of the patriarch Germanos (715–30) concerning two churchmen, Constantine of Nakoleia and Thomas of Klaudioupolis. The letters date to the 720s and, perhaps, the early 730s after Germanos had retired (Ostrogorsky 1930: 238; Speck 1981: 267–81).

In the earliest two letters (Mansi xiii, 100A11–105A3, 105B7–E11; *PG* 98: 156B12–161C5, 161D6–164C10; Stein 1980: 5–30), both concerning the bishop of Nakoleia (a city in Phrygia, roughly 300 km southeast of Constantinople), Germanos expressed his annoyance at Constantine's unexpected behavior. The first letter, addressed to Constantine's superior John, bishop of Synada, treated the issue primarily as a disciplinary case. According to Germanos, Constantine had refused to honor images by performing *proskynesis*, a gesture of suppliance or reverence, in front of them. Constantine apparently reasoned that such honor was due only to God, and

Part 1: Projections

2. Metromania or the Undersides of Painting

Sophie Berrebi

Overhead driveways and their sprawling, spaghetti-like networks have come to exemplify in the collective visual imagination the archetypal motif of late capitalist urban dystopia. The underground railway system, by contrast, speaks of an earlier modernity, one that was born in the industrial age, and developed in the early-twentieth century, producing in that course the now classic dialectic of alienation and progress analyzed by Georg Simmel (1998).

Stepping down into the Parisian metro in the mid-1940s to paint its commuters, the French artist Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) seemingly avoided those themes. Neither was he much concerned, in the sinister years of the Occupation, with any veiled allusion to the underground resistance movements that occasionally used the metro as a site of action. The straight-faced multicolored puppets that appeared in a large painting (*Le Metro*, 1943) and in a series of equally colorful gouaches (1943) were made in the early years of this third and successful attempt to embark on a career as a visual artist. The recurrence of the subject matter in Dubuffet's oeuvre – a series of lithographs on the metro followed in 1949 – bestows it a programmatic quality for the work that followed. Bypassing the more expected associations with modernity, the metro provided the artist with a mundane set filled with everyday characters that suited the artist's claim to avoid high culture and classical beauty and depict instead the 'common man' in his daily routines. If it were only a vehicle to convey this idea of the common man, the underground, in its incarnation of the Paris metro, would be little more than an accidental support to this idea. Yet underground as an idea recurs in Dubuffet's pictorial and verbal work after this initial period, and extends well beyond the subject matter of the metro. His interest in the ground, the soil, the undergrowth as a subject matter in the 1950s reprises this notion as a visual theme. Furthermore, 'underground', can also be used to describe the 'Art Brut' toward which he displayed a sustained interest as a collector and main theorist, after coining the word in the mid-1940s. Likewise, his celebrations of 'anticulture' – in opposition to established high culture – in particular in a lecture given in English in Chicago in 1951 to an audience of American art amateurs, institutional figures, and artists, may be understood as another oblique reference to an idea of a cultural underground.

Thus if the idea proposed by this book is to explore a certain polysemic understanding of the underground as place and idea associated with the urban my-

2.1. Jean Dubuffet. *Métro*, oil on canvas (1943).

2.2. Jean Dubuffet. *Métro*, gouache on paper (1943).

thologies and histories of Amsterdam and Paris, the term also aptly characterizes a recurring set of interests, issues, and themes that Dubuffet developed throughout his extended career. Within his oeuvre the underground, we might say, is both a place and a metaphor, and relates to both apocryphal and factual aspects of his life, work, and ideas. As such the term 'underground' sums up and resonates deeply yet diffusely with his multi-faceted practice. It can be used to define a set of thematic issues as well as technical concerns, and above all, perhaps, it suggests a way of thinking.

The aim of this essay is to examine the term underground as a key to unlock and define Dubuffet's aesthetic and, if not to iron out the many paradoxes that characterize it, at least to identify some kind of convergence in the wide constellation of his concerns as painter, writer, and collector.

Within Dubuffet's oeuvre, which spans six decades from the early and largely fruitless attempts at becoming an artist in the 1920s and 1930s to his death in 1985 after a prolific career, the depictions of the Paris underground from the 1940s constitute only the first evocation of the underground understood literally as an underground network. Soon after, moving away from the urban context, Dubuffet undertakes a series of paintings that evoke more or less abstractly the soil and what exists underneath the ground. This concern recurs in different works that suggest topographic explorations of a given area or, on the contrary, vertical cuts into the ground. In several instances, the term 'underground' appears in titles that use the French equivalent of the term: '*sous-sol*'. *L'âme des sous-sols* (*The Soul of the Underground*) from 1959 exemplifies this interest. The painting suggests – more than it actually depicts – a formless and undefined area of earth under the ground. In such a work, another idea of underground emerges, as the term might be said to refer not only to the subject matter but also to the radical technical approach to painting that is developed by the artist, who spreads and piles up thickly onto the canvas heavy, muddy substances that make the final work oscillate between the two dimensions of painting and the three dimensions of relief, or sculpture.

A sentence by art theorist and historian Hubert Damisch, one of Dubuffet's most subtle exegetes, establishes, suggestively but briefly, a connection between these two very different ideas of what the 'underground' may signify as subject matter and technique. Writing in 1962 what is, in part, a phenomenological critique of Dubuffet, Damisch remarked,

> If Dubuffet does not enjoy working with flat brushstrokes, that is because the observer of the 'dessous de la capitale' (the undersides of Paris) and the geologist that he later became, likes to work within the thickness of the ground – I mean the painting – and to disclose its undersides. (*Fenêtre* 114, author's translation)

Although Damisch does not develop this direct connection any further in his essay, it also appears in the very title of the book in which this text was reprinted, *Fenêtre jaune cadmium ou les dessous de la peinture*. The title of this book, which contains a series of monographic essays on twentieth-century artists, is

2.3. Jean Dubuffet. *L'âme des sous-sols*, silver-paper (1959).

remarkably close to the title of the book compiled by Jean Dubuffet and Jean Paulhan in 1949: *La Métromanie ou les dessous de la capitale*. The heading of my own paper brings together the titles of these two publications in order to take up Damisch's brief – but highly significant – allusion and delve further into questioning the relationship between the *undersides* of Paris and those of painting.

More specifically, my aim is to examine how the idea of underground, in all its semantic variety, can be construed as a term to define Dubuffet's practice. In turn this will shed light on how Dubuffet's work, through its continuous involvement with different kinds of underground, contributes to the definition of this term somewhat more generally in the framework of cultural production in the post-war period.

The 1940s, and in particular what I call the 'metro years' from 1943 to 1949, is a key period to look at in this context. It brackets a period of a few years during which Dubuffet raises in provocative ways the question of the human figure, of the painters' technique and materials, and of culture and its dissidences. How these different streams of interests coalesced in defining a particular form of 'underground thinking', or 'thinking of the underground' – as Andrew Hussey evokes in his chapter – that profoundly orientated and defined his practice of the following decade is what I want to investigate.

The Underneath of Paris

The metro paintings and gouaches from 1943-1945 were created in the midst of Dubuffet's series the *Marionettes de la ville et de la campagne*. The *Marionnettes* were the artist's earliest public statement and consisted of paintings, gouaches, and drawings depicting urban scenes with Parisian buildings and their inhabitants, and country landscapes complete with animals and farmers. Formally, the paintings combined flattened perspective, bright, at time unmixed colors, with coarsely outlined and schematically drawn figures. They exude a general effect that might be described as one of conscious, playful, and elaborate 'de-skilling' by which Dubuffet deliberately went against the subtle color harmonies of an Henri Matisse, and the artful and precise distortions of a Pablo Picasso, to compare him to two veteran modernists who were celebrated by important exhibitions in Paris at the end of the war, at the time Dubuffet encountered his first successes on the Paris art scene. Dubuffet followed up this theme of the metro with a series of gouaches that reprise the characteristics of the large metro painting from 1943, on a smaller scale and in ten scenes. Dubuffet hoped to assemble these scenes into a book but the project, which lingered in the publisher's offices, was ultimately rejected by Gaston Gallimard. Despite this, it caught the attention of Jean Paulhan, a seminal figure of the French literary world and for a long time, until the Occupation, the editor of Gallimard's literary journal, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Paulhan, a collector of contemporary art and occasional critic, had then recently discovered Dubuffet's work. His accolade brought him a certain controversial reputation, along with many acquaintances with writers and a sustained dialogue about literature and art (see Dubuffet 2004).

In this context, Jean Paulhan penned, in 1945, a series of five very short stories destined to accompany the metro gouaches. The text and paintings remained an unpublished project that was revived a few years later when Dubuffet, casting aside the gouaches, drew a series of lithographic prints alongside which he copied out by hand Paulhan's text. Anna Louise Milne has described the whimsical quality and the falsely naïve style of some of Paulhan's writing of the time, and while this certainly applies to this text in *La Métromanie ou les dessous de la capitale*, it equally reflects the character of Dubuffet's images. They depict little groups of figures outlined in Dubuffet's trademark simplified, somewhat childlike style. His characters are shown seated on benches on the train platforms, waiting, clambering into trains, and squeezed into coaches. Complete with felt hats, bow ties, and handbags, the figures closely illustrate Paulhan's text, both in subject matter and in visual impact: the pictures are embedded within the text and drawn with the same thin lines than the handwritten text. Yet while the result suggests, visually, proximity between the two authors, in reality, Dubuffet and Paulhan approached the metro from polarized perspectives.

