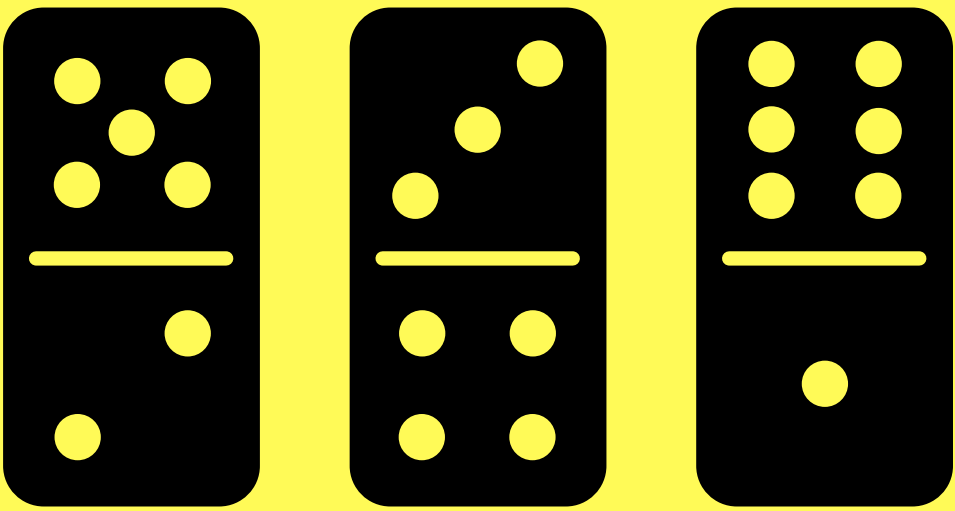

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL

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#3–2024

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ARTICLES – ARTIKEL

ANIMAL-SHAPED MASKS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN SCULPTURE, ARCHITECTURE AND ARMOUR. AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Caroline van Eck

501

MICHAEL SNIJDERS'S COPIOUS COPIES AND THE MECHANISMS OF PRINT

Aaron M. Hyman

567

A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON ALEKSANDR DEINEKA'S DONBAS IMAGES

Marina Gerber

673

WITHIN THE FABRIC OF PUBLIC SPACE. TEXTILE INTERVENTIONS IN CURRENT PROCESSES OF DECOLONIZING MONUMENTS

Leena Crasemann & Anne Röhl

721

REVIEWS – REZENSIONEN

JEFFREY MOSER, *NOMINAL THINGS. BRONZES IN THE MAKING OF MEDIEVAL CHINA*

Phillip Grimberg

763

NANCY SHATZMAN STEINHARDT, *YUAN. CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN A MONGOL EMPIRE*

Denise Patry Leidy

767

YI SONG-MI, *RECORDING STATE RITES IN WORDS AND IMAGES. UIGWE OF JOSEON KOREA*

Burglind Jungmann

773

JOHANNA SPANKE, *PHOTOMURALS. FOTOGRAFISCHE WANDBILDER IN TRANSNATIONALEN AUSHANDLUNGSPROZESSEN ZWISCHEN MEXIKO UND DEN USA*

Angela Lammert

779

ARTICLES
BEITRÄGE

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ABSTRACT

In sixteenth-century Florence a variety of sculptural or architectural ornament was developed in the shape of animal masks, often featuring several animals or parts of different animals in one object, and the presence of eyes half hidden behind the surface mask. Michelangelo's New Sacristy is a main locus for the development of these ornaments, but they soon spread over the city. Although sixteenth-century viewers called them "grotesques", they differ from the two-dimensional variety inspired by the Domus Aurea because they consistently use strange, hybrid animal features that are not part of the repertoire of mythological hybrid beasts such as griffins, commonly used in grotesques inspired by the Roman tradition. They also stand out because they share these animal features with parade and tournament armour of the same period. Their formal characteristics, as well as their similarity to the ornament of contemporary parade armour, little studied until now, raises many questions about their origins, meaning, circumstances of creation and use, and possible impact. These ornaments also share many formal and compositional features with the masks made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America. They share a duplication or triplication of animal shapes, the presence of eyes behind the mask, incrustation and other graphical patterns, and a particular patterning, or spreading, of animal features across the object they cover. The central question this article seeks to address is therefore: is it possible to develop an approach to these masks, both Italian and North American, that can suggest a common ground, in form, function, impact, or sets of beliefs that drove their creation and use? The analysis of Northwestern Coast mask design by Franz Boas, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Philippe Descola will serve, first, as an instrument to better understand the composition of sixteenth-century animal-shaped masks, because they make the viewer aware of aspects of their design that remain under the radar in traditional stylistic or iconographical interpretation. Second, the similarities between these two groups of artefacts will point to shared sets of beliefs in nature as a source of endless transformation, and in the fundamental kinship of humans and animals.

KEYWORDS

Grotesques; Medici Chapel; Michelangelo; Armour; Negroli; Lucretius; Ovid; Piero di Cosimo; Metamorphosis; Northwest Coast masks; Philippe Descola; Animism.

I. Introduction

In sixteenth-century Florence a variety of sculptural or architectural ornament was developed in the shape of animal masks, often featuring several animals or parts of different animals in one object, and the presence of eyes half hidden behind the surface mask. In Michelangelo's New Sacristy for instance a band of masks runs behind the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, where on close inspection eyes turn out to glare at the viewer from the eye sockets of the masks, suggesting a presence that can only be assumed, but not determined [Fig. 1]. The statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici sport very conspicuous grotesque masks, which sometimes echo designs that Michelangelo made at the same time for small objects such as a salt cellar [Fig. 2a, Fig. 2b and Fig. 6]. Contemporaries called them grotesques, and at first sight they may look like a variety of grotesque ornament because they feature hybrid animal shapes and the ambivalent expression associated with grotesques. Actually, they share a number of features that set them apart from the dominant sixteenth-century tradition of two-dimensional ornament largely inspired by the rediscovery of the Domus Aurea.[1] They are

1
This article originates in conversations in front of Florentine statuary with my friends and colleagues Stijn Bussels (Leiden University) and Bram Van Oostveldt (Ghent University). The research for it was done during a stay at the Harvard Centre for Renaissance Studies at Villa I Tatti. I am very grateful to its Director, Alina Payne, for the invitation to work there.
The literature on grotesques is vast. Among recent studies, see Alessandra Zamperini, *Les grotesques* (translated from the Italian by Odile Menegaux), Paris 2007, which gives a survey of pictorial grotesques from antiquity to the nineteenth century; Claire Lapraik Guest, *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance*, Leiden/Boston 2016, 442–592, to date the most sophisticated analysis of the place of grotesques within artistic thought from antiquity to the early modern age; Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Art of Transformation. Grotesques in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Rome 2018, a thematic analysis of Italian Renaissance grotesques and their antecedents in antiquity and the Middle Ages, which locates them in various contexts, both material, such as grottoes, and conceptual, such as ideas about nature, and also brings present-day theories of the grotesque, by Derrida or Deleuze for instance, to the table. Michael Squire's Fantasies so Varied and Bizarre. The Domus Aurea, the Renaissance, and the "Grotesque", in: Emma Buckley and Martin Dinter (eds.), *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, Cambridge/New York 2013 is an important revision of current ideas on the nature and theoretical implications of grotesques, arguing for their meta-pictorial and metapoetical status. Damiano Acciarino (ed.), *Paradigms of Renaissance Grotesques*, Toronto 2022 revisits the condemnation of grotesque figuration by Counter-Reformation theorists, and broadens the scope of varieties covered to include artefacts created in the Americas. For studies that do not restrict themselves to the Renaissance, see Frances S. Connelly, *The Grotesque in Western Art and Culture. The Image at Play*, Cambridge/New York 2012; and her older edited volume *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, Cambridge/New York 2003. Among slightly older studies Frances Barasch's *The Grotesque. A Study in Meanings*, The Hague 1971, is still fundamental, though less frequently cited, because of the wide range of literary, religious and artistic sources she brings to the table. André Chastel, *La grottesque*, Paris 1988, and Philippe Morel, *Les grotesques. Les figures de l'imaginaire dans la peinture italienne de la fin de la Renaissance*, Paris 1997, both remain fundamental discussions of painted grotesques, their development and spread across the Alps, setting many terms of discussion that still persist, such as the relation between grottoes, the Domus Aurea and grotesques, or the issues of fantasy, licence and realism, already introduced by Vitruvius in his condemnation of Pompeian illusionistic painting, and rehearsed ever since. Not much has been written on Michelangelo's grotesque designs. See in particular the article by David Summers, The Archaeology of the Modern Grotesque, in: Connelly, Modern Art and the Grotesque, 20–47, and David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, NJ 1981, 496–497. Recently Robyn L. O'Bryan has argued that the grotesque elements in the New Sacristy should be considered as apotropaeic devices, based on Roman and Etruscan funeral traditions: *The Grotesque in Medici Taste and Patronage*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Virginia 2000. Long before this, André Chastel contributed to a global exhibition of masks, held at the Musée Guimet in 1959–1960, part of a series of shows that aimed to develop a structural analysis, inspired by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, of varieties

animal masks that adorn walls, statues and objects. They consistently use strange, hybrid animal features that are not part of the repertoire of mythological hybrid beasts such as griffins, commonly used in grotesques inspired by the Roman tradition. They also stand out because they share these animal mask ornaments with parade and tournament armour of the same period. Also, where the grotesques stemming from the Domus Aurea generally present a cheerful picture of Nature's endless variety and abundance, organized in a symmetrical composition, these Florentine ornaments are single masks that are often quite uncanny because of the covert presence of eyes.

This corpus has received little scholarly attention so far, despite their striking appearance and often unexpected presence in monuments and on buildings across Florence and Tuscany. Their formal characteristics, as well as their equally unstudied similarity to the ornament of contemporary parade armour, raises many questions about their origins, meaning, circumstances of creation and use, and possible impact. Also, and this may sound quite counter-intuitive, the group of Renaissance artefacts studied here share many formal and compositional features with the masks made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America, particularly the Hajda, Yup'ik and Kwakwaka'wakw, formerly called Kwakiutl. They share a duplication or triplication of animal shapes, the presence of eyes behind the mask, incrustation and other graphical patterns, and a particular patterning, or spreading, of animal features across the object they cover [Fig. 3].

The central question this article seeks to address is therefore: is it possible to develop an approach to these masks, both Italian and North American, that can suggest a common ground, in form, function, impact or sets of beliefs that drove their creation and use? This question touches on the old problem in art history and anthropology posed by the presence of objects that display the same features, but in places and times that are far removed from each other, whereas there exists no clear evidence of the migration of people and objects that could have explained these similarities. In art history it was defined in the 1940s by Erwin Panofsky as pseudomorphism: "The emergence of a form A, morphologically analogous to, or even identical with, a form B, yet entirely unrelated to it from a genetic point of view."[2] Intriguingly this phenomenon was defined in similar terms and at the same time by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his discussion of the similarities between Northwest Coast art and the art of ancient China.[3] This article will not return to the problem of

of artefacts that are made across the world. In the catalogue he is, to my knowledge, the first recent author to discuss the sculpted masks and helmets in the New Sacristy in a global perspective: André Chastel, Les temps modernes. Masque, mascarade, mascaron, in: *Le masque* (exh. cat. Paris, Musée Guimet), Paris 1959, 87–93.

2 Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture*, New York 1964, 26–37.

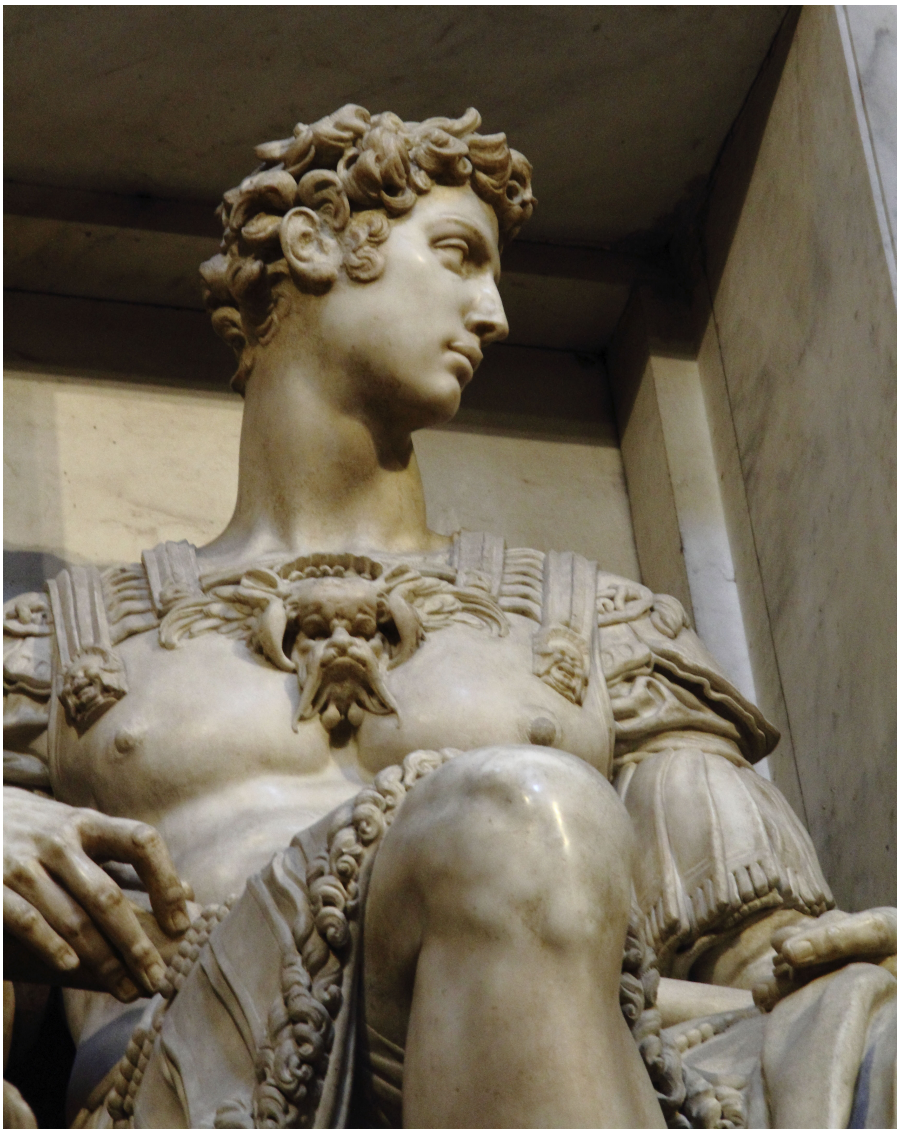
3 Claude Lévi-Strauss, Le dédoublement de la représentation dans les arts de l'Asie et l'Amérique, in: *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris 2003 [1958], 279–321 (first published under



[Fig. 1]
Studio of Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici*, 1526–1534, marble, detail of mask frieze, Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 2a]
Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Statue of Lorenzo de'Medici*, 1524–1534, marble, 168 cm, New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 2b]
Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Statue of Giuliano de'Medici*, 1524–1534, marble, 168 cm, New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 3]
Kwakwaka'wakw people, *Wooden, carved, oval shaped, human transformation mask*, n.d., wood, straw, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).

the occurrence of similar formal features in very different cultures as such. Instead, it will take a close look at one particular variety of such similarities – the animal-shaped mask and the features it shared between sixteenth-century Florence or Milan and more recent cultures of the Northwest Coast, to see whether we can make some progress on two major elements in the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss and the recent work of his successor, Philippe Descola. The former argued that if repeated historical investigation of these similarities does not provide an answer, one should turn towards human psychology and structural analysis.[4] The latter in a sense attempted to provide both kinds of answers, by developing a structure of four ontologies or sets of beliefs about the relation between animals and humans, coupled with very detailed analyses of image-making from Alaska to Florence, and from the remaining prehistoric cultures of North America to the highly literate environment of Renaissance Florence or the Dutch Republic. Both were contributions by anthropologists with a deep interest in, and knowledge of, art. Here I want to see whether, starting from an art-historical perspective, we can advance the understanding of this particular kind of animal-shaped mask ornament by combining art-historical contextualization with anthropological analysis and widening of perspectives.