For Dubuffet, this archetypal urban subject matter had above all a provocative dimension – first of all, in the way in which it played with the conventional notion that painting thrives on light and on representing its effect on the surfaces of things. Depicting an underground space lit with artificial light only made a clear statement about the pedestrian nature Dubuffet wished to confer to his

art. If, furthermore, we read the metro series as invoking, metaphorically, an underground aesthetic, a secretive, dissident art practice removed from the mainstream, there was something paradoxical in taking as a subject matter for this purpose accidental gatherings of average, mainstream people, displaying a broad variety of human types. Grouped together and frozen still for a few minutes between two stops, they presented the artist with ready-made, constantly changing *tableaux vivants* that epitomized everyday life in all its banality and randomness. Yet these were also precisely the types he claimed were his ideal audience. Writing in January 1945 a pre-project for a conference on painting destined to a wide audience, Dubuffet explained: 'I would rather that my paintings amuse and interest the man on the street when he comes out of work, not the fanatic, the connoisseur, but the person who has no particular instruction or disposition' ('Avant-projet' 36, author's translation).

For Jean Paulhan, by contrast, the metro took on graver undertones. His short tales are allusive and metaphorical, evoking the hardship of the war, the dire economic situation of its immediate aftermath (his text is dated 20 June 1945), and the moral crisis of a society that had endured years of Occupation and emerged politically divided. Furthermore, Paulhan's allusion to the Resistance through the voice of one of his characters: '*d'ici trois mois, dit Castille, je devrais me cacher comme sous l'occupation*' ('Within three months, said Castille, I will have to hide myself, as under the Occupation'), recalls more generally the metro's historical as well as symbolic importance as a place of underground contestation of German authority. The metro indeed was the site of one of the first acts of resistance in 1941 when Pierre Georges Fabien, who later gave his name to the metro stop Colonel Fabien, shot dead a German soldier on 21 August at Barbès Rochechouart. Unlike Dubuffet, Paulhan had been an active member of the Resistance and his reference to underground secret action – even though he did not participate in the post-war cult of the Resistance – reads as another subtext in the book's otherwise more fanciful tone.

Differences, however, can be productive, and pursuing this idea of underground as resistance, the metro project can be read as anticipating a double form of underground thinking that marks an early turning point in Dubuffet's aesthetic. This change occurs through the process of translation by which Paulhan reacted to Dubuffet's gouaches of 1943 with a text to which, in return, Dubuffet responded by producing a new set of images, this time lithographs, in 1949. Translation here might imply mutual transformations of each author's ideas, and perhaps a productive misunderstanding by which the metro became something else than the sum of their diverging perspectives.

In 1949 Dubuffet was in a very different place than he had been in 1943. After resuming artistic practice tentatively in 1942 and becoming introduced into some important circles of the Parisian literary world, Dubuffet experienced controversial success with this first two solo exhibitions organized at the René Drouin Gallery on the Place Vendôme. This notoriety helped him in turn to gain a gallery representative in New York by 1947 and through this dealer, Pierre Matisse, a larger set of collectors, which was a relatively rare occurrence for an artist of his generation, but which meant, in this case, that by 1947 the Museum

of Modern Art in New York owned one of his paintings. Dubuffet had also authored a volume of writings on his aesthetic views and artistic practice, which Paulhan helped to collect and publish at Gallimard under the title *Prospectus aux amateurs de tout genre*.

In the period of six years between the metro painting and the book of lithographs, *La Métromanie,* his ideas about art had clearly shifted. The man on the street to whom he wanted to reach out, as he explained in 'Avant-projet d'une conférence populaire sur la peinture' (January 1945), did not warm up much to his work, as the violence of critical reactions to his exhibitions in the mainstream press showed. Within a few years, Dubuffet's attitude changed, a modification that was reflected in both his paintings and his writings. His 'Notes pour les fins lettres' ('Notes for the Well-Lettered'), also from 1945, dealt with broad aesthetic issues but through the more reduced prism of technical issues in painting. Developing a more difficult form of painting toned down to neutrals and thickly layered onto the canvas, coupled with a growing interest in marginalized forms of art production, Dubuffet also began to develop a conception of an art removed both from mainstream culture and from the avant-garde. In an important essay from 1949, he stated: 'True art is always where it is not expected, where nobody thinks of it nor says its name' ('L'Art Brut' 90-1, author's translation). As well as endowing art with a secretive quality, in praising qualities of elusiveness and secrecy, this sentence curiously visualized a process akin to political resistance activities, and evokes the vital constant mutability and secretiveness of resistance movements as during the Second World War.

These six years between 1943 and 1949 also witnessed a shift in Dubuffet's art practice. The metro painting and gouaches of 1943 showed flattened, simplified hieratic figures evocative of medieval stained glass. These gouaches were cited in the opening plates of the lithograph book of 1949 that displays similarities of style and composition. But immediately after, illustrating the first of the four short stories or playlets by Paulhan, Dubuffet shows figures embedded in a network of lines, scratches, and smudges. Entrenched deep in the landscape (the first story takes place in the countryside), the figures appear boxed into a tight, irregular spider-like web of lines and marks. The high horizon line that leaves only a small white strip at the top of the plate tilts the scenery forward to the surface of the page, as if Dubuffet was depicting the ground simultaneously from above and in cross section. In this way, the landscape depicted becomes at the same time a background and an underground. Both the tight enclosure of the figures that presses them into the ground and the sense of dual viewpoint are repeated in several plates that follow, as one story, leading to another, displaces the action from the countryside to the city and its metro. The last illustration located in a rural environment announces literally the descent into the metro by strikingly depicting a figure seen in profile, laying horizontally face down, but less toward the ground than already half immerged into it. The following image extends this visual theme. It shows a male figure standing in front of a map of the metro, stretching out an arm as if to search for his itinerary. Although the figure is depicted in front of the map, the contours of his body subtly merge with the network of metro lines and names of stops, and partly engulf him, making

2.4. Jean Dubuffet. *Adieu vieille terre…* , on page 13 of Jean Paulhan's *La Métromanie ou les dessous de la capitale*. Lithograph on paper, transferred to stone (1949).

2.5. Jean Dubuffet. Plate 3 of Jean Paulhan's *La Métromanie ou les dessous de la capitale*. Lithograph on paper, transferred to stone (1949).

unclear the limit between human figure and map. In a third image that marks the transition into the metro, Dubuffet boldly juxtaposes again two views: a profile view of a figure on top of the stairs leading into the metro, and a view of the staircase and the fence around the entrance to the metro surrounding the figure in a semi-circular shape.

This bringing together of different viewpoints, made by playing with the rules of 'correct' drawing and perspective, occurs repeatedly throughout the book. Hence a few striking plates further on in the book show figures set in an abstracted space made up of irregular hatchings. Barely visible save for their faces and grinning smiles, they seem embedded very deep underground, gesticulating as if trying either to extract themselves from the murky soil or on the contrary to take a regressive pleasure in being stuck into it. The lithographs of the *Métromanie* book depict space in a far more complex way than Dubuffet's earlier representations of the metro did. In the book, the flatness has given way to a newly created depth, which originates in the juxtaposition of viewpoints that disorientate the viewer.

In a text from 1945, Dubuffet had evoked his difficulty in the 1920s and 1930s to find an entry point into painting: '*je cherchais l'entrée*', he wrote ('Plus modeste' 90). With the metro series Dubuffet finds an entrance into more experimental work, stocking up ideas experimented in linear drawing that will later be translated into painting. The metro lithographs are, furthermore, a cipher by which Dubuffet displaces his '*je cherchais l'entrée*' into an '*entrée en matière*' as

2.6. Jean Dubuffet. Plate 8 of Jean Paulhan's *La Métromanie ou les dessous de la capitale*. Lithograph on paper, transferred to stone (1949).

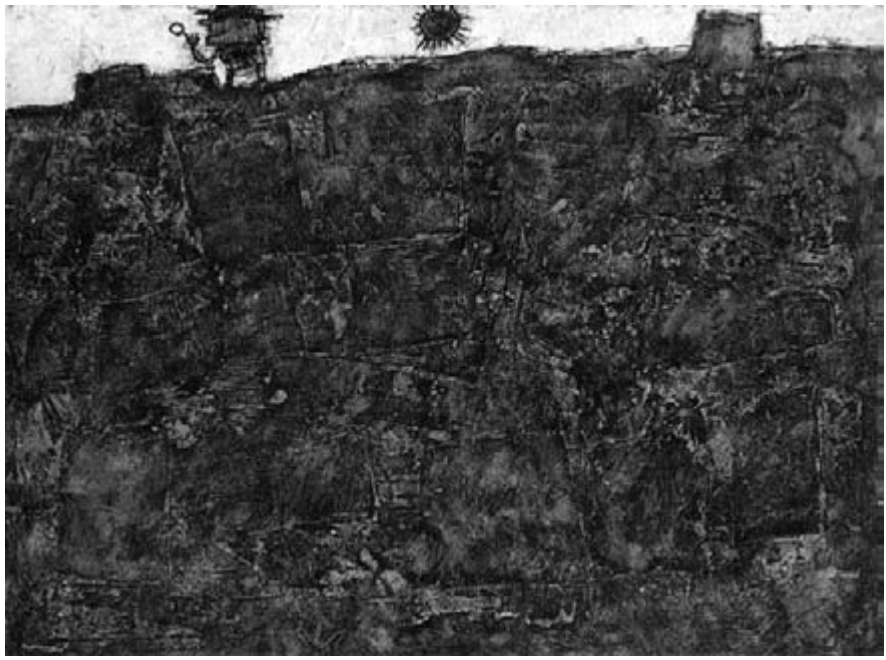
Hubert Damisch, playing with words in an essay from 1985, called his entrance into another form of underground, far more organic and topographic.