The first section following this introduction will therefore explore their emergence in the circle of artists working at the New Sacristy, and their spread through Florentine architecture and sculpture (§ 2). Next I will consider similar features in parade armour and their contexts (§ 3). Arrived at this junction I will return to formal analysis to consider the similarities with Northwestern masks in more detail, as the foundation for a different, anthropological approach (§ 4). Here the analyses of Northwestern mask design by Franz Boas, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Philippe Descola will serve, first, as instruments to better understand the composition of sixteenth-century animal-shaped masks, because they make the viewer aware of aspects of their design that remain under the radar in traditional stylistic or iconographical interpretation. Second, the similarities between these two groups of artefacts will point to shared sets of beliefs driving their production. Therefore, in the final section, I will argue that the common ground between these Florentine sixteenth-century ornamental masks and nineteenth-century Northwestern Coast masks lies in a shared set of beliefs in nature as a source of endless transformation, and in the fundamental kinship of humans and animals.

the same title in: *Renaissance. Revue trimestrielle publiée par l'École libre des Hautes Études*, vols. 2 and 3, 1944–1945, 168–186). On this coincidence, see Yves-Alain Bois, On the Uses and Abuses of Look-Alikes, in: *October* 154, 2015, 127–49.

4 Lévi-Strauss, Le dédoublement de la représentation, 289.

II. Sculptural and Architectural Animal-Shaped Masks

The New Sacristy of the Basilica of San Lorenzo was designed by Michelangelo, and built from 1519 to 1524, to house the tombs of the Medici. It was left unfinished after the exile of the family in 1527, the death of the Medici Pope Clement VII, and Michelangelo's departure for Rome in 1534. Only the tombs of Guliano de' Medici, duke of Nemours, and of Lorenzo, duke of Urbino, were executed by Michelangelo; the rest of the highly ornate initial sculptural project was only partly finished, and by other sculptors.[5] Overshadowed by the monumental tombs and revolutionary use of elements of the classical orders, here deployed in an interior, in austere *pietra serena*, the animal-shaped masks scattered around the Chapel have not received much attention in existing scholarship. Yet animal features are already quite prominently displayed in the corridor that leads to the New Sacristy. The two sculpted, free-standing trophies (quite possibly the first early modern three-dimensional monumental version of this motif, until then usually represented in relief) display several grotesque animal features, such as the snake-like sword handle protruding from the corselet of the figure closest to the threshold of the Sacristy [Fig. 4]. These were executed, after Michelangelo had stopped working on the New Sacristy, by Silvio Cosini (1495–after 1547), who was trained by Andrea Ferrucci in Florence, and worked for Michelangelo between 1524 and 1528.[6]

The breastplate and back of the statue of Giuliano de' Medici also sport grotesque masks. The one on the breast has a humanoid face whose front is transformed into a crab flanked by what look like the feather tails of a cock, whereas the one on Giuliano's back, not usually visible to visitors, combines a humanoid face wearing long moustaches with the diadem-like ornament that would later return in the Porta Pia [Fig. 2b].[7] The helmet of Lorenzo de' Medici

5
On the presentation drawing of the original project, see William E. Wallace, Two Presentation Drawings for Michelangelo's Medici Chapel, in: *Master Drawings* 25/3, 1987, 242–260; for the design and building history of the chapel, see Alexander Perrig, Die Konzeption der Wandgrabmäler der Medici-Kapelle, in: *Städel-Jahrbuch*, N.F. 8, 1981, 247–287, here 267–271. In the initial design the sculpted trophy was intended to be placed above the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici. See most recently Horst Bredekamp, *Michelangelo*, Berlin 2022, 408–411. Gino Lorenzi began the process of adding grotesque motifs by adding a ram's head, festoon and shell, which together look like a grotesque face, to the socle of the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici. He was then joined by Silvio Cosini to carve the grinning heads in the capitals (1524–1531). Cosini and Francesco da Sangallo made the rows of masks behind the statues of Morning and Dusk below the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici. See also Dario Donetti, Modelli, produzioni, variazioni. L'organizzazione del lavoro nel cantiere della Sagrestia Nuova, in: Alessandro Nova and Vitale Zanchettin (eds.), *Michelangelo. Arte – materia – lavoro*, Venice 2019, 217–231, and William E. Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo. The Genius as Entrepreneur*, Cambridge/New York 1994, 122–135.

6
On Cosini see most recently the unpublished PhD thesis by Stefano Farinelli, *Monumetal Grotesque. Michelangelism and Ornament in 16th-Century Florence through the Case Studies of Niccolò Tribolo and Silvio Cosini*, PhD thesis, University of Kent 2022; and Marco Campigli, Silvio Cosini e Michelangelo, in: *Nuovi Studi. Rivista di Arte Antica e Moderna* 11[12], 2006 [2007], 85–116, and id., Silvio Cosini e Michelangelo, 2: oltre la Sagrestia Nuova, in: *Nuovi Studi. Rivista di Arte Antica e Moderna* 13[14], 2007[2008], 69–90.

7
Bredekamp, Michelangelo, 409–410.

is covered by a hybrid duplicated animal [Fig. 2a]. He leans his arm on an armrest that ends in a lion's head with the ears of a mouse. Behind the tomb of Giuliano runs a frieze of grinning masks, where on closer inspection eyes look out from behind the eye openings of the masks. The candelabra on the altar, installed after designs by Michelangelo in the eighteenth century, show several animal-shaped elements [Fig. 5]. These are also found in contemporary designs by him for lamps, candelabra, and a salt cellar [Fig. 6].[8]

According to Francisco de Hollanda, Michelangelo considered them as expressions of artistic invention, which despite their irrational character are praised because of their artistry.[9] Contemporaries mentioned them: Vasari noted in his *Life of Michelangelo* how the artist's breaking away from the constraints of Vitruvianism inspired them to design grotesque ornament.[10] Anton Francesco Doni wrote how "grotesques fill the eye"; Cellini would later echo this in his praise of Michelangelo's ornament, which has "such infinite beauty that calls the eyes of men to see, or rather, forces them".[11] The most detailed assessment is by the antiquarian Pirro Ligorio. Ligorio was himself a designer of grotesques and wrote his text in reaction to the fashion for grotesque ornament following the rediscovery of the Domus Aurea in Rome.[12] Like practically all Renaissance writers on grotesques, he follows Vitruvius' rejection of architectural grotesques in Pompeian painting – attenuated columns tottering on stiletto-heeled bases supporting pediments by the whispiest of connecting elements – because such images do not

8
See Charles de Tolnay, *Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo Buonarotti*, Novara 1975–1980, vol. 1, 86–87, cat. nrs 437 and 438; for a design of saliera for the Duke of Urbino, 1537, now in the British Museum, and for a lamp in the shape of a hybrid mask, now in the Fogg Museum, Inv. 1932-152r. This resembles the helmet of Lorenzo. See also vol. 2, 194 for a design, now in the Louvre, of an earlier, much more lavish design for the New Chapel; and see vol. 2, 186 for an alternative design with armour trophies in niches in the walls. See also Cammy Brothers, *Michelangelo. Drawing and the Invention of Architecture*, New Haven, CT/London 2008, 141-142 on these drawings.

9
Francisco de Hollanda, *Vier Gespräche über die Malerei geführt zu Rom 1538. Originaltext mit Übersetzung, Einleitung, Beilagen u. Erläuterungen von Joaquim de Vasconcellos*, Vienna 1899, 105.

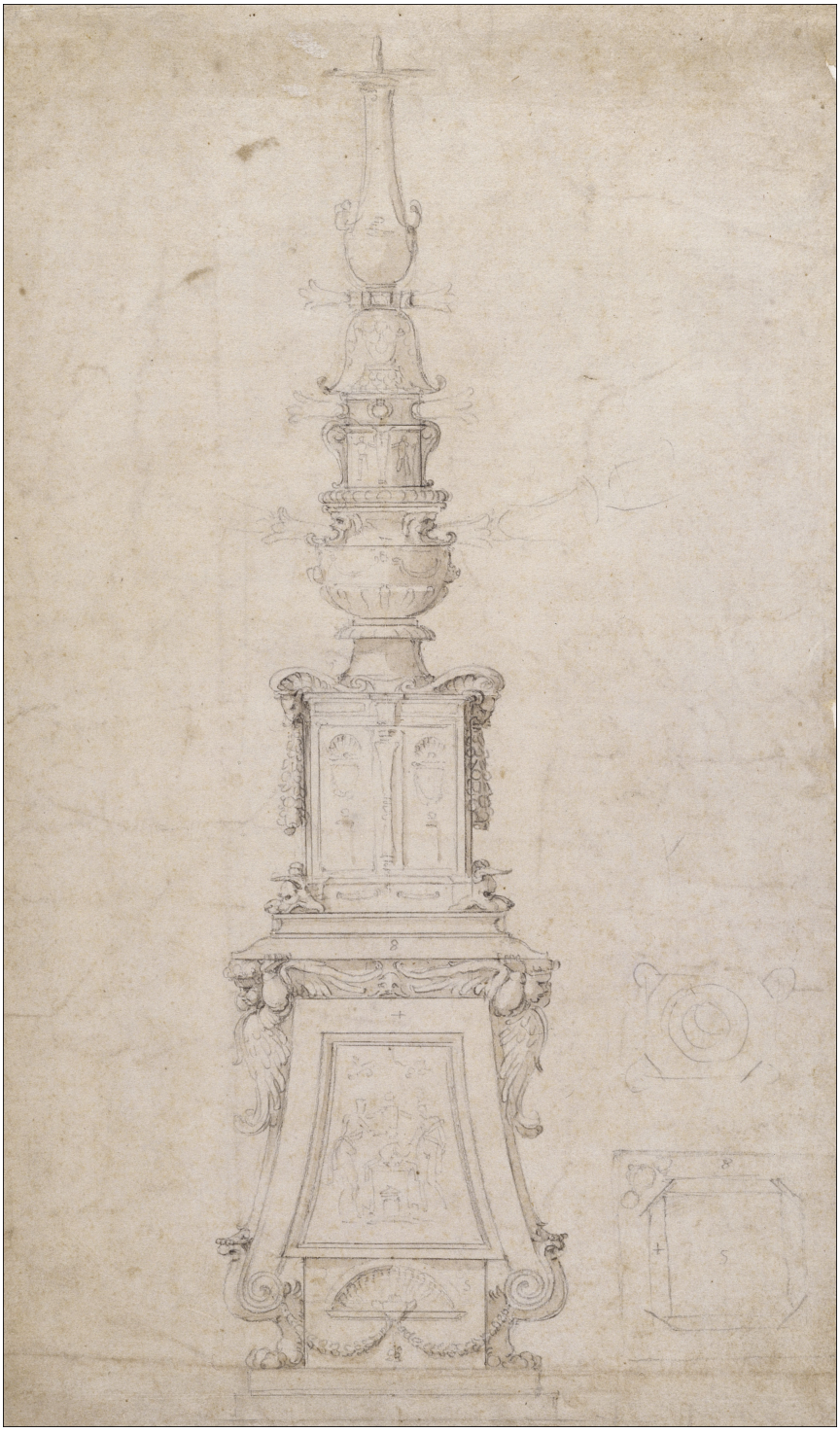
10
Giorgio Vasari, *La Vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568. Curata e commentata da Paola Barocchi*, Milan 1967, 59: "La quale licenzia ha dato grande animo a quelli che hanno veduto il far suo, di mettersi a imitarlo, e nuove fantasie si sono vedute poi alla grottesca, più tosto che a ragione o regola, a'loro ornamento."

11
Anton Francesco Doni, *Disegno*, Venice 1549, 22; Benvenuto Cellini, in: Carlo Cordiè (ed.), *Opere di Baldassare Castiglione, Giovanni Della Casa, Benvenuto Cellini*, Milan/Naples 1960, 1109–1110. See also Summers, Michelangelo and the Language of Art, 171 and 176.

12
E. Mandowsky and C. Mitchell (eds.), *Pirro Ligorio's "Roman Antiquities". The Drawings in MS XIII.B7 in the National Library of Naples*, London 1963. Ligorio's text was reprinted in Nicole Dacos, *La Découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques à la Renaissance*, Leiden 1969, 162–182, after the Turin ms. of the *Libro dell'antichità*, vol. VI, s.v. Grottesche, fols. 151–161, and the Vatican ms. *Libro dell'Antichità*, vol. VII, fols. 118v–129v (Ottob. Lat. 3368).



[Fig. 4]
Silvio Cosini, *Detail of trophy statue for the corridor leading to the Medici Chapel*, ca. 1524–1528, marble, 150 cm, photo: author.



[Fig. 5]
Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Design for a Candelabrum*, 1520–1530, drawing, 43.4 × 25.4 cm, New York, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, photo: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Public Domain.



[Fig. 6]
Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Design for a Salt Cellar*, 1537, black chalk, 217 × 155 mm, London, British Museum, photo: British Museum © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence.

represent reality as it is, and contradict or ignore structural logic.[13] They should therefore not be included in the "maestà dell'architettura", but, observes Ligorio, the ancients, associating them with the broken and interrupted desires of men – "interrotti desiderii negli humani pensieri" – used them to decorate those parts of their houses which were deprived of light, and where night always reigns.[14] Because of this Roman usage Ligorio does not approve of the most famous sixteenth-century creator of architectural grotesques: Michelangelo. He broke with classical use and introduced broken pediments, masques and other grotesque forms, formerly reserved for pagan funerary rites, used on the exterior of buildings, into the interior of the New Sacristy. This was much imitated by his students in sixteenth-century palazzi, and thereby these forms were deprived of their original reason and meaning. In doing so, instead of "sculpting the vessels and instruments of the priesthood into an image of the divine word, [Michelangelo] has made wings of bats, and fantastic mixes of brute and strange forms instead of angels. [...] Thus the architecture of façades and side walls dedicated from old to Pluto has become public and sacred ornaments."[15] After this very articulate condemnation it seems that critical appraisal of these animal-shaped elements died out; at least there is no mention of them in Raphael Rosenberg's recent survey of accounts of the Sacristy.[16]

When we move out of this interior into the streets of Florence, we can see very similar masks in the buildings designed by Michelangelo's students and followers.[17] They display the same hybrid animal features, the same uncanny presence of seeing animal eyes behind the face of an animal that turns out to be a mask, once one notes that there are eyes behind it. They also feature an intensification of their uncanny and threatening expression. The window-frames of the Palazzo Nonfinito by Bernardo Buontalenti host such grotesques, as do the kneeling windows of the Casino Mediceo, also by Buontalenti, and his Palazzo Gerini [Fig. 7a, Fig. 7b, Fig. 7c and Fig. 8].

13
Vitruvius, De architectura libri X, VII.v.

14
Pirro Ligorio, entry on *Grottesche* from his *Libro dell'antichità*, reprinted in Dacos, La Découverte de la Domus Aurea, 16. On Ligorio, see most recently David R. Coffin, *Pirro Ligorio. The Renaissance Artist, Architect, and Antiquarian*, University Park, PA 2005.

15
Pirro Ligorio, entry on *Grottesche*, 175.

16
Raphael Rosenberg, *Beschreibungen und Nachzeichnungen der Skulpturen Michelangelos. Eine Geschichte der Kunstbetrachtung*, Munich/Berlin 2000.

17
On the imitation of Michelangelo by architects such as Buontalenti or Ammanati, see Brothers, Michelangelo, 206–209; Francis Ames-Lewis and Paul Joannides (eds.), *Reactions to the Master*, Aldershot 2003, in particular 114–136; and Francis Ames-Lewis, Artists as Beholders, in: Thomas Frangenberg (ed.), *The Beholder*, Aldershot 2006, 103–122.

In a next stage of what may be called the emancipation of the sculptural grotesque, fountains take the form of a multiplication of grotesque animals. In Pietro Tacca's fountains in the Piazza Santissima Annunziata for instance, one monstruous animal slithers into another [Fig. 9a and Fig. 9b].[18] The last example to show here are the objects below the windows in the Argenteria in the Palazzo Pitti, somewhere between outsized ornament and independent sculpture: in several rooms these are executed in grey stone, always showing dragon wings with talons flanking a grotesque mask at the top and the bottom of the central axis. In the last room, it is executed in much more lavish coloured marble [Fig. 10a and Fig. 10b]. They are probably based on a design for a fountain which was never executed, and which is now attributed to Andrea Ferrucci.[19]

A few things emerge from this tour: these grotesques are very often masks, which on closer inspection reveal a face hidden behind the eye sockets. They are always combinations of animal and human features. Their hybridity, for want of a better word, connects them to teratology or monster theory, which will be discussed in Section III.3. Unlike pictorial, two-dimensional grotesques inspired by the rediscovery of the Domus Aurea, these three-dimensional varieties do not look like a celebration of the infinite variety and metamorphosis of nature. Instead, they puzzle, terrify and threaten, particularly because often they are not spotted straightaway, but turn out to have been there already, looking at the viewer, before the spectator becomes aware of them, which adds to their frightening effect: suddenly you become aware you are being observed by a monster.

III. Animal Masks in Renaissance Parade Armour

In the New Sacristy animal-shaped masks in sculpture and in armour are placed in close proximity: Michelangelo's designs for the candelabrum include elements that are very similar to the masks on the armour of the Principi. The two animal hybrids looking like a helmet just above the pedestal are, for instance, very similar to the mask on the back of Lorenzo's armour, sadly difficult to see under normal circumstances. When we move out of this interior, and into the world of real armour, there are even more striking similarities between stone and metal grotesques. Here it may help to bear in mind the original double meaning of the Latin *ornamentum*, which could refer both to adornment or decoration, and to military

18
See Eugenio Castellani, *Maschere Grottesche tra Manierismo e Rococò*, Florence 1991; G. K. Koenig, Finestre fiorentine della seconda metà de Cinquecento, in: *Quaderni 2–3 dell'Istituto di Elementi di Architettura*, Florence 1963.

19
See Sandro Bellesi, Interventi decorativi in Palazzo Pitti, in: *Paragone* 49/583, 1998, 49–68, and id., L'Allestimento della Grotta dell'Ammanati e il suo significato iconografico, in: *Palazzo Pitti. La reggia rivelata* (exh. cat. Florence, Palazzo Pitti), ed. by G. Caprecchi, Florence 2003, 60–69.



[Fig. 7a]
Bernardo Buontalenti a.o., Palazzo Nonfinito, Florence, 1592–1600, photo: Dimitris Kamaras, Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 7b]
Palazzo Nonfinito, Florence: detail of window, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 7c]
Palazzo Nonfinito, Florence: detail of window, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 8]
Bernardo Buontalenti, Casino Mediceo, Florence, 1568–1574, photo: author.



[Fig. 9a]
Pietro Tacca a.o., Fountain, 1629, bronze, Piazza SS Annunziata, Florence, photo: author.



[Fig. 9b]
Pietro Tacca a.o., Fountain, 1629, bronze, Piazza SS Annunziata, Florence, photo: author.



[Fig. 10a]
Andrea Ferrucci (attr.), Grotesque stair decoration, c. 1630, pietra serena, Argenteria, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, photo: author.



[Fig. 10b]
Andrea Ferrucci (attr.), Grotesque stair decoration, c. 1630, various kinds of coloured and white marble, Argenteria, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, photo: author.

arms or equipment.[20] The parade and tournament armour created by the Milanese workshop of the Negroli family in particular displays many elements also present in the sculptural and architectural grotesques we just saw. Animal hybrids, dragons and bat wings are often used, as in the burgonet for Guidobaldo II della Rovere by Filippo Negroli, which is part of the so-called Fame Armor [Fig. 11].[21] This helmet has bat wings with eyes flanking the face, but also at the back of the head. Double or triple combinations of animals are used as well, for instance in a burgonet for the emperor Charles V by Filippo Negroli of c. 1540 [Fig. 12]. Another shared element is the use of incrustation. *Sgraffito* grotesque ornament is present for instance on the façade of the palazzo for Bianca Capello (1578) by Bernardino Poccetti, and incrustation in the so-called Morosini helmet by a Milanese armourer from 1550–1560, now in the National Gallery in Washington [Fig. 13a and Fig. 13b].[22] The similarity between the breastplate that is part of the Fame Armor, now in the Bargello, and the sculptural object in the Palazzo Pitti is perhaps most striking: in both cases there are dragon wings with talons and eyes [Fig. 14a and Fig. 14b]. Bat wings and heads, which are also so striking in the architectural grotesques of the Palazzo Nonfinito, continued to be used in sixteenth-century armour, for instance in a garniture made for Francesco de Medici (1570–1575, now in the Bargello).[23] The chanfron of an armour made for Charles-Emmanuel of Savoy in 1585, which he offered to Philip III of Spain, now in Madrid, shows a very intriguing combination of a surface treatment that makes it look very similar to the skin of animals such as the armadillo, recently introduced into the Medici menagerie [Fig. 15]. The tomb

20
On the Latin meanings of ornamentum, see Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge/New York 2007, 25. The double meaning can be traced back to the verb "ordinare", which meant to organize, arrange or put in order. On Renaissance armour, see Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Sixteenth Century*, London 1937; John Rigby Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe, 1450–1620*, New York 1985; and Bruno Thomas and Ortwin Gamber, L'arte milanese dell'armatura, in: *Storia di Milano*, vol. 11, *Il declino spagnolo*, 1630–1706, Milan 1958, 697–841. Carolyn Springer's *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance*, Toronto 2010, Introduction, note 1, has a very good bibliographical overview of armour studies; see also Marianne Koos, Körper in Hüllen. Die Rüstung als Maske/Maskerade und zweite Haut in der englischen Kultur des späten Mittelalters, in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual* 4, 2021, 35–86. Although this article considers English armour, it offers many new perspectives for the study of late medieval and early modern armour in Europe in general.

21
On the Negroli, see *Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance. Filippo Negroli and His Contemporaries* (exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum), ed. by Stuart W. Pyhrr and José-A. Godoy, with essays and a compilation of documents by Silvio Leydi, New York 1998; *Parures triomphales. Le maniérisme dans l'art de l'armure italienne* (exh. cat. Geneva, Musée des Beaux-Arts), ed. by José-A. Godoy and Silvio Leydi, Milan 2003. For the Fame Armor, see Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance, 18–19 and 136–150.

22
Cf. Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance, 326–330. See also Vittoria Addona, The Grotesque Provocations of the Palazzo di Bianca Cappello, in: *Source. Notes in the History of Art* 42, 2022, 26–47; Gunther Thiem and Christel Thiem, *Toskanische Fassaden-Dekoration in Sgraffito und Fresko, 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1964; Emanuela Ferretti, Appunti per la conoscenza del cantiere storico. Bernardo Buontalenti e la fabbrica del palazzo di Bianca Cappello a Firenze (1573–1578), in: *Ricerche Storiche* 1/32, 2003, 47–79.

23
Parures triomphales, 252.

for Ruggiero Minerbetti in Santa Maria Novella of 1527, carved by Silvio Cosini, whom we have already met as the sculptor of trophies and grotesques in the Medici Chapel, offers an early material instance of this connection between stone and metal grotesque masks: helmets with grotesque animal shapes figure below the catafalque, and they look strikingly similar to the grotesque helmets made by the Negroli workshop [Fig. 16].[24]

III.1 Parades and Tournaments

Now the question is, what to make of these shared features across different materials and artistic disciplines. A first starting point is offered by the settings in which such armour was worn: that of parades and tournaments. Armour *all'antica*, very fashionable for such events, abounded in grotesque masks. Tournaments were a fixture of Italian court ritual, and continued to be part of festivities to celebrate marriages or peace treaties well into the sixteenth century, even after the invention of gunpowder had made armour quite obsolete. Actually tournament armour became ever more lavish as the invention of gunpowder and firearms made it less and less effective as a protecting device. Victor Stoichita called this the "enveloppe de surenchère", the creation of what we might call a second, superfluous skin, that often looked like the body or hair.[25] The tradition was nourished by the popularity of mediaeval chivalry texts, such as the Arthurian romances. The libraries of the Gonzaga, Este and Visconti held numerous copies. In the Palazzo Ducale at Mantua, Pisanello decorated the Sala del Principe with scenes from the tournament at the Castle of King Brangäne in c. 1439–1442.[26] *Amadis de Gaule* was equally popular. It counted Charles V, François I and Philip II among its assiduous readers.[27] Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) represented a final Italian flowering of this tradition.

The interest in chivalry so widely documented in Italian Renaissance courts suggests some iconographical connections, particularly for the motif of the dragon wings with eyes. The breast-

[24] On the genesis of this tomb, see Farinelli, Monumental Grotesques, 179–187.

[25] Victor I. Stoichita, La 'seconde peau'. Quelques considérations sur le symbolisme des armures au xvie siècle, in: *Micrologus* 20, 2012, 451–463, esp. 453–456.

[26] *Pisanello. Painter to the Renaissance Court* (exh. cat. London, National Gallery), ed. by Luke Syson and Dillian Gordon, London 2001, 48 and 55.

[27] Cf. Braden Frieder, *Chivalry and the Perfect Prince. Tournaments, Art, and Armor at the Spanish Habsburg Court*, University Park, PA 2008, 20 and 40. On Renaissance tournaments, see also Ida Sikević (ed.), *Knights in Shining Armor. Myth and Reality, 1450–1650*, Piemont, NH 2006; *Italian Armour for Princely Courts* (exh. cat. Chicago, Art Institute), ed. by Leonid Tarassuh, Chicago 1986; John F. Hayward, The Revival of Roman Armour in the Renaissance, in: Robert Held (ed.), *Art, Arms and Armour. An International Anthology*, vol. 1, Chiasso 1979, 144–163; Angus Patterson, *Fashion and Armour in Renaissance Europe. Proud Looks and Brave Attire*, London 2009. On the impact of Amadis de Gaule on architectural design, see André Chastel, *The Palace of Apolidon*, Oxford 1986.



[Fig. 11]
Filippo Negroli, *Burgonet for armour of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, Milan c. 1532–1535, steel, gold, textile, Saint Petersburg, Hermitage, in: Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance, 137.



[Fig. 12]
Filippo Negroli, *Burgonet for Charles V, "alla romana antica"*, Milan, c. 1540, steel, gold inlays and incrustation, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, photo: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.



[Fig. 13a]
Bernardino Poccetti, Façade of the Palazzo for Bianca Capello in Florence, 1578, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 13b]
"The Morosini Helmet", visored burgonet, c. 1550–1560, repoussé and embossed iron or steel, with gilding and silvering, Washington, National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, photo: National Gallery of Art, Public Domain.



[Fig. 14a]
Filippo Negroli, *Breastplate for armour of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, c. 1530–1532, steel and gold, Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, photo: author.



[Fig. 14b]
Andrea Ferrucci (attr.), Grotesque stair decoration, c. 1630, pietra serena, Argenteria, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, photo: author.



[Fig. 15]
Milanese, Chanfron and crinet from the garniture presented by the Duke of Savoy to King Philip III, c. 1585, etched, embossed, gilt and gold-damascened steel, Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, Real Armería, in: *Parures triomphales. Le maniérisme dans l'art de l'armure italienne* (exh. cat. Geneva, Musée Rath), ed. by José-A Godoy and Silvio Leyd, Geneva 2003, 87.



[Fig. 16]
Silvio Cosini, *Tomb for Ruggiero Minerbetti*, 1527, marble, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, photo: author.

plate that is part of the Fame Armor, made for Guidobaldo della Rovere (1532–1535), is covered by two dragon wings with eyes scattered over them. It also carries a device: "Nulla bibam Laethes oblivia flumine in ipso" ("Let me not drink any of the forgetfulness of the Lethe in the river itself"); its pauldron is decorated with hybrid animal heads. The device may be a reference to passages in Ariosto, Vergil, or to the late Roman poet Claudian, where Good and Bad Fame are distinguished, with Bad Fame carrying black wings like a bat.[28] Carolyn Springer discusses various interpretations connecting it with Ariosto, suggesting a reference to the armour of Rodomonte in Canto XIV, line 118: "He was armed with a strong and hard breastplate made from the scaly hide of a dragon." Others have compared it to the passage describing the battle with the sea monster Orc (Canto X.94–112): the monster also has a horned head, pointed wings, protruding eyes and a porcine snout bristling with teeth. Another similarity is with the bat-winged creature encountered by Rinaldo in the Ardennes, which has a head with a thousand lidless eyes that never shut, and snakes instead of hair.[29]

These connections with chivalry literature are all plausible, particularly in the light of the prominence of armour worn, lost or found in Ariosto's epic. At the same time, they should not obscure the much wider network of Greco-Roman and Christian meanings and associations of dragons, armour and danger that go back to the Greek etymology of the word "dragon" in the verb *derkomai*, which means to see. It was taken to refer to someone or something with a deadly glance or very sharp eyes, because such eyes always appear to be open.[30]

III.2 The Revival of Roman Armour

The Renaissance revival of Roman armour also provided an inspiration for the inclusion of grotesque imagery in helmets, breastplates or chanfrons. Surviving pieces were present in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian collections. Armour was also represented

28
Ariosto, *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1533), lines XXXV.11–16; Vergil, *Aeneid* IV.181–183. The connection between the breast plate and Ariosto was first proposed by Florent Gille, in the text accompanying plate 57 in F. Gille and A. Rockstuhl, *Musée de Tzarskoé-Sélo, ou collection d'armes de Sa Majesté l'empereur de toutes les Russies*, Saint Petersburg/Karlsruhe 1835–1853; reprint Fridingen 1981. Cf. Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance, 18–19. See also Ortwin Gamber, Der italienische Harnisch im 16. Jahrhundert, in: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 54, 1958, 73–120; and Ortwin Gamber and Christian Beaufort, with Matthias Pfaffenbichler, *Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Hofjagd- und Rüstkammer. Katalog der Leibrüstkammer*, vol. 2: *Der Zeitraum von 1530–1560*, Vienna 1990.

29
Gerusalemme Liberata 42.46–47. Cf. Springer, Armour and Masculinity, 95–103. Ariosto, XXXV.11–16 tells of Ippolito d'Este and an "ancient man / who to and fro perpetually ran", "He fills his lap with labels to the brim [...] and in the stream, named Lethe, which takes all / His precious load of plaques, he lets them fall."

30
Cf. Daniel Ogdern, *Drakon. Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Ancient Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford 2013.

in stone trophies, such as the so-called Trophies of Marius, recorded for instance in the sketchbook attributed to Jacopo Ripanda now in the Ashmolean, or the pillar with trophies that had been in the Uffizi since the early sixteenth century.[31] Surviving statues of Roman emperors, coins and sarcophagi all provided models for Renaissance armourers. They share many conspicuous features: the use of bats, dragons, Gorgons and other terrifying, often animal faces; the use of animal body parts, in particular feet and dragon claws; and monstrous combinations of animals, both real and fabled.

Wearing parade armour *alla romana* was part of the general trend among Renaissance rulers to model their appearance and behaviour on that of the rulers and captains from antiquity. Humanist speeches, for instance those by Leonardo Bruni, often compared them.[32] They drew on treatises on war such as Roberto Valturio's *De re militari* of 1472, the second illustrated book to be printed in Italy, and widely distributed to fellow rulers by its dedicatee, the Condottiere Sigismondo Malatesta. The Roman author observed that the depiction of predatory animals on standards and banners "has been in use since the beginning of the world, when men were themselves animals, living in the woods in a constant state of war and eating human flesh".[33] I will return in Section V to this association of the use of animal imagery and the animality of early humans.

Knowledge of Roman armour was consolidated in the sixteenth century in Du Choul's treatise on Roman military equipment of 1555, the *Discours sur la castramétation et discipline militaire des Romains*. We can trace the spread of adaptations and transformations of Roman armour through drawings and sculpture. An early case is the relief of Alexander the Great, c. 1483–1485, now attributed to the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio [Fig. 17]. It became something of a specialism of Florentine artists in the late Quattrocento to depict figures in profile like this, wearing fantasy armour.[34] Leonardo's drawing of an old warrior, now in the British Museum, shows a similar helmet with batwings and eyes. The surviving draw-

31
See H. R. Robinson, *The Armour of Imperial Rome*, New York 1975; for surviving visual documentation of Roman armour, see Cornelius Vermeule, Hellenistic and Roman Cuirassed Statues. The Evidence of Painting and Reliefs in the Development of Cuirass Types, in: *Berytus Archaeological Studies* 13/1, 1959, 1–82 and plates 1–26. For the Medici collections of surviving Roman armour, see Eugène Müntz, Les collections d'antiquités formées par les Médicis au XVIe siècle, in: *Memoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres* 35/2, 1895, 85–168. For the revival of Roman armour, see Hayward, The Revival of Roman Armour.