The Undersides of Painting

This second form of underground is concerned with the material texture of painting, which, in Dubuffet's works, is achieved through extensive experimentation with a host of fine art and ordinary materials. A series of paintings from 1945-1946, dubbed '*Hautes Pâtes*' by the artist, exemplified his interest in what I want to see as another way of thinking the 'underground'. Those paintings reprised subject matters of his earlier series, *Marionnettes de la ville et de la campagne*, but swapped flat surfaces and primary colors for complex mixes of paint, sand, straw, pebbles, and other organic materials which created thick, dark-colored paintings in which figures were gouged rather than painted. These radical *Hautes Pâtes* paintings prefigured what became, after the metro lithographs of 1949, a main concern in Dubuffet's work for the decade that followed. From 1949 to 1960, the experimental quality of Dubuffet's paintings resides in his increasingly wild explorations of the capacity of painting to absorb extraneous materials. Putties and resins complement the natural materials introduced earlier. Announced by the metro lithographs and their experimental depiction of space, the works from the 1950s combine textural inventiveness with spatial disorientation. Dubuffet explores repeatedly the ground and the underground both in design and texture and through subject matter and technical approach. The last paintings of the decade, from the so-called *Matériologies* series, represent a complete fusion of these different interconnected aspects. A few key works mark the steps of this development toward the *Matériologies*. A 1951 painting, *Le Géologue* (The Geologist) is a key work in this respect, and one that Damisch mentions in the sentence quoted at the start of this essay.

Depicting a figure peering into the ground through a magnifying lens, standing over a vast expanse of indefinable ground, *The Geologist* launched Dubuffet's interest in the depiction of the ground and what is beneath it. The many characters and types riding the metro have now all disappeared but one. This solitary figure is itself gradually absorbed, devoured by the land around it as in another painting of the same series entitled eloquently *Le Voyageur sans boussole* (*The Traveller without a Compass*). If this is not strictly true of all the works of the early 1950s – many of them depict more or less clearly little characters clambering across expanses of land – the change of focus in these works from figure to the space surrounding them defines, what Jean Luc Nancy describes as what constitutes for him, in *Paysage avec dépaysement,* the genre of landscape painting. In a letter written from New York in early 1952, Dubuffet indeed described his increasingly bare, very textured expanses of paint in which occasionally a face or a character peers out, as being produced merely '*par force d'habitude*' ('by the force of habit').

Elaborating on this coming forth of the ground, the place, in landscape painting (hence the stress on *pays*, in *paysage*) Nancy writes: 'If I wanted to push it, I



2.7. Jean Dubuffet. *Le géologue,* oil on canvas (1950).

would say that instead of painting the countryside as a place, he paints it as its underside: what presents itself there is the announcement of what is not there' (114). Although it is somewhat of a facile pun, this idea of *endroit* which is an *envers* suggestively describes the rough stretches of land that are so devoid of any characteristics that they seem to depict not only the ground but also its other side, its underside. These places might be non-places, they might be the underground, the undergrowth or the soil seen from above, and throughout the 1950s, Dubuffet's painting seems to alternate between depicting plane and underground.

The surfaces of his paintings in the early 1950s, particularly from the *Paysage du mental* series, are indeed most often not only piled up (as they were in the *Hautes Pâtes* of the 1940s) but also filled with craters and recesses created by shrinking resins. When they are not as thick as these, in the *Pâtes battues* (*Beaten Pastes*) series of 1953 and 1954 that followed, the creamy top layer is scratched to reveal an under layer painted in a different way (Damisch *Fenêtre*). A few years later, Dubuffet resorts to another strategy to evoke the interplay between underground and above the ground. This consists, in his so-called *Texturologies*, in superimposing layers of projected speckles of paint of different but similar colors that create optical illusions of depth. The series that closed the decade of the 1950s, the *Matériologies,* present a kind of climax of this depiction of the ground. Completely devoid of figures or lines, these large works by Dubuffet's standards at this time consist in aggregations of natural and artificial materials, including tin foil, resins, and straw. There is no longer any suggestion of view-

point. In fact these are almost three-dimensional objects that evoke iron and copper ore, a chunk or slab that would have been carved out from a layer of the underground.

While these paintings go quite far in exemplifying art as underground, not only through representation, but through what this representation implies as a secretive practice, carried out in resistance against assimilation to prettiness and easy visual consumption – there is no eye candy here – there is another way to read them in terms of underground. Here we go back to Hubert Damisch and his interest in the undersides of painting. For Damisch, this notion goes back to Balzac's best-known novella *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* (*The Unknown Masterpiece*) in which one of the protagonists discovers the painting his master has kept hidden for so long. Peering beneath the mess of paint layers of the failed masterpiece, the viewer calls out: '*il y a une femme la dessous*' ('there is a woman under there'), or behind this, as the plot suggests this is a double entendre. The novella introduces for Damisch a reflection on the importance of the *dessous* or underside or underneath, a term that refers to the traditional secrets of coating and layering of painting in the secrecy of studio practice, as it evokes the more modern 'cuisine' of the painter, that is, the unorthodox experimentations with materials by which artists create their idiosyncratic touch. Delacroix is mentioned in this context, along with Jackson Pollock and, more to our point, Dubuffet.

Dubuffet's exploration of the undersides of painting, his experiments with materials, his way of piling them up thickly on the surface of his canvas or board, his depictions of the ground, and his scratching and gouging of surfaces, further present Damisch with an antithesis of the definition of modernist painting as proposed in mid-twentieth-century New York, by the critic Clement Greenberg. For Greenberg modernist painting defined itself by its particular attention to the medium and its properties: paint as well as the canvas and what he called its 'inherent flatness'. Thinking differently to Greenberg, Pollock, Dubuffet and several other artists, Damisch defines the underground, or, as he calls it, the *dessous*, as an alternative to flatness, and a primary quality of modern art. It is through this attention to the '*dessous*' that the historian gains a new understanding of the way in which artists break with illusionary perspective by delving into the physical properties of painting and exposing its undersides, which are traditionally left secret or hidden. In this idea of underlayer in painting, another interpretation of the underground appears. It becomes a criteria by which modern art can be re-interpreted, against the domination of the visual sense that is predominant in the Greenbergian version of modernism. Stressing the underside therefore means both working against this domination of the visual, against an idea of pure visibility and, as Damisch argues in reference to phenomenology, it also means to conceive of painting as an activity that engages all bodily senses rather than exclusively vision (*Fenêtre* 116-17).

Underground and Avant-Garde

By way of an extended conclusion I want to return to the period of the metro to address a third dimension of the idea of underground. In the title of the book, *La Métromanie ou les dessous de la capitale*, the first word, *métromanie* – translated as 'metromania' in English – is diverted from its usual meaning of an obsession with writing verse. It is meant to signify instead the kind of dizziness that overcomes the obsessive metro rider, the passenger who, having punched his ticket in the morning, spends his entire day criss-crossing the city, riding the metro as a merry-go-round. The manic behavior described by Paulhan in his text hints to another type of obsession, closer in fact to the original meaning of metromania, the compulsion not of writing verse, but of drawing and painting. This type of compulsion, found first in individuals whose works Dubuffet began to collect in Switzerland, prompted by the famous 1922 book by Hans Prinzhorn, *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken*, began to interest him at the same time as he worked on the metro versions, and was shared with Jean Paulhan.

Art Brut (a term translated by Roger Cardinal in 1972 as 'outsider art'), became Dubuffet's version of Prinzhorn's psychopathological art, although, as Dubuffet staunchly claimed, the two were different. Art Brut for Dubuffet referred more specifically to visual productions of people he found living at the margins of society in social or psychological isolation, who had never had training in the visual arts and were in effect sheltered from mainstream culture through a diversity of circumstances such as imprisonment or confinement in a retirement home or an asylum. These were not artists in the cultural, socially acknowledged sense of the term, nor were they psychotics whose graphic productions were studied by psychiatric doctors, as in Prinzhorn's publication. Rather, what Dubuffet found so important in the Art Brut 'artists' he found and identified as such is that they were animated by a compulsion to create, something that Dubuffet believed was absent in what he called 'cultural artists', including in members of the avant-garde. Dubuffet shared this interest in Art Brut with a group of writers that included Paulhan alongside André Breton and Henri-Pierre Roché, and he federated this enthusiasm by creating in 1947 the Foyer de l'Art Brut in order to collect funds and administer the growing collection he was compiling. Paulhan was one of his early companions in this. The pair traveled across Switzerland in 1945 during an early research trip that the writer recounted in a short book, *Guide d'un petit voyage en Suisse*.

While the term 'Art Brut' does in no way apply to Dubuffet's own production as is sometimes wrongly assumed, Art Brut did constitute for him the ideal model of an art driven – as Damisch has put it – by 'inner necessity'. Dubuffet's rhetorical attempts to place himself apart from other art movements, rejecting for instance the label *informel* that came to define the more organic abstract painting of the 1950s, and his efforts to construct himself a very specific, isolated position on the contemporary French art scene testify to this idea of Art Brut as an ideal model for artistic practice

As a secretive, marginal, alternative practice of art, Art Brut constitutes, an epitome of underground thinking. If Dubuffet defined Art Brut as the opposite of

mainstream art (notably in a lecture and essay entitled 'Art brut préféré aux arts culturels', from 1949), Art Brut as a notion may also help shape more generally an influential idea of the underground as a form of aesthetic resistance, following a common meaning of the term in the English language. This of course is anachronistic to some degree: the 1962 edition of the Littré dictionary does not contain the English term 'underground', although a more recent edition from Le Robert does.