32
Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance, 9ff.

33
Roberto Valturio, *De re militari*, Verona 1483, fols. 215r, 234v, 236v and 238v, quoted and translated by Francesca Borgo, The Beast Within, the Beast Without. Zoomorphic Armour Ornament and the Human-Animal Divide in the Material Culture of Renaissance War, in: *Venezia Arti* 32, 2023, 35–50, 36.

34
See Francesco Cagliotti, Fifteenth-Century Reliefs of Ancient Emperors and Empresses in Florence. Production and Collection, in: Nicolas Penny and Eike D. Schmidt (eds.), *Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe*, New Haven, CT 2008, 67–111.

ing by Rubens after Leonardo's *Battle at Anghiari* shows an intriguing use of shell shapes for grotesque shoulder protections, as well as a ram's head on the breast plate [Fig. 18]. This has the effect of dazzling the viewer, who can no longer distinguish immediately the various features of the armour from the body of the warrior. Because the body of this warrior hides the neck and head of his horse from sight, there is also a strong suggestion that he is a centaur, which adds to the blurring of the boundaries between man and beast in the image. The lavabo attributed to Verrocchio for San Lorenzo also displays the dragon wings we have met earlier [Fig. 19].[35]

To date, however, there are very few, if any, surviving documents that would show how a design made for instance by Verrocchio or Michelangelo was used in the workshops of the Negroli or other Milanese armourers. There is only one material connection between sculpted grotesques and their use in armour, to my knowledge, a relief sculpture showing a grotesque helmet, in Cosini's Minerbetti tomb, mentioned above [Fig. 16]. Instead, what we do have, is a series of very strong visual and thematic similarities: the use of hybrid beings that combine parts of different animals and humans; the duplication and triplication of animal shapes, particularly in three-dimensional objects such as the grotesques in Palazzo Pitti; and the treatment of grotesque ornament to suggest a second skin. The appearance, later in the sixteenth century, of grotesque helmets in images of trophies, for instance by Polidoro da Caravaggio, or in collections of prints such as the *Speculum Magnificentiae Romae*, does document the dissemination of grotesque armour, outside Florence and after Michelangelo and his studio had stopped working on them. Giulio Romano's designs for grotesque helmets *all'antica* for instance, created in Mantua in 1530 in connection with Charles V's visit to the city, were recorded in Jacopo Strada's *Galearum Antiquarium*. Strada took these drawings with him when he moved to Vienna to work for the Habsburg court, and they illustrate the spread of such grotesque armour design outside Tuscany and Italy.[36]

III.3 Monster Theory

Many animal-shaped masks discussed here either present hybrid animals, combining for instance features of bats with claws and

35
On the lavabo in San Lorenzo sometimes attributed to Verrocchio, see most recently Simona Cohen, Animal Heads and Hybrid Creatures. The Case of the San Lorenzo Lavabo and Its Sources, in: ead., *Animals As Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art*, Leiden 2008, 195–239.

36
Cf. *Fürstenhöfe der Renaissance. Giulio Romano und die klassische Tradition* (exh. cat. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), ed. by Nikolai Dobrowolskij, Vienna 1989, 236 and 338; *Riddarlek och Turnerspel. Tournaments and the Dream of Chivalry* (exh. cat. Stockholm, Royal Armoury), ed. by Lena Rangström, Stockholm 1992, 120. The manuscript of the *Galearum Antiquarium* is kept in the Austrian National Library, ms Cod. min. 21; a copy entitled "Casques d'après Jules Romain" is in the National Museum in Stockholm, Inv. THC 4166–4241.



[Fig. 17]
Andrea del Verrocchio or studio, *Alexander the Great*, c. 1483/1485, marble relief, 55.9 × 36.7 cm, Washington, National Gallery of Art, photo: National Gallery of Art, Public Domain (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 18]
Peter Paul Rubens, *Drawing after Leonardo's Battle of Anghiari*, 1603, black chalk, pen in brown ink, brush in brown and grey ink, grey wash, heightened in white and grey-blue, 45.3 × 63.6 cm, Paris, Louvre, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 19]
Andrea del Verrocchio, Lavabo, now in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo, Florence, c. 1465, marble, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).

humanoid eyes, or combine human and animal features, such as horse ears and a human face. These suggest connections with contemporary monster theory or teratology, as well as with the general interest of Renaissance culture in metamorphosis and transformation. Benedetto Varchi for instance, who gave a lecture on monsters at the Accademia Fiorentina in 1548, and who was probably responsible for the concept of the *Grotta degli animali* by Tribolo in the Boboli Gardens (begun before 1550), explained their existence by looking for natural causes, such as accidents in conception. He only discusses natural monsters, not monstruous artefacts created by humans, in an enquiry that is still very much indebted to Aristotle's treatise on the generation of animals.[37] For Varchi the main problem posed by the existence of monstruous living beings is to understand the purpose of their creation, since he firmly adheres to the view nature does not make mistakes. His solution is to argue that monsters exist because of an accident, not even an error, on the part of sublunar nature. But that conclusion makes his entire treatise less relevant for the understanding of grotesque monsters, since these were created intentionally.[38]

Somewhat later, Vincenzo Scamozzi would make the connection between design and monster theory. In his *Idea dell'Architettura* of 1615 he compared architectural detailing or *sacome* (the small parts of profiles such as crown mouldings, astragals, cymas or scotias) with animal faces, and applied the distinctions between *genera* and *species* to the classification of ornament. These small details are very important to architectural composition, since they knit together the larger parts, such as architraves, friezes and capitals. Thus they make up, as Scamozzi puts it, the "true portrait (*ritratto*) of the work". But the analogy between a face and a façade is pushed further. These small elements or profiles are like the eyes in the heads of animals: without them, they look like "mostri di natura".[39] The corporeality of architecture is further elaborated when he compares the way in which the parts of a building are articulated and connected with the bodily fabric of muscles and nerves:

> As in the latter one can see the connections between bones, the linkage of the nerves, and the intersection of the veins, with the covering of soft tissue: so in the former one can see the trimming of the columns, and walls, the interlocking of

37
Benedetto Varchi, *Della generatione de mostri*, a lecture held in 1548, and published in 1560 and 1590; reprint in *Opere di Benedetto Varchi ora per la prima volta raccolte*, Trieste 1859, 146–147.

38
Varchi, Della generatione de mostri, in particular 93 and 114.

39
Vincenzo Scamozzi, *Idea dell'architettura universale*, Venice 1615, 149. Cf. Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance. Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture*, Cambridge/New York 1999, 310 n. 83.

> cornices, the entwining of those things that ornament, and finally the shells [*corteccie*] that cover the internal parts.[40]

Here a perception of the surfaces of buildings is revealed that considers them as organic, living surfaces displaying features very similar to human faces. But at the same time the monstrous animals so prominent in Florentine architecture and sculpture are not included: it is the human face that is taken here as a metaphor to understand the function of *sacome*.[41] We do find here a confirmation, in architectural theory, of a conception of the façade of a building as its face and skin, features that seem to be thematized by the insertion of grotesque masques in Florentine palazzi of the late sixteenth century, or by the use of sgraffito ornament.

IV. Anthropological Perspectives. Animal-Shaped Masks from the American Northwest Coast

To move forward at this stage, I want to return to the animal shapes themselves, the starting point of this essay, to ask, what do these grotesque animal figures actually *do*? Both in buildings and in armour grotesque animal shapes are used to cover parts of the underlying fabric. They are masks in the shape of animals that disguise and perhaps even camouflage the face of the bearer or support.[42] These similarities suggest a series of questions about grotesques as part of the defensive apparatus, the body armour of a building – in line with one of the original Latin meanings of the term *ornamentum*, that of the armour and equipment of a soldier. As we saw, Du Choul quotes an observation by the Roman military writer Vegetius that Roman soldiers wore helmets in the shape of a lion's head to terrify the enemy, and also to appropriate the characteristics of the animal, already suggesting the terrifying nature of such grotesque *ornamentum*, as well as hinting at underlying psychologi-

40
Scamozzi, *Discorsi sopra l'Antichità di Roma*, Venice 1582, 15, quoted and translated in Payne, The Architectural Treatise, 234 and 310, n. 81.

41
On Scamozzi's species theory of architectural ornament, see Payne, The Architectural Treatise, 223–230.

42
In Armour and Masculinity, Carolyn Springer develops a reading of such hybrid decoration and duplications in terms of Caillois' ideas on protective adaptation in insects. Caillois also points out that the best protection is to look like nothing at all – which clearly does not apply to armour and architectural grotesques. Caillois also notes that "the insect [...] acquires [eyes, circles, and masks] as part of the morphology of the species and carries them as an indelible part of its organism", while humans develop prostheses that can be taken up and removed at will. Taking her cue from this she argues that all forms of technology illustrate the evolutionary desire to exceed the limits of the species. Springer's argument opens up many perspectives, and it illustrates the importance and implications of looking outside art theory to understand grotesques.

cal mechanisms.[43] With such varieties of duplication, in a second skin, or in the multiplication of animal and hybrid shapes in one grotesque mask, we enter the realm of human behaviour, of humans using dress, or the second body of armour, and by extension the interior and exterior of buildings, to fascinate, frighten or ward off viewers. In other words, we enter the realm of anthropology.

To provide a foundation for this excursion into anthropology we need to return to a formal analysis of our sixteenth-century masks. Zoomorphic masks, often combining several animal faces, are quite common across the world, and particularly in the animist societies of the Northwest Coast of North America. There is one category of artefacts that displays in particular many features similar to the mask ornaments made in sixteenth-century Italy: the masks made by the Hajda, Yup'ik and Kwakwaka'wakw societies.[44] Compare for instance the Italian sallet in the shape of a lion's head with a Yup'ik mask of a sea lion's head framing a man's head [Fig. 20a and Fig. 20b]. Or consider the multiplication of animals in a helmet by Giovanni Paolo Negroli with a Kwakwaka'wakw transformation mask [Fig. 21a and Fig. 21b]. These masks also show the stressing of facial features such as the eyebrows, that we find for instance in the masks guarding the windows of the Palazzo Nonfinito [Fig. 7]. The aspects of a second skin, and integration of human or animal wearers' faces with the animal face of the mask, as shown in the sallet in the shape of a lion's head [Fig. 20a], and a chanfron or protective armour for the head of a horse [Fig. 22a], also suggest a comparison with the masks made by the Kwakwaka'wakw [Fig. 22b].

These masks have been collected since the nineteenth century and have been the subject of anthropological study by Herman Haeberlin and Franz Boas, and most recently Philippe Descola.[45] They combine animal and human features, often including two or three different species. These representations of animals are often split or duplicated over the entire surface of an object, in a way that recalls the duplications of animal figures flanking a central element such as a column in European heraldry. Haeberlin and Boas noted a series of common features in these masks: stylization and schematization, the representation of a body by splitting, often across the entire surface, and the dislocation of split details, the frontal representation of

43
Guillaume du Choul, *Discours sur la castramétation et discipline militaire des Romains*, Lyon 1555, 152. He refers to Vegetius' *Epitome* II.16, where the Roman author discusses the use of boar skin covering of helmets to frighten enemies. See also his description of tournaments in II.57.

44
On these masks, see the recent overviews by Allan Wardwell, *Tangible Visions. Northwest Coast Indian Shamanism and Its Art*, New York 2009 [1996]; Steven Brown, *Native Visions. Evolution in Northwest Coast Art from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Seattle/London, 1998; and Gaylord Torrence (ed.), *Art of Native Americans. The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection*, New York/New Haven, CT, 2019.

45
See Herman Haeberlin, Principles of Esthetic Form in the Art of the North-Pacific Coast. A Preliminary Sketch, in: *American Anthropologist* n.s. 10/3, 1918, 258–264, and Franz Boas, *Primitive Art*, Oslo 1927.



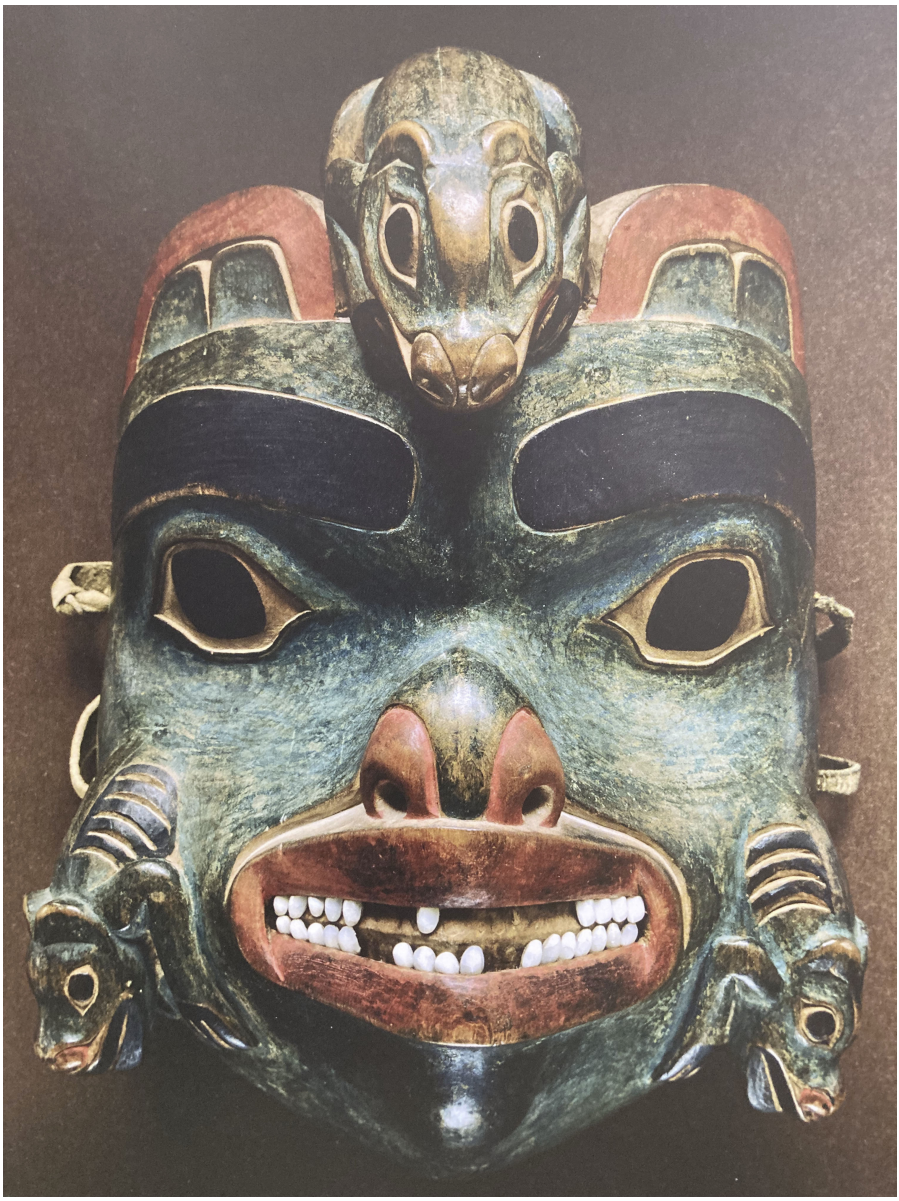
[Fig. 20a]
Italian, *Sallet in Shape of a Lion's Head*, c. 1475, embossed and gilt copper on underlying steel helmet, New York, Metropolitan Museum, photo: Metropolitan Museum, Public Domain (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 20b]
Tlingit Bear Skin Helmet, before 1867, bear skin, wood, teeth, iron, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 21a]
Giovanni Paolo Negroli, *Close Helmet*, c. 1540–1545, steel, copper alloy, gold, 27.3 × 29.2 × 38.1 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum, photo: Metropolitan Museum, Public Domain (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 21b]
Tlingit mask, before 1867, wood, shells, animal skin and pigments, 27.8 × 17.9 × 12 cm, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, in: *La Fabrique des images. Visions du monde et formes de la représentation* (exh. cat. Paris, Musée du Quai Branly), ed. by Philippe Descola, Paris 2010, 26.