In the metro pictures, Dubuffet transformed the political associations of resistance evoked by Jean Paulhan in his text into purely aesthetic ones. This transformation process, which is visible in Dubuffet's writings of the same period, was further developed in the paintings of the 1950s that evoke, in increasingly abstract terms, the underground understood literally as 'what is under the ground'. Along with the *Hautes Pâtes* from the mid-1940s, it is upon these works that Hubert Damisch's theory of the undersides of painting has rested, as a form of aesthetic dissidence in relation to the orthodoxy of flatness in modernist painting. Further, with Art Brut, Dubuffet was able to create and theorize upon a movement that placed itself far beyond the avant-garde, in a sense, as an anti-avant-garde, an ultimate, almost tautological underground, since the authors who where part of it were so estranged from mainstream culture that they were not even aware of being 'artists' or of being in a movement.

Together, these different ways of interpreting the notion of underground take steps into outlining a posture that sought to distance itself from the so called 'historical' avant-garde movements of the 1910s and 1920s of which Dubuffet was a firsthand witness, and sometimes participant in the course of his early artistic experiments in a period he later dubbed his 'prehistory'. In attempting to function *against* the 'historical' avant-garde, Dubuffet's reflection on the underground aims to locate another space of aesthetic contestation, one that he liked to call *anticultural*, as in his lecture 'Anticultural Positions'. This radical re-thinking of the avant-garde and of aesthetic dissent is what made Dubuffet a precious example for some of the artists who, in the 1950s and 1960s, also called in their own terms for an anticultural positioning. His work was hence much admired by some of the artists that formed CoBrA, for its raw visual quality and effort to 'unlearn' drawing. It also served as a model for the early Claes Oldenburg, who translated Dubuffet's idea of anti-culture in the context of the United States and its a-cultural condition (see Berrebi 'Paris Circus'). At the same time however, the source of that aesthetic, in being closely connected to that modern, industrial invention, the '*metropolitain*', remained firmly anchored in a notion of underground that the 1960s avant-garde movements, discussed in other chapters in this book, would transform in a more radical way.

2

Pictures for our time and place: Reflections on painting in a digital age

Melinda Hinkson

Social theorist Zygmunt Bauman puts forward the proposition that 'life is a work of art'. The statement appears glib without Bauman's further qualification: 'Being an individual', he suggests, '(that is, being responsible for your choice of life, your choice among choices, and the consequences of the choices you chose) is not *a matter of choice*, but *a decree of fate'*. Identity, Bauman tells us, needs to be created, just as works of art are created.[1] In the present we are, he suggests, all artists of life. Bauman's reflections on the art of identity-making—which point to certain generalised processes at work in our society more than art creation per se—are confirmed in the observations of other social theorists. Arjun Appadurai argues that with the rise of technological mediation imagination is transformed—it 'has broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth, and ritual and has now become a part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people'; it 'has become a collective social fact'.[2] Sociologist John Thompson writes of the defining ontological challenge that confronts us in the present: to coherently integrate two registers in which we experience others

1 Zygmunt Bauman, *The art of life*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008, pp. 53–4.

2 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 5.

and the world around us—experience we might simply characterise in terms of presence, and the experience of distance that is enabled by technological mediation, in the first instance by the advent of print and generalised print literacy and then progressively by networked computerisation.[3]

Each of these writers is concerned with the way technological mediation brings about a new social landscape in which the onus is on the individual to draw relations of presence and distance into coherent alignment. This 'new' province of subject formation is the 'old' work of artists. As Hans Belting reminds us, the most basic and complex definition of an image is that it makes an absence present.[4] Crucially an image cannot execute its own coming into being. Images are made present by the media that make them tangible and animate them and the bodies that produce and respond to them. Belting's model of image–media–body transcends the presence/absence binary presupposed by the social theorists while continuing to foreground questions of qualitative distinction between differently mediated forms of image. It is a potent model for thinking about relations between persons and images in the present.

In this essay, I briefly consider these issues from the perspective of two quite different locations. The first is the mediated public sphere. The second is the intimate space of painting production. The link between these locations is painting itself, and, more particularly, attitudes to painting, acts of *looking at* paintings and *making* paintings in an era of accelerated technological mediation. Pursuing a nuanced understanding of what might be described as a contemporary cultural attitude to painting, I briefly consider the work of three Canberra-based painters: Micky Allan, Vanessa Barbay and Jude Rae. Significantly, none of these painters is directly engaged with the problem of mediation I have established. All three are committed to painting as a distinctive medium of artistic practice. In looking at their approaches, we nevertheless gain important insights into how technological mediation figures in the cultural practice of painting in the present. We also encounter distinctive

3 John Thompson, *The media and modernity: A social theory of the media*, California, Stanford University Press, 1995. A large and complex literature tracks the social consequences of technological mediation from print literacy through to the digital period. Among others see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991; Walter Ong, *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the world*, London, Methuen, 1982.

4 Hans Belting, *An anthropology of images: Picture, medium, body*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011.

perspectives on the contemporary problematic of imaging identity in general and portraiture in particular. Before turning to consider this work, I want to explore a minor art scandal that erupted in Australia in 2010 to establish a context for thinking about a contemporary cultural attitude to images. Far from being peripheral to the concerns of a book on portraiture in the digital age, I will argue that in tacking between these spaces of looking at and making artworks, we gain insight into the complex interplay between the life history of persons, place and technological mediation that bear upon contemporary creative approaches to imaging identity.

In April 2010, Melbourne artist Sam Leach took out two of Australia's most prestigious art awards—the Archibald Prize for portraiture and the Wynne Prize for Australian Landscape painting. Public outcry followed the revelation that his entry in the Wynne Prize, the painting *Proposal for a Landscaped Cosmos*, was 'a copy' of a work by seventeenth-century Dutch painter Adam Pynacker, held in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. On 14 April 2010, the headline on the front page of *The Australian* screamed 'Double Dutch: Scandal rocks Wynne prize'. Under this headline, the newspaper paired low-resolution images of the two works side-by-side, inviting readers to make their own comparison.

Figure 2.1: Left: *Boatmen moored on a lakeshore*, Adam Pynacker, 1668; Right: *Proposal for landscaped cosmos*, Sam Leach, 2010.

Low resolution scans of these two images were reproduced side by side under the headline, 'Double Dutch: Scandal rocks Wynne painting prize', in *The Australian* and online outlets, 14 April 2010.

Source: Left: Wikimedia commons; Right: courtesy of the artist.

In the days that followed, Australian talkback radio and the blogosphere were alive with commentary on the 'embarrassing' situation. The Art Gallery of NSW was said to be 'a joke'. The judges' insistence that they would have awarded the prize even if they had known the painting was a 'copy' was said to set off the 'old bullshit meter'. The painting was ridiculed not only as a copy but also a 'poor imitation' that one might 'expect to commission in Asia from the … workshops that create these sorts of fakes'. And in perhaps the harshest blow to the artist, his 'mediocrity' should have come as no surprise because, as one commentator revealed, Leach was 'merely a graphic designer'.[5]

Beyond this online chatter, which might be identified as revealing one dimension of a familiar Australian attitude to art, commentary on the Wynne Prize was interesting for what it seemed to reveal about an attitude to *painting*, and more specifically landscape painting. Running through the commentary was a desire to see painting conform to particular expectations. Landscape painting should be unmediated: it should deal with what can be seen; it should be about the 'real' environment. Considerable hostility was directed towards Leach for having depicted a Dutch landscape rather than one that was 'authentically' Australian. While the whole episode might easily be dismissed as a predictable clash between a misguided artist who should have properly attributed his painting and persistent modernist desires among 'the public' for a coherent and knowable subject, I want to suggest that the scandal around Sam Leach's painting can be usefully explored in terms of the interests I have established—particularly for what it reveals about a generalised desire in the present for an authentic art (read: painting) that is independent of the effects of technological mediation and its logic of simulation.

Yves-Alain Bois reminds us that such attitudes to painting and the desire for the integrity of specific media are by no means new and by no means restricted to 'the public'.[6] They emerged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as part of a general 'attempt to free art from its contamination by the forms of exchange produced

5 All quotes are taken from comments posted on Crikey.com, 14 April 2010.

6 See Diarmuid Costello, 'On the very idea of a "specific" medium: Michael Fried and Stanley Cavell on painting and photography as arts', *Critical Inquiry*, no. 34, 2008, pp. 274–312.

by capitalism'.[7] As we approach the present, the urge remains to free art not only from the contaminating effects of the market but from information. Yves-Alain Bois considers the naivety of such longing at a time where 'reproducibility and fetishization have permeated all aspects of life', and indeed have become our '"natural" world'.[8] Given these circumstances, we must shift orientation if we are to identify the substantive work that painting can continue to do. Here Bois invokes Mondrian, for whom painting was,

> a theoretical model that provided concepts and invented procedures that dealt with reality: it is not merely an interpretation of the world, but the plastic manifestation of a certain logic that he found at the root of all the phenomena of life.[9]

It is in this deployment of painting as a distinctive method of working through questions, rather than as a means to an end, that we find a compelling response to glib claims of painting's death in the face of photography and the market.

Two weeks after being awarded the Wynne, Sam Leach made his first public comment, appearing on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Radio National, in a 30-minute conversation with senior journalist Monica Attard. For the first time the artist made public his intentions in relation to the painting entered into the Wynne prize, telling Attard, 'I wanted to make a painting that was very optimistic, actually, about humanity'. Leach continued:

> I wanted to make a painting that was going to be about projecting an idealised landscape into the deep future. That was really the point of it; to say … maybe humans will actually survive, and maybe if we do … technology could be used to do something that's quite beautiful.

Here Leach revealed that his painting dealt with a technological theme:

> SL: [W]hat I really wanted to do was take that … idealised, archaic landscape and just flip the meaning from it … I wanted to take out those things [the figures, the pastoral idyll] the … golden, idealised past and turn the meaning of the painting into something that's about … projecting the idea into the future.

7 Yves-Alain Bois, *Painting at model*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1993, p. 235.
8 Bois, 1993, p. 242.
9 Bois, 1993, p. 240.

MA: So then why didn't you just cite the original work?

SL: You know, having said all of that … the original painting itself is not actually what my work is about. My work is about an idealised future … when you put a painting into a gallery basically you've only … got a small amount of information that you can give the viewer and that is the painting itself and the title … I wanted to make sure my title … gave viewers a guide to the painting.

MA: With all due respect, I mean, the title is not what you look at. What takes the eye is the image, and the image is strikingly similar to the Pynacker.

SL: [I]t's clear that the painting is based on that original painting. But actually the content and meaning of the painting is quite different from the original painting. And … *if you … had the original painting and my painting side by side* you'd see that there are a number of distinct differences really.

MA: *I've seen them reproduced in the media*, and to me, what strikes my eye is the jutting landscape … it almost overrules everything else. So again, I'm surprised to hear you say that, in your mind, that you were creating something distinctly new.

SL: [Y]es, the composition is the same. And I did actually work quite hard to maintain the feel of that original Italianate landscape. If you look at the painting and … you think that landscape is like the original 17th century, well, that's really part of the intention of the work. But really, when people look at a painting, *I think many people at least will look at the detail of the painting and think about how that detail informs the entire work*.[10]

This dialogue is revealing for the profound disconnect it registers between painter and journalist, particularly around concepts of representation and authenticity. What I want to highlight is the way each assumes a contrary position regarding the circumstances under which viewers might engage with the paintings in question. The painter makes it clear he assumes a viewer who sympathises with his intentions and, importantly, who will encounter his picture *in all its detail* in material form, scale, technique and texture. He assumes a viewer with an appreciation for paint, not simply as image, but as material dealt with in particular ways. The journalist expresses

10 *Sunday profile*, ABC Radio National, Friday 30 April 2010, www.abc.net.au/sundayprofile/stories/2886663.htm, accessed 1 March 2016, emphasis added.

a collective desire for an unmediated painting, but simultaneously assumes the viewer's access to these paintings via rescaled digitised images on television or the internet to be unproblematic.[11] The painter assumes people will be physically *in the company of* his pictures. The journalist assumes the integrity of mediated engagement. Crucially, while the mediated environment is an essential element of this interchange, it goes unremarked upon by both.

Why do I dwell upon this relatively mundane controversy? It raises questions about how we interact with images in a digital age; questions about what kind of work we wish particular kinds of pictures to do for us in the present; as well as WJT Mitchell's question about what pictures may want from us,[12] questions about what is at stake in maintaining qualitative distinctions between different kinds of images. In looking to apply an anthropologist's lens to these questions, I move from the abstract space of public debate to some more intimate positions from which to gauge the interactions between persons and images, shifting register to consider how technological mediation figures in the work of three Canberra-based artists, who describe themselves as painters.

I discovered early on in my conversations with painters that the desire for painting to retain some kind of autonomy from the mediated visual cultural environment is by no means restricted to the abstract world of public opinion. Canberra-based painter Micky Allan recalls the Head of the National Gallery of Victoria Art School, John Brack, telling her years after her 1968 graduation that she should have won the final-year travelling scholarship but that she was ruled out of contention by the judges because she had used a photograph to constitute a subject in her submitted work, rather than painting it direct from life.[13]

As this episode implies, Micky has never harboured a desire to keep painting autonomous from photography. Throughout her career she has moved between and combined several media in her practice. Trained as a painter, painting on canvas is her preferred medium of

11 See interview podcast, *Sunday profile*, ABC Radio National, 2 May 2010, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/sundayprofile/sam-leach-wynne-prize-winning-artist/3104550, accessed 4 February 2014.

12 WJT Mitchell, *What do pictures want: The lives and loves of images*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2005.

13 All biographical material and quotations from here on are from interviews with the author, 1 April and 30 April 2010.

expression, but she has also developed a reputation over the past 30 years for work on etched glass and hand-painted photographs. Micky's biography reflects a common, complex interrelationship between personal experience and creative expression. An early and difficult marriage to another art student saw her painting marginalised in favour of his. By the time the marriage broke down, Micky had stopped painting altogether. Over the next 10 years she lived a highly mobile life, moving between Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. While each location gave rise to new artistic projects, canvas painting lay stubbornly dormant.

A move to Sydney in 1978 was precipitated by a personal breakdown. There followed what Micky describes as a 'fabulous period of complete certainty, simplicity, calm'. In Sydney she had her first solo show, which combined drawings, a book of poems and hand-painted photographs, but no paintings.[14] 'I did photographs', recalled Micky, 'because, why, I wanted to paint, but I couldn't do it. It sort of wouldn't flow.' Micky's hand-painted photographs drew considerable interest, but also hostility, in the heady days of photography's attempts to gain recognition as a distinctive form of fine art. Renowned Australian photographer Max Dupain was observed at one of her shows with tears pouring down his cheeks and was heard to declare, 'it should be stamped out!'

But this painter was neither courting controversy nor attempting to make a critical statement regarding the medium of photography. She was drawn to photography by an altogether more personal set of motivations. For Micky, picking up the camera provided an avenue for venturing out into the world, leaving behind the isolation of the studio. Photography, somewhat paradoxically, brought her face to face with other people. 'I wanted that connection and that engagement', she told me, 'even if it was only there in the second of taking the photo.' There were, of course, also qualities of the photographic image that were particularly appealing—'the tonal range you can't get in painting; all that fine grain'. 'And there was something about [this] … this happened, this place exists.' Photography, it seems, as both practice and medium, provided a kind of anchorage, a certainty that Micky needed both socially and artistically. But Micky was repelled

14 Micky Allan, *The Live in Show*, exhibition at Ewing and George Paton Gallery, Sydney, 1978.

by the dark room, and especially its chemicals, and was impatient for the photographs 'to be there', ready for her to paint. Photographs were ultimately a form of technical support. Photographs were there in a time when 'painting seemed too hard'.

Figure 2.2: *Untitled #2*, from the series *Yooralla at twenty past three*, Micky Allan, 1978, watercolour and coloured pencil on silver gelatin print, 27.7 x 35.2 cm.

Source: Courtesy of the artist.

Then followed a conscious decision to 'give up the photography', a challenge as difficult, one might surmise from her way of speaking about it, as giving up booze or cigarettes. Going cold turkey, Micky took herself, along with some travelling companions, to the red centre and camped out for an extended period near Uluru, the iconic heart of Australia. Without a tent and living on meagre rations of potatoes for days on end, Micky and her friends wandered around exploring the landscape during the day and then basking in the 'velvet, embracing, expanse of the night sky'. Like a well-disciplined patient withdrawing from her addiction, Micky did not photograph, paint or draw during this time, although she did make some sketches from the window of the moving car. On her return to Adelaide, the creative urge was back and

Micky produced large charcoal drawings of what she remembered of the desert landforms and 'these imagined strange insects'. She refers to these drawings as some of her favourite pieces. 'They really surprised me, what came out … They were going into that totally imaginative area that is responding to the place.'

Through the 1990s to the present, Micky has produced series upon series of painted work, wrestling with how to figure in paint the complex interaction of the infinite in the everyday, the interplay between material and immaterial experience, the rhythms of nature, crisis and renewal, and echoes between deep sea, night sky and outer realms of the universe. Mesmerising sweeps of paint are in some works interrupted by a raised fractal, a scatter of glitter, cut coloured-glass marbles, highly textured painted strips. These motifs—often depicting entities beyond tangible reach, such as deep-sea creatures and space matter—are regularly constituted with the help of photography and scanning equipment. The photographic images feed Micky's imagination in ways that are critical to her practice.

The energy and conflicting pulls of Micky's imagination are as evident on the walls of her studio as they are in her manner of speaking. When I visit her one day in April 2010 I am taken aback. In place of the usual riotous scene of colour, materials and works competing for her attention, is an austere calm of empty bench tops and blank white walls. Canvases are stacked away, turned so that their backs face into the room. Materials are filed in draws. The studio has been transformed into a blank canvas awaiting its tenant's next move. As I take a seat a flash of blue catches my eye—a pile of underwater photographs from a recent trip to Cape Leveque in Western Australia lies on a table next to Micky's laptop, tickling her interest.

Jude Rae, who painted Micky's portrait (Figure 2.3), speaks about the studio as lab.[15] But in her case it might also be characterised as a critical theory workshop. Her paintings are consciously constructed meditations on the nature of contemporary perception. Yet they are emptied of any obvious content that might draw the viewer's attention to such perceptual processes. Jude's still-lifes are of bottles, cheap vases, plastic containers. Her main aim, as she describes it to me, is 'to neutralise the force of association that those sort[s] of

15 Henceforth all quotations are from interviews with the author, 12 April and 23 April 2010.

objects [still-life objects] carry with them'. She wants to reinvigorate a supposedly exhausted genre via a new set of questions. This process gained further dramatic force with Jude's second series of still-lifes: of fire extinguishers and gas bottles, produced in the wake of 9/11 and the second Gulf War. Her subsequent series of portraits of people with their eyes closed, and then of people engaged in looking at things beyond the reach of the viewer, are similarly a form of genre critique. A particularly striking painting, *Self-portrait (the year my husband left)*, which won the 2008 Portia Geach Memorial Award for portraiture, poses further questions regarding mediation and concealment and the complex encounter of painter and viewer in the work itself.

Jude works with a deep awareness of painting's *lack* of autonomy; particularly how the forms of vision brought to bear on and through paint today are deeply entwined with the wider visual cultural environment. She wants to produce pictures that get us thinking about how we look at things under these conditions. In order to do so, she needs to withdraw from the 'visual chaos' and into her studio, which she characterises as 'like an extension of my psyche'. Here Jude closes the curtains and immerses herself under fluorescent light in the work of painting, with or without the semi-controlled intrusion of the outside world via Radio National playing in the background.