[Fig. 22a]
Filippo Negroli studio, *Chanfron from Roman Armour for Ferdinand II of Tyrol*, Milan c. 1547–1550, steel, gold, silver and brass, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, in: Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance, 276.



[Fig. 22b]
Kwakwaka'wakw culture, *Wooden transformation mask*, created before 1960, cedar wood, cedar bark, paint, fibre, lacquer, metal, skin, 42.8 × 47.1 × 104.3 cm, Vancouver, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, photo: Wikimedia Commons.

a creature through the use of two contrasting profiles, the reduction of monumental artefacts to small scales, and the illogical transformation of details into new representations. To these features should be added an element identified by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his essay on split representation of 1946: the combination of graphic, that is two-dimensional, and plastic, that is three-dimensional forms, for instance the use of tatouage on a face, or of incrustation in a mask.[46]

Now many of these features of Northwest Coast masks can also be found in the group of Renaissance artefacts studied here. They are all highly stylized and schematized to begin with. Split representation of an animal to cover the entire surface can be found in the Palazzo Pitti sculptures as well as a burgonet for Guidobaldo II della Rovere now in Saint Petersburg [Fig. 11 and Fig. 12]. In the latter the pair of horns over the eyebrows of the visor is flattened, or splayed, to flank the animal crouching over the eyebrows. Dislocated splitting can be found for instance in Michelangelo's design for a salt cellar, with birds' heads and beaks added at both ends of the lid, but also in the masks at the centre top and bottom of the Pitti pieces [Fig. 6, Fig. 10a and Fig. 10b]. The frontal representation of a creature through the use of two contrasting profiles is present in many helmets. The chanfron of Ferdinand of Tirol, where an animal is masked as a human face growing from acanthus leaves, baring animal teeth, is a typical case of the transformation of details into new representations [Fig. 22a].

For Philippe Descola the variety of Northwestern masks most rich in elements pointing to the ontology that drives in his view their creation, is that of the transforming masks made by the Kwakwaka'wakw. Here the human wearer is disguised, or transformed, into various animals, depending on the parts of the mask he or she opens or folds. This looks very similar to the helmets that integrate several animals into one protective device, and hide the human face of the wearer, or to the helmets that completely encircle their face, as in the lion-shaped sallet discussed above [Fig. 20a].

So let us have a closer look at Descola's analysis of these masks in *Les formes du visible*. He is the successor to Lévi-Strauss at the Collège de France, and has combined an impressive amount of field work in Amazonia, and the American Northwest Coast with a theoretical model to understand human image-making across the globe. The model is based on a structuralist classification of relations between human and non-human animals, or ontologies. This was the topic of his recent major books, *Les formes du visible* (2021) and *Par-delà nature et culture* (2005), as well as the exhibition he curated at Quai Branly, *La fabrique des images* (2010).[47] *Les formes du visible*

46
Lévi-Strauss, Le dédoublement de la représentation, 273. He refers to Leonhard Adam, Das Problem der asiatisch-altamerikanischen Kulturbeziehungen mit besonderen Berücksichtigung der Kunst, in: *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens* 5, 1931, 40–64.

47
Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture*, Paris 2005; *Les formes du visible*, Paris 2021, and *La fabrique des images* (exh. cat. Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris), ed. by Philippe Descola, Paris 2010.

received immense media coverage in France, but far less in the Anglo-Saxon world, and even less among art historians, who have mainly criticized his sometimes outdated views on the development of linear perspective in Renaissance Italy [Tab. 1].

Now what matters here is his analysis of animism, and how it can function to understand the similarities between Florentine mask-shaped ornament, Milanese armour and Northwestern masks. To show this let us turn to some of the masks he discusses, and the way they give visual and tangible form to an animist ontology. Animism is defined by the worldview that there is a similarity of interiority – of the soul, or deep nature, if you wish – between animals and humans, but a difference of exterior appearance. What looks like a human being can in fact be a fox or seal taking on the appearance, disguise or camouflage of humans. Metamorphosis is key to this ontology. As Descola puts it:

> L'animisme peut être vu comme une façon de systématiser l'expérience de l'inopiné. Un bruit inattendu [...], un animal qui m'observe, un coup de vent imprévu, tous ces événements qui tranchent sur l'ordinaire de façon minuscule incitent notre imagination à exercer 'un droit de suite' en inférant une présence là où on devrait être seul [...] bref, en imputant, lorsque les circonstances s'y prêtent, à des non-humains visibles ou non-visibles des comportements, des états intérieurs et des desseins analogues aux nôtres.[48]

In all these parts of the world where an animist ontology is documented, the world is populated by a multitude of living beings, dressed in an animal or vegetal appearance, but whose appearance, as the local inhabitants know, hides or disguises an intentionality and emotions that are analogous to those of humans. They all possess a soul, a morphology and attributes that distinguish them. Animist masks show the interiority of these beings, together with their incarnation in very different human or animal physiques. In some cases, human hands are added to the image of an animal to indicate that the animal has the intentionality or power to act analogous to that of humans. Animism is a very visual ontology, as is also suggested by the fact that in the languages of Amazonia the word for spirit or soul is the same as the one used to designate shadow, reflection or image. Spirits are most of the time invisible, but they can become visible by combining some anthropomorphical elements that suggest intentionality – eyes that see, for instance – with the attributes of a particular species. The resulting images show animals which by their human attributes indicate that they possess an interiority similar to that of humans. Therefore the challenge of giving visual form

48
Descola, Les formes du visible, 89.

similarity of interiority difference of exteriority	animism	totemism	similarity of interiority similarity of exteriority
difference of interiority similarity of exteriority	naturalism	analogism	difference of interiority difference of exteriority

[Tab. 1]
A schematic representation of the four ontologies defined by Philippe Descola, adapted from the diagram in id., Par-delà nature et culture, 176.

to an animistic ontology is to render the subjectivity of non-human beings.[49]

This is where the mask comes in. It is the simplest way to give visible form to the inner being of an animal spirit. At the same time it is also one of the clearest ways for a human to indicate that it can take on the appearance of an animal while simultaneously showing that it has remained human despite this new appearance. The mask is also a very effective way of exhibiting metamorphosis, enabling the oscillation between one being and the other, and between two perspectives, that of the animal and that of the human. The transformational masks made by the Yup'ik of western Alaska, who dwell in the delta of the Yukon, always show the quality of the represented person, their *yua*, by inserting a human face into an animal body or face, or by adding human limbs to an animal body, or vice versa [Fig. 20b]. They all refer to the quality of being a person, a state of being shared by all living beings according to animism. These human elements indicate aspects of human interiority: intentionality, for instance, discernment or anticipation.[50] [Fig. 23] shows a Yup'ik mask of seal or sea lion spirit, surrounded by human hands to show the inner human being. They are figurations of the importance for the hunter of a penetrating sight: the hunter needs to perceive the prey before being perceived.[51] Similarly, the Negroli armour discussed here gives an animal appearance to the human that wears it, or a human appearance to the horse, while at the same time showing the human person inside it, their intentionality and watchfulness.

Metamorphosis is a conspicuous feature of animism because it reveals the essence of this ontology: humans and animals share a similar interiority, and this interiority or spirit or soul can inhabit very different bodily envelopes. Since there is this shared interiority, it can happen that humans and animals meet in unexpected ways, revealing their shared spirits: animals can fix the hunter when they are supposed to run away, a human can leave behind animal footprints etc.: all encounters that make one see in a being something other than what their face suggests.

Descola's observations about the figuration of animist ontologies in Northwestern masks sounds very similar to the experience

49
Ibid., 509.

50
On Yup'ik animist beliefs, see also Janet Catherine Berlo, Yup'ik and Alutiiq Masks from the Alaskan Arctic, in: *Indigenous Beauty. Masterworks of American Indian Art from the Diker Collection* (exh. cat. Seattle, Seattle Art Museum), ed. by David W. Penney, Seattle 2015, quoting a Yup'ik saying on p. 69: "the world contains no others, only persons". "This encapsulates the belief, essential among many Northern peoples, that there are varieties of personhood – human people, nonhuman people (animals), and other-than-human people. This last category encompasses the mysterious and influential beings that may manifest themselves in visions or be carved in masks as combinations of species of animals or as human animal hybrids." Cf. ibid., 70: "[These masks] symbolize a vital force representing a chain or a continuum of all the individual spirits of that genus."

51
Ibid., 117–133.



[Fig. 23]
Yup'ik mask of seal or sea lion spirit, 1800s, wood, paint, gut cord, feathers, Dallas Museum of Art, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).

suggested by architectural masks. There animals, often with facial masks that combine parts of different animals, and half hidden by their window sill, observe the spectators before they see them. Their eyes, framed and half hidden by very prominent sockets, display the kind of intent watchfulness that is also visualized in Yup'ik masks. As in the transformational masks, a split representation or seeing-double occurs here: at one moment I see indications of a humanoid interiority; at the other I only see the distinctive physical appearance. These masks, particularly those made by the Kwakwaka'wakw, not only look very similar to helmets with their flaps and visors protecting their wearer: they also offer a similar metamorphosis of an animal into a human or vice versa. As André Breton already noted: "The power of the transformational mask resides first of all in the possibility of an abrupt passage from one appearance to another."[52] They are connected to complicated myths about the slow transformation of a human into various hunting animals. Most of these masks represent two stages of metamorphosis at the same time, forcing the viewer to entertain various perspectives at once: a human face appearing in an animal face for instance.

Other mechanisms are at work here as well: what we would call camouflage, for instance. Among the Inuit of Alaska as well as the peoples of Terra del Fuego or Siberia it was quite common to wear animal skins, with their paws becoming human shoes, not just for protection, or hunting camouflage, but also to appropriate or embody the physical capacities of these animals: one captures the powers of an animal by becoming their living image. In Amazonia a very intriguing variety of ontological, animist camouflage occurs: humans paint their bodies to resemble how they think animals perceive them [Fig. 24].[53] Now this recalls the wishful thinking of much Renaissance armour: it makes the wearer look like the animal they would wish to be associated with, if not taken for.

V. Vestiges of Renaissance Animism

But is there a way of connecting this anthropological analysis of Northwestern masks produced by animist societies with the beliefs possibly driving the creation, use and perception of sixteenth-century animal-shaped masks and armour in Italy? Although Christianity firmly opposed any variety of animism, since it held that only humans possessed a soul, with animals created to serve mankind, there are nevertheless many indications of the persistence of animist beliefs from antiquity. The Roman poet Lucretius, whose work

52
André Breton, Note sur les masques à transformation de la côte pacifique du Nord-Ouest, in: *Neuf* 1, 1950, 39, quoted in Descola, Les formes du visible, 125.

53
Descola, Les formes du visible, 155.



[Fig. 24]
Member of the Yanomami tribe in Venezuela, photo: Napoleon Chagnon, reproduced from Descola, Les formes du visible, fig. 35, 155.

enjoyed a significant, through contested, revival in Quattrocento Florence, wrote famously in Book V of *De rerum natura* how

> [...] earth cloaked the scene, / Hill and dale, with every kind of leaf and shining green, / And green the blooming meadows gleamed. All trees began to vie / Galloping at a terrific clip, to race up towards the sky. / And just as feathers, fur or bristles straightaway start to grow / On four-footed beasts or on birds mighty-on-the-wing, just so / The fledgling earth first sprouted a down of herbs and coppices. / Next, she engendered the tribes of living things, the many races / That arose by different causes and in many different ways.[54]

This animated universe was echoed by Leonardo, who described in a famous passage in the *Leicester Codex* how the earth is one big, living body, possessed of an "anima vegetativa". Lucretius, like Pliny the Elder, noted the power of Nature to generate images in her own right: Pliny cites the example of shellfish, another animal quite conspicuous in grotesque figuration. Such animist views of Nature were not unique for Lucretius and his Renaissance followers. In the *Timaeus*, even though based on a very different, transcendental metaphysics from Lucretius' Epicurean atomistic worldview, Plato described the world as a "single, living creature, containing within itself all the living things whose nature is of the same order".[55] These views were subsequently rehearsed by the Paduan philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi, who argued that the universe was one big living being in which everything is connected.[56]

It is highly likely that Lucretius' animated universe was an inspiration for Piero di Cosimo's painting of a *Hunting Scene* [Fig. 25].[57] This includes the humanoid and animal hybrid shapes

54
Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, V.783–96; quoted from Lucretius, *The Nature of Things* (translated and with notes by A. E. Stallings. Introduction by Richard Jenkyns), London 2007, 172. On Florentine interest in Lucretius following Poggio Bracciolini's discovery of a manuscript of *De rerum natura*, see Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve. How the World Became Modern*, New York 2011; and Pierre Vesperini, *Lucrèce*, Paris 2017, for a view arguing for a much greater continuity in the appraisal of Lucretius since his poem was written.

55
Plato, Timaeus 30d, quoted from *Plato's Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato* (translated by F. M. Cornford), London 1956, 40. See also Ittai Weinryb, Living Matter. Materiality, Maker, and Ornament in the Middle Ages, in: *Gesta* 52/2, 2013, 113–132.

56
Cf. Dennis Geronimus, Living Landscape and Wonderment in Renaissance Art, in: Guy Hedreen (ed.), *Material World. The Intersection of Art, Science, and Nature in Ancient Literature and Its Renaissance Reception*, Leiden 2021, 191–225.

57
On Lucretius' reception in Renaissance Italy, see Alison Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge, MA 2010; Dennis Geronimus, No Man's Lands. Lucretius and the Primitive Strain in Piero's Art and Patronage, in: Dennis Geronimus, Virginia Brilliant and David Franklin (eds.), *Piero di Cosimo. The Poetry of Painting*, London 2015, 48–61, with bibliography; and Erwin Panofsky, who first suggested the connections between Lucretius' account of the origin of human culture and Piero's work: The Early History of Man in a Cycle of Paintings by Piero di Cosimo, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 1, 1937, 12–30.

that also occur in grotesques. There are also other connections between Florentine animal grotesques and Piero di Cosimo's work. Vasari described how as a young man he spent much time creating masquerades and triumphal processions for the Florentine aristocracy, which were decorated with "ornaments, trophies, and most bizarre things of fancy".[58] Working for Giuliano de' Medici he made a marine monster which, as Vasari put it, "was so extravagant, bizarre and fantastic in its deformity that it seems impossible that Nature should produce anything so deformed". It ended up in the wardrobe of Cosimo I, according to Vasari, but is now sadly lost, as is the book consisting of drawings of bizarre animals he also made for Giuliano.[59] In Piero's surviving work there are not many grotesques, but animal-human hybrids figure quite prominently: quite a few centaurs and satyrs in the *Return from the Hunt* now in the Metropolitan Museum [Fig. 28]. These all share a particular feature in their depiction: they are not the bestial, slightly manic creatures found in the work of most painters of the time. Instead, they often show behaviour, emotions and the suggestion of an inner life that stresses their parentage with humans. Conversely, the humans, particularly in the *Forest Hunt*, behave and look like animals: they are dressed in lion skins, snarl, tear and fight like wild beasts. Lucretius did not believe that mythological hybrids such as centaurs had survived the earliest stages of animal life on the earth; but he did suggest that humans still display the traits of animals, in an echo of these earlier stages of the development of life, despite their more evolved ways of life.[60]

Even though no grotesque designs by Piero di Cosimo survive, spending some time with him, and the animist world that his paintings evoke with their Lucretian background, does point to a current of thought in Florence in the sixteenth century in which animality is a prominent feature. The earliest stages of life on earth were peopled with monsters and animal-human hybrids. Even after these had died out, according to Lucretius, many animal traits still remain present in humans. In the hunt as in warfare, as the *Forest Hunt* suggests, animals show human behaviour and emotions, and humans behave and dress like animals.

The animality of humans is also a topic in texts that do not belong to the Lucretian tradition, but whose subject puts them in closer proximity to armour. As Francesca Borgo has recently shown, many treatises of fencing depict the swordsman as a hybrid creature showing the features of the animals whose characteristics he wants to possess: the courage of the lion, swiftness of the hind,

58
Giorgio Vasari, Life of Piero di Cosimo, in: id., *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (translated by Gaston du C. de Vere and with an Introduction and Notes by David Ekserdjian), London 1999 [1912], vol. I, 652–653.