Some months before our conversations in her studio, Jude was asked to produce a nude for an exhibition being mounted by her New Zealand dealer.[16] She was eager to be involved but when she came to confront the task encountered a number of hurdles. The first was the genre itself and its historical baggage. As she put it to me: 'How do you make a painting of a nude without a mythological framework?' The second was confronted in the doing. Jude found that she fell back onto the method of the life class, where, to quote her, 'you just plonk a person in front of you and you paint them'. In this case, the person had to be plonked naked in Jude's studio, which was a very challenging experience. The model turned out to be 'too present' to enable the imaginative process to kick in.

16 *Naked*, on show at Andrew Jensen Gallery, Auckland, 29 April–16 July 2010.

Figure 2.3: *Large interior 173 (Micky)*, Jude Rae, 2005, oil on linen, 180 x 120 cm, winner of the 2005 Portia Geach Memorial Award for portraiture.

Source: Courtesy of the artist.

One day, out of frustration, Jude brought her old Canon camera into the studio and set it up to take some video footage of herself while she danced around naked, striking poses to get a sense of the light, trying to work out how she might use a model in that particular space. From this footage she produced a series of blurred, highly pixilated still images. Looking through them Jude saw not pictures of herself but signs that were graspable in terms of art-historical precedent—one particular image stood out, its qualities seemed to reference paintings by Degas, as well as an ancient sculpture of a boy taking a thorn from his foot.

So what had happened in this process? For Jude the camera became a necessary and highly productive distancing mechanism, an objectifying mechanism. As Belting would have it, this doubly digitised process produced a medium for an image, and in so doing enabled the production of a subject—herself—to which she would not otherwise have had access. The photographic process allowed Jude to distance herself from her own body and the problems of the genre, as well as getting 'around the issue of the model in the studio'. In this seemingly simple, stripped-back charcoal drawing on paper is a paradox enabled by the camera.

Jude's drawing (Figure 2.4) is made by a painter who is consciously aware of the effects of the camera on painting—its 'lack of distortion', 'lack of the problems of drawing', its 'hardness and harshness'. While artists like Gerhardt Richter make paintings that comment directly on the visual possibilities and constraints of photography,[17] Jude's engagement with the medium is more ambivalent. She told me she had a problem with photography intervening in painting 'for a very long time'. 'The guilt that somehow if you use photographs you're somehow cheating the world is still very powerful.' What liberated her was recognising that 'vision is governed by expectation … When you experience that, it's like, what is the difference between working from a photograph and working from a set of expectations?'[18]

17 See Peter Osborne, 'Painting negation: Gerhardt Richter's negatives', *October,* no. 62, 1992, pp. 102–13; also Paul Rabinow, *Marking time: On the anthropology of the contemporary*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 116.

18 Rabinow, 2008, p. 116.

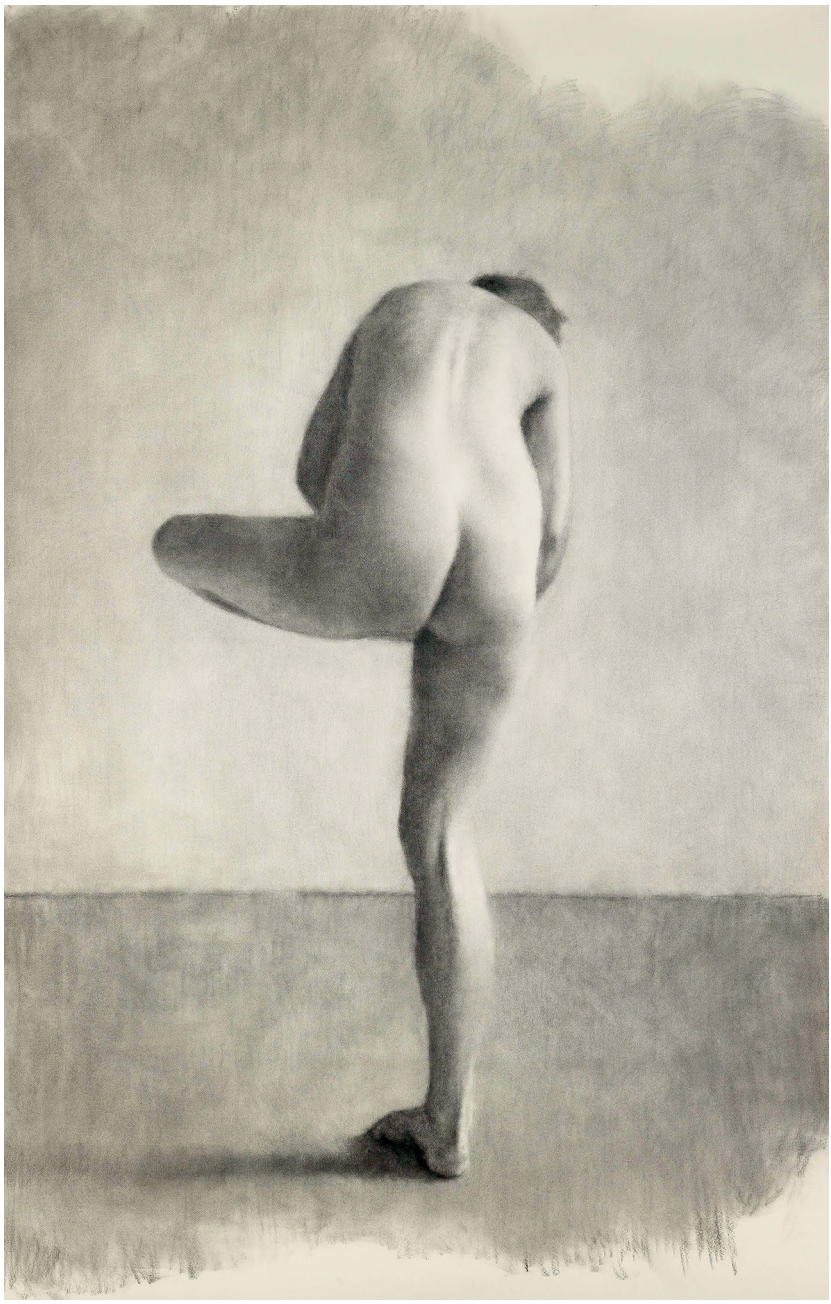


Figure 2.4: *Drawing 101 (naked)*, Jude Rae, 2010, willow charcoal on Fabriano paper, 220 x 140 cm.

Source: Courtesy of the artist.

In the case of the nude project, the pixilated photograph worked as a trigger for the imagination precisely because it was unlike other photographs, which tend to give 'too much information'. Because a photograph presents an absent subject, Jude reflected, it is 'much less overwhelming in all sorts of ways than having the model in front of you ... It … creates a space of imagination. It doesn't close it all down …' 'Working from a photograph', Jude tells me, '… my mind will … often … allow me to reflect in a more dreamlike way on my experience of that person. Which is not possible when they are here in front of me. It can take me quite a long way.' So here we are presented with one kind of instance of the beauty of distance. In slightly different ways both Micky and Jude's use of photography seems to share with Gerhardt Richter a desire to counter (or at least temper) the subjectivist tendencies of painting.[19] Their use of technological mediation is undertaken in support of a thoroughly contemporary culture of painting, not to suggest its end.

A third painter, Vanessa Barbay, confronts the abstract mediation of our time with a poetics of a different register.[20] Vanessa describes herself as trying to 'discover ways of painting animals that express, or at least incorporate in part, a "regime of involvement" as differentiated from that of scientific detachment'. The regime of involvement invoked is starkly devoid of sentimentality. Indeed, Vanessa seeks to transcend the abstract modes of engagement and representation through which such emotions might be carried. She collapses any clear distinction between representation and the real by incorporating into the pictures themselves pigment and material drawn directly from her subjects—dead animals, road kill—and their environments. From a distance, a painting appears as a mottled swirl of dark and lighter shades of brown, an apparent experiment with colour and materiality. Up close, the surprising essence of the work is revealed: echidna spikes jut out from the canvas at 90 degrees, matted hair and sedimented flesh hold the composition in place. 'Echidna and rabbit-skin glue on canvas', as the materials list for Vanessa's *Sorcery painting (autumn echidna)* (Figure 2.5) makes clear: the animal *is* the painting. In this sense, the pictures Vanessa makes are not representations in any conventionally understood sense of the term. These transformational pictures re-enact

19 As observed by Rabinow, 2008, p. 116.

20 This section of the essay draws from Melinda Hinkson, 'Vanessa Barbay: Painting our animal selves', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 259, 2013, p. 88.

and meditate upon something of the human–animal relations that have led to the loss of life of the particular subject with which each work is concerned. Specificity is crucial: place and the materials of particular places loom large in the choices Vanessa makes in the production of each work.

Figure 2.5: *Sorcery painting (autumn echidna)*, Vanessa Barbay, 2011, echidna and rabbit-skin glue on canvas, 84 x 80 cm.
Source: Courtesy of the artist.

Vanessa describes her method as a kind of mortuary practice, one that enables her to collaborate with the deceased animals, to make works that are redemptive acts, transcending the objectification that lies at the heart of classical painting. Her practice involves a carefully managed decomposition process. Dead creatures are placed on canvas,

laid out on a sprung bed base and left to the elements beneath a eucalyptus tree on a Monaro property. After a period of months, the canvases acquire shroud-like impressions of bodies, bits of putrefied flesh, as well as eucalyptus sap, dust, rain, marks left by other animals and faint grid-like impressions of the wire mesh protecting the corpses from predators. Most (but not all) shrouds are then domesticated/deodorised, being steeped in vinegar and infusions of eucalyptus leaves to leach the odour of decomposing flesh.

As Vanessa considers what further creative involvement each shroud asks of her, she gives attention to the particular and local circumstances of each creature's demise. Her choices are also shaped by a wider critical interest in cross-cultural attitudes to the non-human universe, and by an eye attuned to the sacred offerings of nature. *Gift (autumn rosella)*, an ethereal silhouette of a rosella in flight, is the ultimate mystical outcome of the decomposition process, untouched by Vanessa's painting hand except for a coat of rabbit-skin glue. This magical picture has the aura of an ancient religious painting.

Other works are outcomes of the delicate balance between Vanessa's painterly imperative—as the daughter of a taxidermist/collector and two generations of Hungarian artists she has inherited a deeply felt obligation, 'the need to replicate what I see around me'—and her aspiration to transcend that imperative. Where she takes up the paintbrush she does so with a light touch. Wider influences of a childhood closely lived among animals dead and alive, and in association with the Koori community at Vincentia on the NSW South Coast, are evident. Vanessa's more recent research with Kunwinjku painters in Arnhem Land also leaves traces—in the repeated use of *delek*, spiritually charged white pigment; in restrained experiments with cross-hatching; and in her pervasive attention to the possible sacred outcomes of collaborative engagements between humans, other species and the environment. If Vanessa's artworks are portraits, they demand a reinterpretation of that genre for these works foreground an inextricable set of relationships between the deceased subjects of her paintings, the environment in which those subjects lived and died, and the human attitudes implicated in their demise.

While Vanessa's approach to painting enacts a critique of the abstraction that characterises the dominant contemporary attitude to nature, this does not amount to a rejection of technologised methods.

Many of Vanessa's works have been created with the intervention of a computer, scanner or projector. The projected outline of a bird's nest and dead bird are traced with gesso onto canvas prepared with nothing but rabbit-skin glue. The completed work enfolds the projected image as a component of its making, but, like Jude's nude, does not reveal its crucial involvement to the viewer.

To some extent these technical supports are drawn into the process of making paintings under the pressure of the institutional environment in which they are made—the university-based art school.[21] Vanessa's strong moral preference to paint directly from life (or death) is qualified by her concern to meet the requirements of her PhD program, to reveal the processes of making to her examiners, and to meet the 'milestones' and projected outcomes of annual plans. In this respect, her carefully crafted regime of involvement with her subjects and her practice are challenged by the institutional requirement to make paintings more quickly than might otherwise be the case. Projecting images of dark and light onto the canvas so that they might be traced out with efficiency is one kind of compromise made by painters in the art school setting, alongside other constraints related to the cost, and therefore choice of materials, size of canvases and number of paintings made.

* * *

To link the consideration of these painters' work back to the issues with which I began, in describing our vision of the world as 'bifocal', anthropologist John Durham Peters suggests that one of the great ironies of contemporary experience is that the distant, or the global, which we grasp through media images,

> becomes clear through representation, whereas the immediate is subject to the fragmenting effects of our limited experience. Our sense organs, having evolved over the ages to capture immediate experience of the local, find themselves cheated of their prey.[22]

21 See the contributions to Brad Buckley and John Conomos, *Rethinking the contemporary art school*, Nova Scotia, The Press of Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design, 2009, for an examination of the range of issues and pressures brought to bear on university-based art schools in the present.
22 John Durham Peters, 'Seeing bifocally: Media, place, culture', in Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (eds), *Culture, power, place: Explorations in critical anthropology*, Durham and London, Duke, 1997, p. 79.

John Durham Peters seems here to capture something of Jude Rae's experience of being overwhelmed by the presence of the naked model in her studio. We may well observe that studio-based nude life-painting was a common mode of painterly practice of an earlier period. In the digital era, the physically present model may no longer be a familiar or regular element in painterly practice, as painters take inspiration from all manner of objects and phenomena, mediated in all manner of ways. In what Mitchell describes as the latest biocybernetic turn in our relationship with images, the image-worlds created in our time enact the increasingly central and intimate place of technologies in a distinctive way of being human.[23] The subjectivity of persons who identify as painters is as much caught up in these transformations as is the case for the rest of us.

Yet, as a number of writers have observed, paintings continue to demand a different register and temporality of engagement from the fleeting, screen-based images that currently dominate daily experience. TJ Clark and Didier Maleuvre argue that, increasingly, we take the attitude that characterises our interactions with fleeting commodified images into our engagements with other kinds of images, including paintings.[24] This is the logical consequence of late capitalism, which has called out not only a distinctive form of image but, along with it, a distinctive cultural attitude through which persons interact with those images.

It is unsurprising that under these circumstances there may be a strong social demand for painting to stand for what is thought to be natural, or unmediated. While the painting practices considered here demonstrate that painting in the present is technologically mediated activity, these artists continue to privilege what they understand as a *logic of painting*; that is, a method of working-through, a method that only at its conclusion gives rise to 'production'. What is strikingly the case across the work of these three painters is that none wish painting to be free of the possible effects of technological mediation. Their enterprise presupposes a *flow across* art forms and ways of seeing: the possibility of troubling, and indeed *undermining*, binary

23 Mitchell, 2005.

24 TJ Clark, *The sight of death*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006; Didier Maleuvre, 'A plea for silence: Putting art back into the art museum', in Hugh Genoways (ed.), *Museum philosophy for the twenty-first century*, Lanham, MD, Alta Mira Press, 2006.

distinctions such as those between presence and distance, immediacy and abstraction, materiality and intangibility. Given this, there is a kind of double movement in their works—on the one hand, a drawing of attention to thoroughly contemporary phenomena, on the other, a casting of their concerns in more transcendental, universal terms.

In this way, painting practice might be grasped as a form of myth-making. During my discussions with painters I have been regularly reminded of anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' work on myth, which he describes in terms of a universal human need to enact in narrative form the contradictions with which we live.[25] Within the structures of myth, Levi-Strauss identifies elements directed at overcoming those contradictions. Art, he suggests, lies midway between science and myth. Artists construct objects from a limited set of materials and tools, but the objects produced are simultaneously objects of knowledge. Artworks have a special ambiguity in that they are both closed *and* open forms.[26] This kind of interpretation is particularly helpful for thinking about the distinctive place of painting in our digitally dominated contemporary world; painting is both *of* the times and *contrary* to it. Painting may be observed to stand outside of and be opposed to the digital yet, as we have seen, its practice often unfolds in intimate engagement with digital technologies, in much the same ways that painters work within and against the temporal structures and ways of seeing associated with the digital visual culture environment they inhabit.[27] Contemporary painting carries its charge in how it holds this apparent paradox in productive tension. As a medium of the present, painting cannot simply be described in terms of the materials that render its finished form.

The works of these three painters indicate a dilemma that returns us to the Sam Leach case. Viewers of Jude Rae's nude or Vanessa Barbay's animal shrouds or Micky Allan's underwater worlds have no access to the stories and techniques of how these pictures were created. And unlike Leach's painting, their titles give nothing away. Thus I conclude by posing several questions. Does it matter that a charcoal

25 Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural anthropology*, volume 1, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1977.

26 Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The science of the concrete', *The savage mind*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1966.

27 See Melinda Hinkson, 'Australia's Bill Henson scandal: Notes on the new cultural attitude to images', *Visual Studies*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 202–13.

drawing would not exist but for a technologically mediated process of creation? What difference does it make that a painting is composed of the very materiality of its subject? The answer returns the weight of responsibility to the viewer. Just like the journalist interviewing Sam Leach, the viewer of these paintings may not hear or see the message the artist is attempting to convey. It is only when we slow down to look[28] and allow pictures to work on us that they establish themselves as images that speak to us and to our contemporary visual culture environment. In Jude Rae's work, we have a nude that refuses to give up its face and front the gaze of the viewer, a nude that refuses to present itself in the visual language that most commonly addresses the late-capitalist consumer. The work of each of the three painters considered here refuses to conform to conventional expectations of what painting is for. Or are these simply beautiful pictures? You be the judge.

Acknowledgements

Ethnographic research with Micky Allan, Vanessa Barbay and Jude Rae was conducted in 2010. I am most grateful to each of these artists for welcoming me into their studios and for their openness and critical engagement in reflecting upon what it means to be a painter in the digital age.

28 As Maleuvre, 2006, appeals to us to do.

Wassily Kandinsky: the painter of sound and vision

The idea of music appears everywhere in Kandinsky's paintings. He believed shades resonated with each other to produce visual 'chords' and had an influence on the soul. Composer Gerard McBurney on the Russian artist's concertos on canvas

Gerard McBurney

Saturday 24 June 2006 12.03 BST

Playing with the boundaries between the visual and the musical is an old game. The Pythagoreans were probably the first westerners at it when they declared: "The eyes are made for astronomy, the ears for harmony, and these are sister sciences." This relatively simple proposition was taken up by medieval and later sages, who developed it into a vast intellectual undergrowth of arcane and convoluted theories of how music and the mathematical proportions of creation were one and the same.

The Romantics had their own, similar, thoughts: Goethe declared that architecture was "frozen music", and the mid-Victorian über-aesthete Walter Pater breathlessly announced that "all art aspires towards the condition of music". By the late 19th and early 20th century, however, blurring the edges between music and the other arts had become a widespread obsession. The idea fitted with the spirit of an age when artists and commentators from Russia to America were embracing pseudo-religions, dabbling in pseudo-sciences of dreams and symbols, and gabbling with excitement about the prospects for a new synthetic experience of art where the material distinctions between word, image and sound would melt away into a kind of spiritual - though it often seems more sexual - ecstasy that would shake the body and the world. Poems and paintings became music, and music became paintings and poems.