59
Ibid., 655.

60
Lucretius II.700–710; IV.739–744; V.878–924; III.741–753; and V.862–877.

and fierceness of the leopard.[61] The *Flos duellatorum* by Fiore dei Liberi of 1409, of which several manuscript copies exist, juxtaposes animals with the various parts of the body that are supposed to appropriate their characteristics: the lynx, associated with prudence, is placed next to the head, and the lion, symbol of courage, placed next to the arms of the warrior [Fig. 26]. In Paulus Kal's *Fechtbuch* of 1468–1479 the swordsman has turned into a hybrid being with the eyes of a hawk, the legs of a deer and a lion's heart and the figure actually proclaims its animal/human hybridity: "I have eyes like a hawk, so you do not deceive me. I have a heart like a lion, so I strive forward. I have feet like a hind, so I can spring back and forth" [Fig. 27].[62] Going even further, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola argued that humans have the capacity to adopt the appearance of any being they choose. And perhaps most tellingly, in the last book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Pythagoras delivers a long speech about the fundamental identity and kinship of human and non-human animal: "The soul roams to and fro [...] and takes what frames it at will, from beast to man [...] and from man to beast."[63]

VI. Conclusion

Animal-shaped sculptural mask ornaments are an arresting, but challenging part of the visual culture created by Michelangelo and his students under Medici rule. They are very prominently scattered across the statuary and architecture of the city and would continue to be made after Michelangelo had left the city, as can be seen, for instance, in the pedestal for Cellini's *Perseus*, the fountains and statues made for the gardens of the Medici Villas, or in cities such as Pisa that became part of Medici territory. Despite their omnipresence they are difficult to classify or interpret, because they do not fit very well into the categories of Renaissance art theory. This essay has taken a different approach, asking two new questions. First, where else do we find such masks, and what can be learned from extending the corpus? It turned out there are striking, but until now little investigated similarities with the parade and tournament armour made by the Negroli workshop for princes across Northern Italy, including the Medici. By taking armour into consideration, a new range of meanings and possible contexts could be envisaged: like armour, animal-shaped masks could serve as a protective device, or even a second skin, to defend the walls of a building. Connections with Arthurian romance and Roman armour introduced

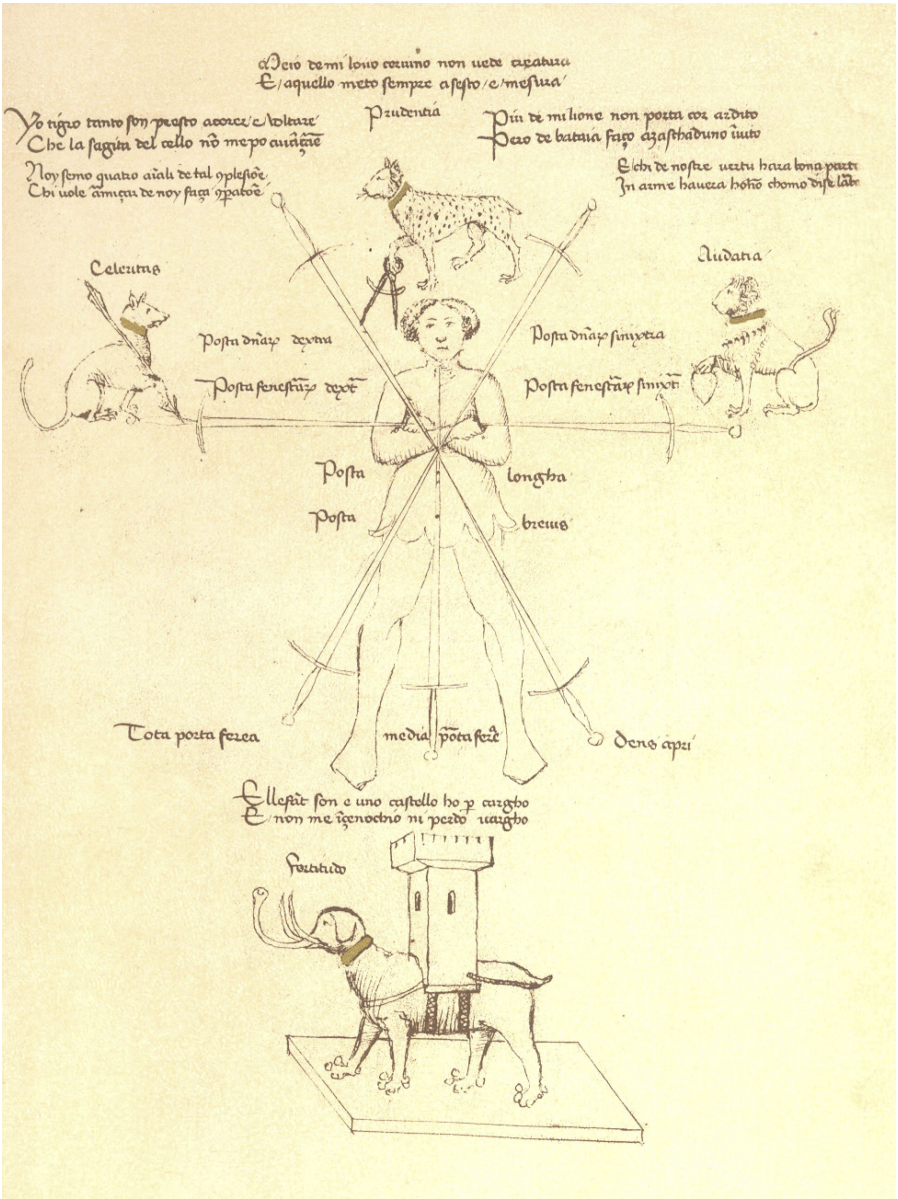
61
Borgo, The Beast Within, the Beast Without, 42–46.

62
Cf. ibid., 42–45. I am much indebted to Francesca Borgo for these sources.

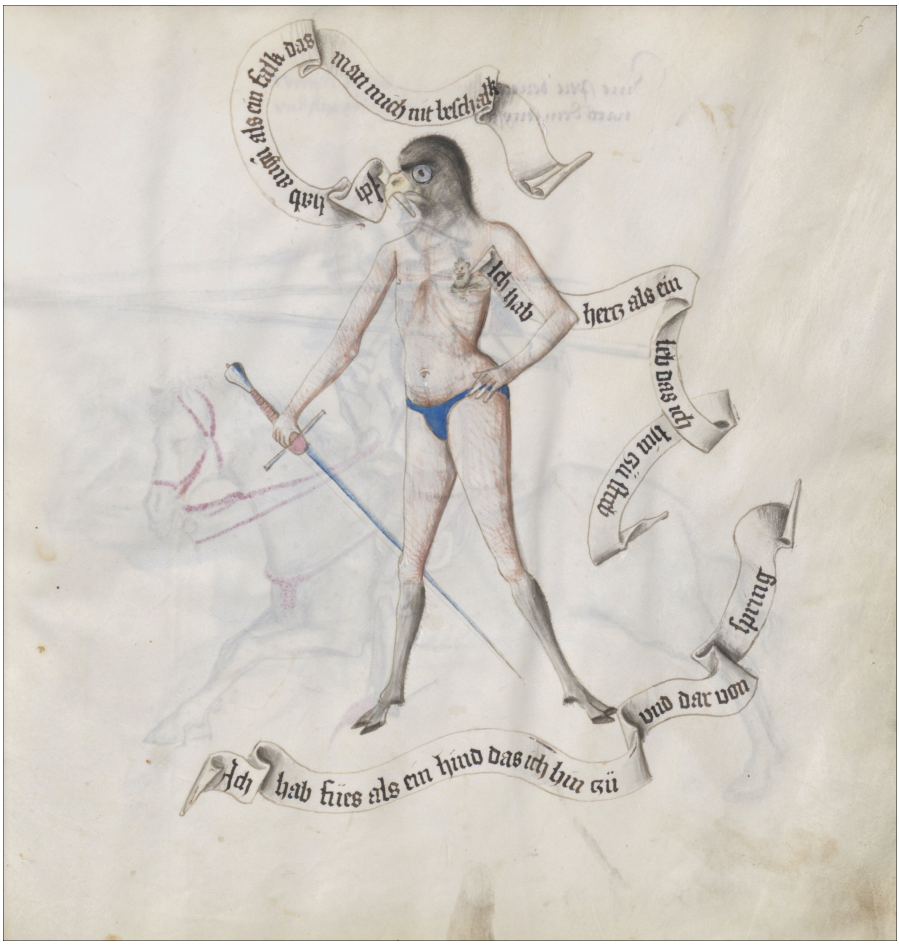
63
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV.60–152 and 252–253.



[Fig. 25]
Piero di Cosimo, *A Hunting Scene*, 1494–1500, tempera and oil transferred to masonite, 70.5 × 169.5 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum, photo: Metropolitan Museum, Public Domain (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 26]
Fiore dei Liberi, *Flos duellatorum*, 1409, fol. 16r, from the facsimile by Francesco Novarti of 1902, original manuscript now lost, photo: Wikimedia Commons (30 September 2024).



[Fig. 27]
Paulus Kal, *Fechtbuch*, 1468–1479, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507, fol. 6r
© Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, photo: Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek/DaFo (30 September2024).



[Fig. 28]
Piero di Cosimo, *Return from the Hunt*, c. 1494–1500, tempera and oil on wood, 70.5 × 168.9 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum, photo: Metropolitan Museum, Public Domain (30 September 2024).

notions of watchfulness, but also the aspect of appropriating the characteristics of animals when wearing armour in their shape. The second new question ventures into the domain of anthropology: what do such masks actually *do*? Here the comparison between Italian sixteenth-century artefacts and more recent masks produced by the peoples of the American Northwest Coast, led to a series of very strong formal and compositional similarities. This made it possible to consider these artefacts from the perspective of Philippe Descola's classification of the ways in which societies define the relation between animals and humans, and interiority and exteriority. But whereas Descola considers Renaissance art to be rooted in a naturalist ontology, which posits a difference of interiority and a similarity of exteriority, I would argue that the particular category of artefacts discussed here suggests instead a connection with the animist ontologies developed in antiquity, and only partly obscured by official Christian doctrine.

Now all this does not constitute an argument for the existence of fully fledged animist ontologies in Descola's sense in Cinquecento Florence or Milan. Instead, this brief excursion into Descola's work points to the heuristic potential of anthropological perspectives on image-making. It makes us compare Renaissance imagery and objects to images and objects made in very different cultures. In the case of architectural grotesques, looking for iconographical meaning, or origins in Roman art, or discussions in artistic theory brings us only so far. In such cases it can be useful, when history does not give an answer, as Lévi-Strauss put it, to look instead at similar psychological mechanisms or ontological belief systems. In the case of Florentine grotesques, as in figurations of animist ontologies, the mechanisms of visual and social interaction involved are similar: concealment and embodiment, embodiment and appropriation, confusing the viewer, and of playing on the subversion and undermining of the difference between animals and humans. Ultimately much of the fascination of these stone grotesque masks, as of the armour, resides in their power to appeal both to the desire to be certain kinds of animals, or at least appropriate their qualities, and to the fear that what looked like a human artefact is in fact a bestial monster – precisely the ambiguity that the animist ontology also thematizes.

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Camouflage and Mimicry as Cultural Techniques, in: *West 86th. A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 30 / 1, 2023, 3–28.

MICHAEL SNIJDERS'S COPIOUS COPIES AND THE MECHANISMS OF PRINT

Aaron M. Hyman

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL
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ABSTRACT

Between around 1630 and 1640, the little-studied printmaker Michael Snijders engraved an idiosyncratic series likely consisting of at least twenty-two prints. Approximating the logics of both drawing manual and sketchbook, the series brings together head studies, limbs, flora, fauna, antique costume, and fantastical creatures. Almost every one of these myriad motifs is copied from another source and staged – over the course of multiple, radically altered states – to produce a delightful play on the entwined concepts of copy and copiousness for artists and increasingly attentive connoisseurs. As this essay argues, Snijders's series thus amounts to an intensive commentary on the mechanisms of print as a medium and, through this, on the history of early modern art and the status of the "copy" within it.

KEYWORDS

Print; Michael Snijders; Drawing book; Collecting; *Liefhebber*; Interpictoriality.

Michael Snijders was a prodigious engraver and publisher who spent his career working in the center of Antwerp, some two blocks from one of Europe's first stock exchanges, a venue that housed spaces for selling artistic wares of the sort that included his own.[1] He does not, however, figure in histories of the city's influential production of graphic arts. In the rare instances that one encounters his name, it is in long lists of copyists and their copies, primarily of a devotional variety.[2] Snijders was one of Antwerp's many makers of *devotieprenten* – small, printed images of saints given out on feast days, awarded at school festivals, and exported across the wider Catholic world.[3] This was his bread and butter.

A normative art historical narrative would have us believe that this industry of printers was parasitic at best, taking the inventions of the city's masters and slowly degrading them through ever more paltry acts of copying. We can see that process at work in his print of the Adoration of the Shepherds [Fig. 1]. The composition was originally designed by Peter Paul Rubens for breviaries and missals published by the renowned Plantin-Moretus printing house but has been reversed through transfer for reproduction.[4] The somewhat stilted lines used to do so have turned the shimmering effects of the original moirées and cross-hatching into flatter, less modulated passages of gray and white. And such copied prints typically were paltry by comparison in more ways than one. Via Snijders's remaking, an engraving produced by Schelte à Bolswert of the founding Jesuit saints (Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier) was reduced from a large 40 × 26 cm sheet suitable for pasting into an album,

1
The only publication devoted to Snijders's broad career is biographical, offering the main archival traces of the artist: Erik Duverger, Le graveur et marchand imagier anversois Michael Snyders (1586–1673), in: *Gentse Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis en Ouderheidkunde* 29, 1990–1991, 91–116.
NB: This article was submitted, peer-reviewed, and accepted for publication before Aaron M. Hyman joined the Editorial Board of *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual – Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur*.

2
Evelyne M. F. Verheggen, *Beelden voor Passie & Hartstocht. Bid- en devotieprenten in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 17de en 18de eeuw*, Zutphen 2006, *passim*; Alfons K. L. Thijs, *Antwerpen. Internationaal uitgevercentrum van devotieprenten 17de-18 de eeuw*, Leuven 1993, *passim*.

3
See note 2; see also Emile H. van Heurck, *Les drapelets de pèlerinage en Belgique et dans les pays voisins. Contribution à l'iconographie et à l'histoire des pèlerinages*, Antwerp 1922; id., Les images de devotion anversoises du XVIe au XIXe siècle, in: *De Gulden Passer* 8, 1930, 67–106; Adolf Spamer, *Das kleine Andachtsbild vom XIV. bis zum XX. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1930; Alfons K. L. Thijs, Notities voor een studie van Antwerpse 17de-eeuwse Suffragia, in: *De Gulden Passer* 61–65, 1983–1985, 561–594. When print historians have attended to this segment of the market, it is usually in order to give a picture of economic concerns rather than to assess any particular objects or pictures; see, for a well-documented example, Jan van der Stock, *Printing Images in Antwerp. The Introduction of Printmaking in a City. Fifteenth Century to 1585*, Rotterdam 1998, 113–142.

4
On Rubens's print, designed before the 1613 Missalum Romanum and reworked for the 1614 Breviarium Romanum, see J. Richard Judson and Carl Van de Velde, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, Part XXI. Book Illustrations and Title-Pages*, 2 vols., London 1978, vol. 1, 96–98 and 132–133.



[Fig. 1]
Left: Michael Snijders, after Theodoor Galle and Peter Paul Rubens, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1610–1630, engraving, 294 × 195 mm, British Museum, 1891,0414.570. Right: Theodoor Galle, after Peter Paul Rubens, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1614, engraving, 300 × 196 mm, British Museum, 1891,0414.571.



[Fig. 2]
Left: Michael Snijders, after Schelte à Bolswert and Peter Paul Rubens, *Saints Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier*, c. 1650, engraving, 136 × 100 mm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, H/II/22/42, DG 2019/1/586. Right: Schelte à Bolswert, after Peter Paul Rubens, *Saints Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier*, c. 1630–1655, engraving, 395 × 257 mm, British Museum, 1891,0414.804.

mounting on a wall, or inserting into a frame, to a mere 13 × 10 cm [Fig. 2]. At those proportions it was now instead geared to being distributed easily en masse – to being held in the hand or tucked into the pocket.