This was when the gaudy flowers of Wassily Kandinsky's paintings burst from their buds. Music - and the idea of music - appears everywhere in Kandinsky's work. Take his generic titles: Compositions, Improvisations, and Impressions. His mighty 10 compositions were created over more than three decades from Composition l in 1907 to Composition X in 1939. The first three were destroyed in the second world war but enough survives in sketches and photographs to give an impression of what they were about and how they fitted into a sequence of paintings that aspires to be, in musical terms, a cycle of "symphonies". The Improvisations are, on the whole, less monumental, more dramatic. One writer compared them to "concertos". Kandinsky himself called them "suddenly created expressions of processes with an inner character". And as for the Impressions, although this may seem less of an obviously musical title, we know that several of them were specifically written in response to the experience of hearing particular pieces of music.

There are also one-off titles by Kandinsky with musical intentions. In Moscow in 1903 he published 122 primitive-looking woodcuts that he called Poems Without Words, clearly having in mind the old musical genre of "songs without words". In 1913 he created a book of linked poems and woodcuts called Klänge - "Sounds". During this same prewar period he wrote several play scripts - more like opera librettos or film scripts - to which he gave titles like The Yellow Sound, The Green Sound and Black and White. Though hardly stageable, these

pieces were intriguing experiments in the synthesising of drama, words, colour and music into

a single seamless whole.

Also at this time Kandinsky wrote his famous theoretical work On the Spiritual in Art. This classic text of early modernism brims with the "spiritual" enthusiasms of the age. But it is also remarkably precise about what Kandinsky considers the practical stuff of his art, and especially about colour, ascribing particular emotional ("spiritual") qualities to each shade, grouping them into families of like and unlike, and proposing complex ways in which contrasted colours could be balanced with one another. As is dazzlingly evident from the art he produced at this period, Kandinsky's fundamental idea of a unifying colour-theory, however outré or whimsical it might appear, played a big part in enabling his astonishing imaginative leap into abstraction.

To support his colour theories, Kandinsky appealed in his manifesto to the evidence of synaesthesia, the scientific name for the condition in which the senses are confused with one another (as when someone hears the ring of a doorbell as tasting of chicken or whatever). He wrote enthusiastically of how "a certain Dresden doctor tells how one of his patients, whom he describes as 'spiritually, unusually highly developed', invariably found that a certain sauce had a 'blue' taste". This touching medical support for the idea that a spiritually superior person will naturally perceive the significance of the kinds of colour connections that he is talking about leads Kandinsky on to a grandiloquent cascade of musical metaphor: "Our hearing of colours is so precise ... Colour is a means of exerting a direct influence upon the soul. Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with its many strings. The artist is the hand that purposely sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key. Thus it is clear that the harmony of colours can only be based upon the principle of purposefully touching the human soul."

The heart of Kandinsky's connection to music, of course, is found not in his titles or theoretical self-justifications but in his works of art. And here it is clear that however arbitrary his scaffolding of theory, he had genuinely arrived at a way of playing on the canvas with the tensions and relationships between pure colours. In an eloquent essay in the catalogue to the Tate Modern's forthcoming exhibition, Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction 1908-1922, the German artist Bruno Haas speaks of the clarity of Kandinsky's painterly "syntax" and describes how Kandinsky's families of colours resonate with one another to produce visual "chords". As if aware that we might not believe him, Haas suggests ways in which we can prove to ourselves the existence of these "chords" by taking a colour print of one of Kandinsky's pictures and holding down our hands over this bit or that to see how the colours (and shapes) change in relation to one another. He quotes a vivid line from Kandinsky describing the experience of painting in this way and once again using a musical metaphor: "I had little thought for houses and trees, drawing coloured lines and blobs on the canvas with my palette knife, and making them sing just as powerfully as I knew how."

Although Kandinsky's hyper-Romantic language of musical and sensual connections is vivid and often original, it was also of its time. At this period many artists and adventurers, often of quite different cultures, talked in generally similar terms. WB Yeats's journals of his early London years touch on some of the same themes, French art and music of the Debussy era is full of associations and theories of this kind, and the Viennese were given an especially fruity prompt in this direction by Freud. It was Vienna that produced for Kandinsky perhaps his most remarkable artistic friendship, with the composer Arnold Schoenberg. In 1911, Kandinsky heard a concert of Schoenberg's music and realised he had found a comrade-in-arms. The two began a long and often stormy friendship involving fierce criticism of one another's works, and the intense sharing of ideas and influences. Schoenberg, who was also a painter and writer, was as deeply involved in the idea of breaking down the barriers between the different arts as Kandinsky. Nowhere is this more vividly seen than in their theatrical experiments of these

years. In 1909, Kandinsky wrote the mysterious text of his proposed music-drama The Yellow Sound (the composer was supposed to be Thomas de Hartmann, who later worked with the "mystic" Gurdjieff). The fifth scene begins: "The stage is gradually saturated with a cold, red light, which slowly grows stronger and equally slowly turns yellow. The giants become visible as do the rocks."

The following year, Schoenberg wrote the libretto for his opera The Lucky Hand. The second scene begins: "In the background a soft blue, sky-like backdrop. Below, left, close to the bright brown earth, a circular cut-out five feet in diameter through which glaring, yellow sunlight spreads over the stage." Both Kandinsky and Schoenberg were seeking to create music dramas in which colour would be perceived on the same level as sound and action. And this before the invention of modern lighting.

There was something else about Kandinsky, however, that separated him from many of his German and French contemporaries. He was a Russian. Born in 1866 in Moscow and brought up there and in the southern city of Odessa on the Black Sea, he was steeped in the habits and passions that characterised so much Russian art from Dostoevsky to modernism.

Take synaesthesia, for example. Dostoevsky touched on this subject when making notes about his experience of migraines. By the late-19th century it had become downright fashionable among Russian composers to claim to suffer, or take pleasure and inspiration, from this condition. Always it was the same brand of synaesthesia, the confusion of sound and colour, even though, as Richard Cytowic - the modern authority on synaesthesia - has pointed out, this is in fact an extremely rare variety. So Rimsky-Korsakov, a composer a generation older than Kandinsky, was convinced that he heard musical keys as colours, while Scriabin, a composer of Kandinsky's own generation, not only declared that he heard keys and chords as colours, but composed his sumptuous orchestral work Prometheus: Poem of Fire in 1909-10 to include a "colour keyboard" illuminating the concert hall with a flood of colours and transporting the meaning of the music into another dimension. To help us, Scriabin wrote out in schematic form his personal vocabulary of music-colour-emotion. Though almost in the manner of Kandinsky, it is of comical clunkiness: C major = The Human Will = Deep Red, G major = Creative Play = Orange, and so on. Unsurprisingly, given such preoccupations, Scriabin, along with Schoenberg, was one of several musical contributors to The Blue Rider, the pioneering magazine that Kandinsky and a group of like-minded artists issued in 1912.

Similar concerns are also found in the work of many of the modernist and experimental writers who flourished in Russia in the very early 20th century. To take one example, between 1899 and 1908, the brilliant novelist Andrey Bely wrote four substantial prose-poems that he called "Symphonies". In them, he unfolded dream-like sequences of symbols, echoes of myth and fragments of real life, held together by nothing much more than the sound and rhythm of the language and vague suggestions of formal signposts borrowed from classical music. In other words, in his symphonies Bely was attempting to endow language with the same supposedly abstract qualities of music that Kandinsky was trying to introduce into painting in his Compositions, Improvisations and Impressions. Interestingly, along with several other Russian colleagues, Kandinsky and Bely fell deeply under the influence of Rudolph Steiner at this time, a fact that significantly affected their creative practice.

Beyond music, writing and painting, the dominant art in Russia at the dawn of the 20th century was theatre. This, after all, was the age not only of Stanislavsky, but of his great pupil, the director Vsevolod Meyerhold. Meyerhold repeatedly spoke of transforming theatre into music, and caused a tremendous stir in 1909 with his epic production of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, in which the colours and shapes of the sets and the movements of the singers were

carefully choreographed in time to the music so that they became, as it were, part of Wagner's score.

This was also the age of Diaghilev and his vastly successful Russian Ballet. The whole point of Diaghilev's epic spectaculars such as The Firebird and The Rite of Spring was the way they brought together Russia's greatest painters, composers, dancers and choreographers to create an overwhelmingly colourful, dramatic and musical experience, which was then self-consciously sold to western audiences as authentically "Russian".

Like so many Russian emigrés, Kandinsky seems never to have doubted his cultural roots and never ceased to speculate about their importance for him. Though he spent much of his life abroad in Germany and latterly in France, he spoke and wrote constantly about Russia, and especially about his native city of Moscow and how its distinctive beauties had nurtured his peculiar way of seeing the world. Images of Russia, usually of an old Russia, surface constantly in his earlier work - troikas, brightly coloured onion domes and the rest - and even in the great paintings of his abstract period we can detect the fertilising influence of Russian icons with their own strangely abstract language of piercing colours and symbolic shapes.

When he visited Moscow in 1910 he wrote to his lover back in Germany: "I am totally in love with Moscow. It is beautiful ... indescribable." When he encountered there his fellow Russian artists and avant-gardists he was "practically delirious". And once back in the west he felt, he said, a "never-waning longing for Moscow" and for "the soil from which I derive my strength".

· Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction is at Tate Modern, London SE1, from until October 1. The Sound of Colour, Kandinsky and Schoenberg 1911-1912, a concert of Schoenberg's Herzgewachse and Pierrot Lunaire (1912) directed by Mike Ashman, will be performed at the Almeida Theatre, London N1, on July 5

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