Though such objects played a pivotal role in practices of material devotion that had grown in Antwerp in the wake of the Reformation, they are admittedly not much to look at. Few scholars thus ever stop to consider Snijders's art, implicitly deemed unworthy for being both belated and technically inferior to the original works that he and the engravers in his stead "simply" reproduced. From a certain point of view, this is understandable: Snijders's products hardly rise from the quagmire of materials more comfortably handled by religious historians and cultural anthropologists. Even in that domain, he is far from unusual; in fact, his shop produced objects using practices that aligned it with an entire cadre of printmakers working in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Antwerp.

Yet at some point in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, Snijders engraved a series – of at least twenty-two prints [Fig. A–Fig. T] – extensively mobilizing copied elements in a mode of intertextual or interpictorial citation that positioned his work squarely within a culture of elite artistic practice. On one sheet alone, for instance, Anthony Van Dyck (with a label on his lapel) turns jauntily over his shoulder to stare out at the viewer; below him, Titian gazes off, in full profile, into the distance; and the richly bearded Plato looks up to the heavens [Fig. 3]. Quite the cast. Each of these figures was, as we will see, copied from another print. But such high-art references unfold within – or are even gestated by – a veritable yard sale of visual forms. Snijders sets his citations within pomegranates that are placed above a pair of angels who embrace next to a mongoose. Those subsidiary details and motifs were also copied. In fact, nearly every single form in Snijders's series has been taken from another artist. In this, the pomegranates that structure the assemblage act as a cue. The classical symbol of fertility is an unusual frame. Yet it is also a clever pun for the emulative artistic act: after all, it was through such a process of borrowing that early modern thinkers understood the inventive artist to be able to bring forth an abundance of pictorial fruits.[5] When handled competently, the copy, like the pomegranate with its many arils, could produce copiousness.

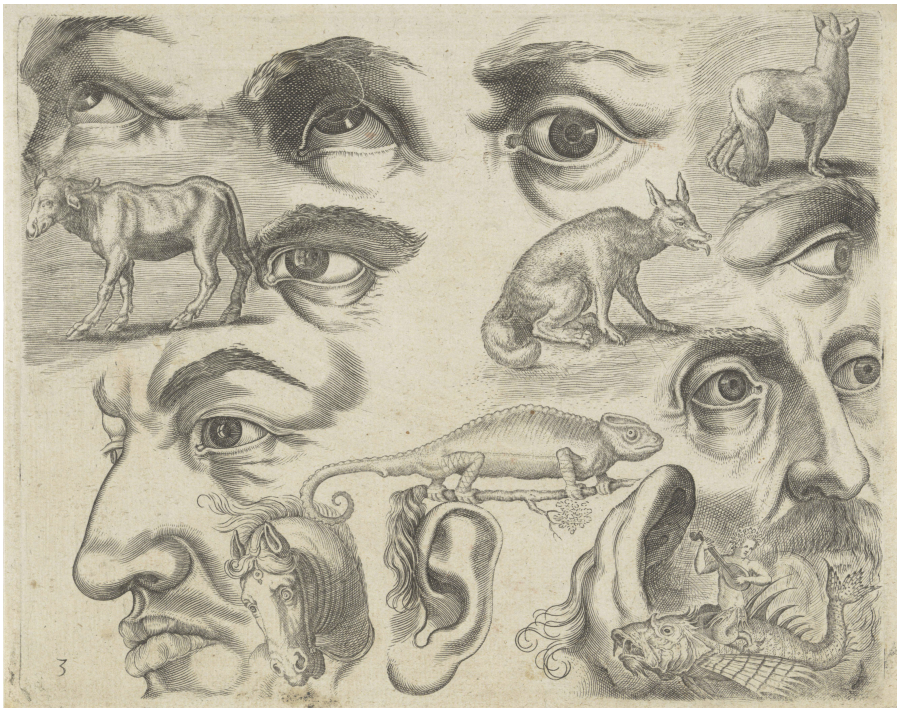
5
On concepts of *aemulatio*, see Jeffrey M. Muller, Rubens's Theory and Practice of the Imitation of Art, in: *Art Bulletin* 64/2, 1982, 229–247; Mark A. Meadow, Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*, Æmulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style, in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 47/1, 1996, 180–205; Maria H. Loh, New and Improved. Repetition as Originality in Italian Baroque Practice and Theory, in: *Art Bulletin* 86/3, 2004, 477–504; Elizabeth Cropper, *The Domenichino Affair. Novelty, Imitation, and Theft in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, New Haven, CT 2005. See also recent work on northern European prints and copying in transcultural frames: Stephanie Porras, Going Viral? Maerten De Vos's St. Michael the Archangel, in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 66/1, 2016, 54–79; Aaron M. Hyman, Inventing Painting. Cristóbal de Villalpando, Juan Correa, and New Spain's Transatlantic Canon, in: *Art Bulletin* 99/2, 2017, 102–135; Heather Madar (ed.), *Prints as Agents of Global Exchange 1500–1800*, Amsterdam 2021.



[Fig. A]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 1*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 144 × 193 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-36.



[Fig. B]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 2* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 232 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-57.



[Fig. C]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 3*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 169 × 211 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-59.



[Fig. D]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 4*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 211 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-60.



[Fig. E]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 5*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 154 × 201 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-678.



[Fig. F]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 6*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 190 × 268 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-61.



[Fig. G]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 7*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 165 × 230 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-680.



[Fig. H]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 8*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 188 × 255 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-681.



[Fig. I]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 9*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 149 × 205 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-682.



[Fig. J]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 11*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 168 × 227 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-683.



[Fig. K]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 12* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 172 × 208 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum RP-P-2004-459.



[Fig. L]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 13*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 149 × 205 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-37.



[Fig. M]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685.



[Fig. N]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 16*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 228 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-686.



[Fig. O]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 17*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 175 × 251 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-687.



[Fig. P]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 18* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 184 × 241 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-688.



[Fig. Q]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 240 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-65.



[Fig. R]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 20* (known state 2), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 179 × 244 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-66.



[Fig. S]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 21*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 183 × 256 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-691.



[Fig. T]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 22*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 156 × 209 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-692.

Given Snijders's broader career, the turn to this type of visual production comes as something of a surprise. But perhaps it should not. For he was uniquely positioned to survey the field, to see the full range of Antwerp's products and to mobilize them to whatever ends suited him. In the only substantive writing on Snijders's series, Caroline Fowler intuitively dubs these works "metaprints".[6] However, this term shares with Victor Stoichita's notion of "meta-painting", from which it derives, a focus on pictorial mechanics that does little to account for the works' particular medial conditions nor pushes one to address Snijders's position in Antwerp's artistic markets – markets out of which his engagement with such medial conditions emerged. As I will argue here, Snijders's series indeed functions as a self-reflexive commentary on print, but it does so by foregrounding the medium's specific technological capacities – chief among them reproduction, multiplicity, and (perhaps paradoxically) mutability. For these prints were released in several states that together highlight the technical possibilities of addition and subtraction – a type of metamorphosis – which the printmaker's copper plate was uniquely capable of accommodating. Taken as a series and across states, these prints show an acute awareness of art's history; notions of invention, originality, and artistic rivalry; boundaries between "high" art and "low" material culture; and several types of audiences for prints – those seeking instruction, trained artists, and (most of all) connoisseurs looking for visual and intellectual delight.

Each of this essay's sections is designed to foreground one or more technical or conceptual aspects of printmaking, aspects that Snijders amplified or thematized such that they comment upon printmaking's potentials and his own place within the industry of print that had developed in Antwerp over the preceding century. He did so, in no small part, by copying from works of art that had themselves already been filtered through print. In repurposing the work of others both extensively and cannily, Snijders challenges many presumptions about modes of artistic production and the categories of artists who engaged them. This was true as much at the moment of the series' creation as it is for modern, academic histories of early modern art broadly and of Flemish painting and print, specifically. It is for this reason, I suggest, that the series should act as a critical locus for art historical attention. In one sense, then, this is an essay on a single artist and a single series; but these open onto a nexus of creators, connoisseurs, and theorists who simultaneously understood the copy as essential to artistic achievement and disavowed its importance, even militating against its creation. In Snijders's series, that tension is staged and navigated with a savviness that helps us see the problematic of the copy anew, specifically around the status of print and its reproductive capacities.

6 Caroline Fowler, Metaprints in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp, in: Lorenzo Pericolo and Elisabeth Oy-Marra (eds.), *Perfection. The Essence of Art and Architecture in Early Modern Europe*, Turnhout 2019, 231–252.



[Fig. 3]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 18*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 184 × 241 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-688.

I. Drawing on Print's History

A first step in making sense of Snijders's admittedly strange sheets comes in following their own invitation to situate the series within the history of the drawing book. Until now, Snijders's series has been uniformly referred to and cataloged as a sequence of study sheets (*studieblaaden*).[7] This nomenclature suggests that the series – numbered from 1 to 22 – amounts to a *tekenboek*, a printed book aimed at the instruction of drawing through the presentation of well-formed examples.[8] Indeed, Snijders's series has a layout and rhetoric that signals a pedagogical intent; and, to a certain extent, an early modern draftsman could very well have used the prints as fodder for learning to sketch basic forms and figures. Yet in addition to its function as a truly didactic manual, Snijders's series brings together an astonishing array of visual material, set in crafty juxtapositions, and thus acts even more potently as a commentary on the emergent intersection between drawing pedagogy and his own art of printmaking.

The printed drawing book, produced to teach the novice or amateur hand, might now seem a logical or inevitable product of the press. In fact, it was a recent innovation. Several German *Kunstbüchlein* had been published in the first half of the sixteenth century, following Albrecht Dürer's treatise on proportion; but this was a fairly isolated development.[9] It was not until the early seventeenth century, nearly two hundred years after the print's "invention" in Europe, that the technology was put to use in transmitting designs to aid in the education of artists. The genre made a unique vehicle for Snijders as an engraver and publisher. For these drawing manuals produced a transmedial condition: they placed the comparatively new medium of print at the center of the age-old practice of drawing.

No complete set of Snijders's series survives, but the known impressions – pulled from twenty of a presumed twenty-two

7
See M. E. Rikken, *Dieren verbeeld. Diervoorstellingen in tekeningen, prenten en schilderijen door kunstenaars uit de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tussen 1550 en 1630*, PhD Thesis Leiden University, 2016, 199–201; *Van Dyck, Rembrandt, and the Portrait Print* (exh. cat. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago), ed. by Victora Sancho Lobis, New Haven, CT 2016, 29; Ann-Sophie Lehmann, Eric Jorink, and Bart Ramakers, Lessons in Art, Lessons in Life, in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 68, 2018, 7–28, specifically 18–20; Fowler, Metaprints in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp.

8
No known impressions of what were presumably sheets 10 and 15, in an otherwise unbroken and sequentially numerated series, survive; it is also possible, it must be noted, that the series continued with sheets numbered past 22.

9
On the trajectory of German *Kunstbüchlein*, see Robert Keil, *Proportionslehre und Kunstbuchliteratur als künstlerisches Lehrmaterial im 16. Jahrhundert*, PhD Thesis Universität Wien, 1983, 111–157; Jaya Remond, Artful Instruction. Pictorializing and Printing Artistic Knowledge in Early Modern Germany, in: *Word & Image* 36/2, 2020, 101–134. On the precursor of the model book, see Ulrike Jenni, Vom Musterbuch zum Skizzenbuch der Neuzeit, in: *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1300–1400. Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern* (exh. cat. Cologne, Kunsthalle and Cologne, Museum Schnütgen) ed. by Anton Legner, Cologne 1978, 139–150; ead., The Phenomenon of Change in the Modelbook Tradition around 1400, in: Tracie Felker and Walter L. Strauss (eds.), *Drawings Defined*, New York 1987, 35–47.

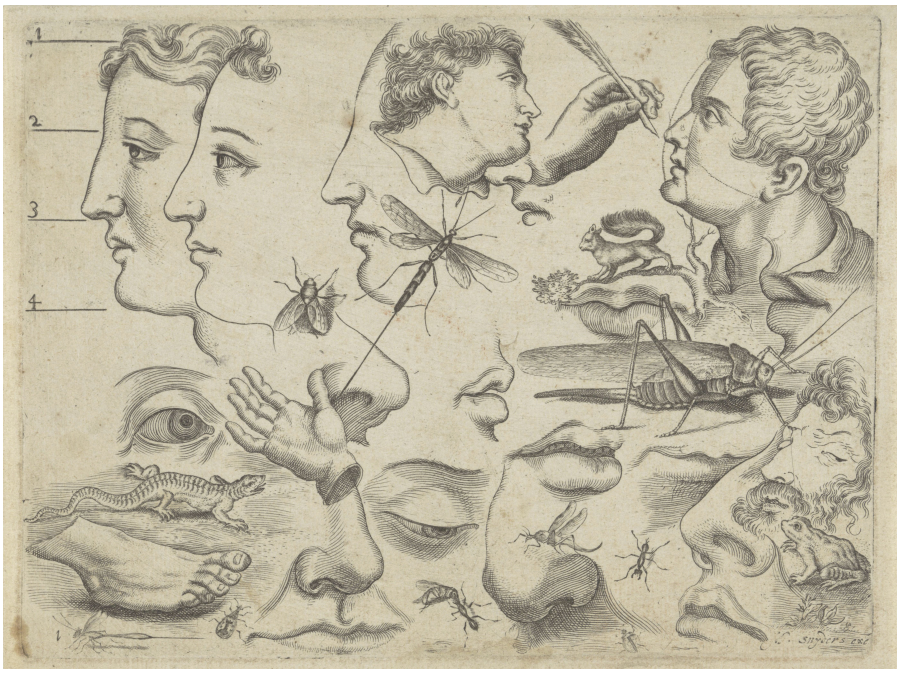
sequentially numbered plates – follow the general order of printed drawing manuals [see Fig. A–Fig. T]. From their inception, such manuals demonstrated a formulaic progression: from instructional diagrams, to illustrations of the various parts of the body as seen from many angles, to entire models illustrating how these parts were linked together as whole human forms.[10] These manuals invariably began with a title page, often featuring a young student practicing the rudiments of his craft. At the outset, Snijders's series signals at once its filiation to this tradition and the strangeness that sets it apart. It has no title page, per se, but the first print, and the one on which he signs as publisher ("excud."), acts as something of an opening preview of the sheets that follow: two eyes, two noses, a few sets of lips, and several examples to show the critical juncture between nose and lips, the point at which features are combined [Fig. 4].

These elements are set at different angles. After all, a draftsman would have to know how to render bits and pieces of the human face in perspective, if he were to make figures in space. That lesson is driven home by two full visages – a clean-shaven youth at center-top and an older, bearded man at the sheet's right edge who glares sidelong down his nose and out at the viewer. To put the pieces of a face together, though, one would have to understand proportion. Snijders thus offers both faces in profile, so that the relative positioning of facial features can be marked out as a matter of interval. He also renders the head of a young man encased in curved lines that indicate proportion, but with an upward tilt suggesting that faces will of course need to be depicted beyond the static and two-dimensional.

A turn of the page, and we begin to proceed through the different parts of a drawing book [Fig. 5]. A page on facial proportion, another for eyes and ears, a third for feet, then on to hands, and then finally, to collections of faces and passages of bodies [Fig. 6] – the composites, in other words, that one could make out of the various pieces offered to that point. The alignment of his own series with the printed drawing book via the conventional ordering of components was simple enough to grasp. But Snijders went to some effort to make clear, at least for the viewer who could spot citations, that this progression was not unthinkingly adopted nor the imposition of a nascent formula but rather emerged from a deep engagement with his predecessors. Snijders is exhaustive in his citation of nearly every printed drawing book that preceded his own.[11] On the very

10
On the logistics of drawing manuals, see *Punkt, Punkt, Komma, Strich. Zeichenbücher in Europa, ca. 1525–1925* (exh. cat. Munich, Central Institute for Art History and Heidelberg, Heidelberg University Library), ed. by Maria Heilmann, Nino Nanobashvili, Ulrich Pfisterer, and Tobias Teutenberg, Passau 2014; Caroline O. Fowler, *Drawing and the Senses. An Early Modern History*, Turnhout 2016.

11
The one notable exception to this is a very odd drawing book, one that in many ways defies the genre's emergent traditions, published by Philips Galle; on this publication see Manfred Sellink, 'As a Guide to the Highest Learning'. An Antwerp Drawing Book Dated 1589, in: *Simiolus. Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 21/1/2, 1992, 40–56. While



[Fig. 4]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 1*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 144 × 193 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-36.



[Fig. 5]
Top Left: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 2*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 232 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-57. Top Right: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 3*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 169 × 211 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-59. Bottom Left: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 4*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 211 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-60. Bottom Right: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 5*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 154 × 201 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-678.



[Fig. 6]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 6*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 190 × 268 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-61. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 7*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 165 × 230 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-680.

first page, the head of the boy being drawn was taken from Pieter de Jode's 1629 *Varie Figurae Academiche / Diversche Figuren Wt De Academia* [Fig. 7].[12] That the figure would take pride of place on the series' makeshift title page was fitting enough. Though De Jode's drawing manual was far from the earliest, it was the first published in Snijders's home city of Antwerp and was thus his series' direct predecessor.[13]

De Jode's own title page projects the stakes of drawing as it was coming to be seen: drawing or design (*disegno*) will lead to fame and honor, but only if labor is pursued with the diligence and constancy that necessarily produces abundance [Fig. 8]. The obviously Italianate logic (and here even language) that heralds a Vasarian notion of *disegno* points not only to the internationalized rhetoric around drawing that had emerged by this point but also to the origin of seventeenth-century printed drawing books in Italy. The majority of Snijders's facial features, diagrams, and motifs were pulled from a drawing book titled the *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria*, which was published by Jan Janssonius in Amsterdam in 1616. Yet almost nothing in this manual was of Janssonius's own devising. Rather, he was himself compiling motifs that had been laid out in the first printed drawing manuals, ones produced in Italy: Edoardo Fialetti's 1608 *Il vero modo et ordine per dissegnare* and the *Scuola perfetta per imparare a disegnare*, a book of models designed by the Carracci and engraved by Luca Ciamberlano, among others [Fig. 9].[14]

It would thus be easy enough to think that Snijders was simply copying from the more geographically and temporally proximate Amsterdam source [Fig. 10]. The *Diagraphia*, after all, had already repackaged the forms of an Italian tradition for local consumption. However, Snijders made crystal clear, for the viewer who was invested in such histories, that he understood the trajectories of these models through print. He carefully cited from just one page

the present article presents a fairly robust account of Snijders's sources and presents many in reproduction for comparison with his own engravings, it is not exhaustive. A master's thesis, produced during the research for this article, should count as the most complete compilation of his sources: Sophie Tiersma, *Een papieren leraar. Michael Snijders' studiebladen met tekenvoorbeelden*, MA thesis Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2022. It was a great pleasure to work with Sophie as she made progress on her thesis and to compare our findings, pointing out citations that the other had missed – much as, so this essay argues, connoisseurs in the early modern period would have done. Though none of her (many excellent) findings altered the shape or argumentation of this essay, she has my gratitude, and her work stands as an objective contribution to the scholarly record.

12
On this publication, see Simon Turner (ed.), *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700. The De Jode Dynasty, Part VII, Pieter de Jode I*, Ouderkerk aan den Ijssel 2020, 4–29.

13
On the tradition and genealogy of northern drawing books specifically, see Jaap Bolten, *Method and Practice. Dutch and Flemish Drawing Books, 1600–1750*, Landau 1985, specifically 91–95 for information on De Jode.

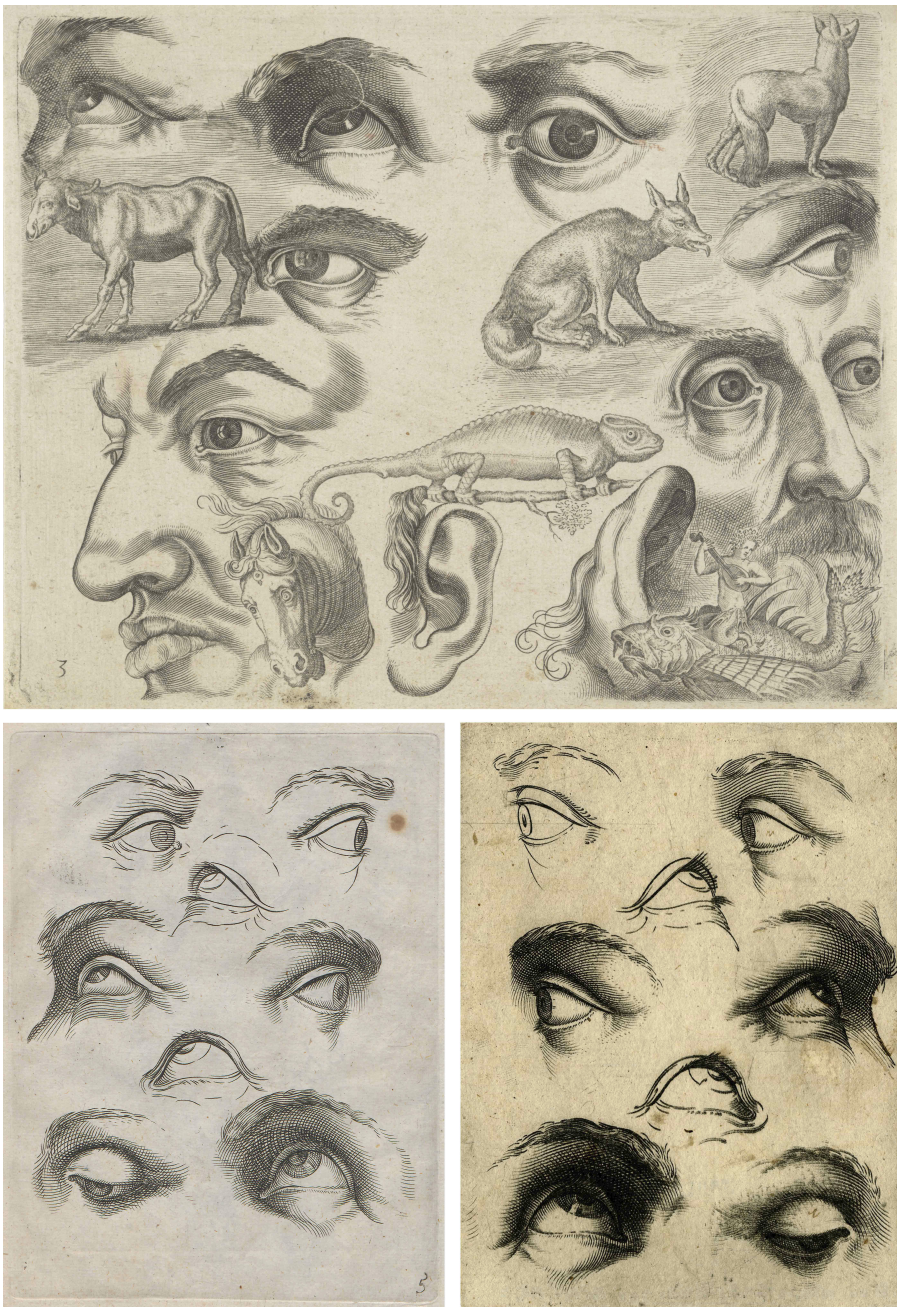
14
Scholarship is notably sparse on these early Italian examples; see David Rosand, The Crisis of the Venetian Tradition, in: *L'Arte* 11–12, 1970, 5–53; Alexandra A. Greist, *Learning to Draw, Drawing to Learn. Theory and Practice in Italian Printed Drawing Books, 1600–1700*, PhD Thesis University of Pennsylvania, 2011; Nino Nanobashvili, *Das ABC des Zeichnens. Die Ausbildung von Künstlern und Dilettanti*, Petersberg 2018.



[Fig. 7]
Left: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 1*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 144 × 193 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-36. Right: Pieter de Jode, Plate 3 of *Diversche figvren wt de academia*, engraving, 264 × 189 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1998-211.



[Fig. 8]
Pieter de Jode, Title-page of *Diversche figvren wt de academia*, engraving, 265 × 193 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-7736.



[Fig. 9]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 3*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 169 × 211 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-676. Left Bottom: Johannes Janssonius, Plate 5 of *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria...*, 1616, engraving, 290 mm (height). Universiteit Utrecht Library, ODZ 2776. Right Bottom: Luca Ciamberlano, after Agostino Carracci, *Page of Eyes from the Scuola Perfetta*, c. 1610, engraving, 145 × 108 mm, British Museum, 1874,0808.620.



[Fig. 10]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 5*, c. 1630–4160, engraving, 154 × 201 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-678. Left Bottom: Johannes Janssonius, Plate 16 of *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria...*, 1616, engraving, 290 mm (height). Universiteit Utrecht Library, ODZ 2776. Right Bottom: Johannes Janssonius, Plate 15 of *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria...*, 1616, engraving, 290 mm (height), Universiteit Utrecht Library, ODZ 2776.

of the *Scuola perfetta* that had not already been taken up by the *Diagraphia*, copying from this earlier publication the sole of a foot seen directly from below and another with a distinctively large bunion, a dramatic angle of the big toe, and a little toe curled next to the others [Fig. 11]. Much deeper in the series, Snijders also directly quotes Fialetti's *Il vero modo* with a single figure – a man's muscled back, one shoulder raised and the other depressed. Snijders even accentuated Fialetti's odd truncation of the very top of the figure's buttocks in placing it on the edge of a piece of cut fruit [Fig. 12].

These two citations are far from a casual occurrence. If Snijders's much more liberal borrowing from De Jode and the *Diagraphia* suggests a proclivity for forms already filtered through the north,[15] these isolated references begin to speak to at least one of Snijders's imagined audiences. To be sure, the sheets could serve the craftsman in search of visual fodder, of models to use as drawing aids. But these thoroughly buried citations speak to a different class of viewers poring over these prints. Indeed, the task of coordinating Snijders's forms against the pictorial record that came before him is visually taxing to say the least. Alighting on the few direct copies of Italian manuals could only have been accomplished by the expert eye, by the person – like Snijders himself – with a panoptic gaze on printed production. It is in this way that the series, as we will continue to see, is specifically geared to the connoisseur (*liefhebber*), a developing early modern persona characterized by an acuity of eye and sharpness of pictorial recall. With his visual wit Snijders entices this figure, and with his extremely particularized citations he lays a reward for that viewer invested enough in art's history and in the newly won place of the printed drawing book within it to chart those relationships.

Printed drawing manuals were fundamentally configured around the notion of copying. The student learned to draw from such a manual by reproducing the models that it provided. But the models were not themselves already or necessarily copied; rather, the drawing manual traded, in part, on reproducing the hand of a highly original master so that this mode, along with the forms it produced, could be learned by the pupil. Snijders shifted that relationship in devising a series in which every figure was itself already a copy, and specifically a copy after print. By placing these within the framework of a drawing book, Snijders suggested that these models should be copied yet again. That is, he used the medium of print and the genre of the drawing book to prompt thinking about a chain of future reproduction. But what he seems to have also realized is that the printed drawing book was the perfect medium for enticing the connoisseur. For the visual logic of a drawing book depended upon presenting graspable, separable, and manipulable units of forms – and those could be taken up just as easily by the novice hand or

15
In addition to the list of drawing books mentioned here, Fowler conjectures (rightly, I think) that a small grotesque in Snijders's series derives from another drawing book by Pieter Feddes van Harlingen; see Fowler, Metaprints in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp, 233.



[Fig. 11]
Left: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 4*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 211 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-60. Right: Luca Ciamberlano, *Study of Feet for the Scuola Perfetta*, c. 1610, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1977.66.1.28.



[Fig. 12]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 17*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 175 × 251 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-687. Bottom: Odoardo Fialetti, Plate 28 of *Il vero modo et ordine per dissegnare*, 1608, etching, 101 × 143 mm, British Museum, U,5.51.

by the eye of the connoisseur ready to make a match and find the source of the printed copy.

II. Changing States

But let us address the elephant in the room – or perhaps the grasshopper, the squirrel, the lizard, the blowfish, the walrus, or the hound. Snijders's contribution to the tradition of the printed drawing book is, to put it mildly, strange. He crowded his printed sheets in ways unusual for the didactic pages of a drawing manual, whose stock in trade was the easily excisable motif that could be clearly copied, no matter how crowded the compilation. Instead, Snijders's sheets warp around forms stacked and set into spatial dissolution. Take, for instance, the opening page: in the top right corner, a face in profile yields to another set into diagonal recession [Fig. 13]. That chin is buttressed by a nose, which gives way to a wrist, which draws the face of a young man (copied, we might remember, from De Jode). One side of his lapel dissolves into a pair of lips, the other the root of a tree, its branch weighted down by a squirrel so as to swoop over the top of yet more lips. These lips rest upon a grasshopper, which balances its right front leg on the forehead of an older man, who is himself set within another head; the beard of the first gives way to the bridge of the other's nose and nostril, the cheek serving as a ledge for a frog below which Snijders has signed as publisher.

By using up every bit of the page in a manner at once casual and economical, the series shifts the didactic, sequential content of the printed drawing book to merge it with the related, but distinct, genre of the artist's sketchbook. A drawing book offers itself up for an extractive process: the young artist will come and learn a series of operations; he or she will also select motifs and take these along in the form of copies on new sheets. The sketchbook represents a next phase of artistic education and achievement in which the artist (poised with the abilities a drawing book had afforded) takes pen in hand and goes out in search of material. The sketchbook's logic is thus instead accretive; its sheets can be filled to the brim – as are Snijders's – in a mode at once visually rapacious and materially economical. It is also the space in which the copy takes on its potency, where a visual repository is made – the best pieces from masters past and present – out of which an artist can then forge a signature style and manner. It is not just the visual disposition of his sheets, then, that aligns Snijders's series with the sketchbook, but the fact that nearly every one of his figures has been taken from another work of art. Within those copies, as we have seen, one finds pieces and sequences corresponding to the drawing book's traditions. But in filling his sheets, Snijders has pushed those sequences into a different register. In this sense, the series offers not just models but so too a *working* model for the young artist, a masterclass in artistic emulation.



[Fig. 13]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 1*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, detail, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-36.

Confronting sheet 9 of the series, for instance, the viewer is pushed to imagine an artist on the go, traveling to churches and collections to draw and filling all the usable areas of his page with pleasing head studies [Fig. 14]. But it hardly took the connoisseur to realize that Snijders was but an armchair traveler. Nearly the entire grouping of figures has been taken from Peter Paul Rubens's exceedingly famous *Tribute Money*, as engraved by Lucas Vorsterman [Fig. 15]. Snijders has deconstructed the composition, which depended upon a dramatic interplay of unified gazes. Now, should one know the source, the figures, who stare so intently into nonspace, gently mock the intensity of that original. For the only male head not drawn from Vorsterman's engraving, Snijders turned to another print designed by Rubens [Fig. 16]. In that Ecce Homo, the figure had played a deictic role, quite literally pointing to Christ's taut and tortured body. As the largest face on Snijders's sheet staring out at the viewer, this head – if one has the source in mind – still acts to entreat: Do you see, he seems to plead, this splintered composition? Do you grasp what Snijders has done with Rubens?

These sheets of repurposed motifs mobilize this type of droll effect to put Snijders's intellect on clear display. Moreover, they serve to animate a commentary on the medium of print. The sketchbook, definitionally, is not printed; but Snijders shifts its visual idiom to the medium of reproducible engraving, again pulling drawing and its histories into a world of reproduction. In doing so, Snijders also widened the series' reach beyond both the young artist and the highly accomplished connoisseur. For not every viewer needed to come with an encyclopedic visual repertoire in order to be enchanted by its formal and iconographic juxtapositions, which range from the fantastical to the simply silly. One might miss that an eye had come from Ciamberlano and been copied subsequently into the *Diagraphia* [Fig. 9], but still giggle at the sight of a fox panting at its corner, as if expectantly hoping for a tear that he might lap up [Fig. 17]; or at the cow across the sheet that, in facing the opposite direction and standing above the eye, threatens it with a quite different sort of bodily action; or at an unruly tuft of a man's sideburn that twists into a branch for a chameleon; or at a guitar-wielding merman who rides a fish right next to an ear cupped and positioned so as to get a raging headache from the next strum of the strings. Each of those elements was copied from other printed sources – animals from a series by Adriaen Collaert, the merman from one of that same engraver's designs for a fantastical platter.

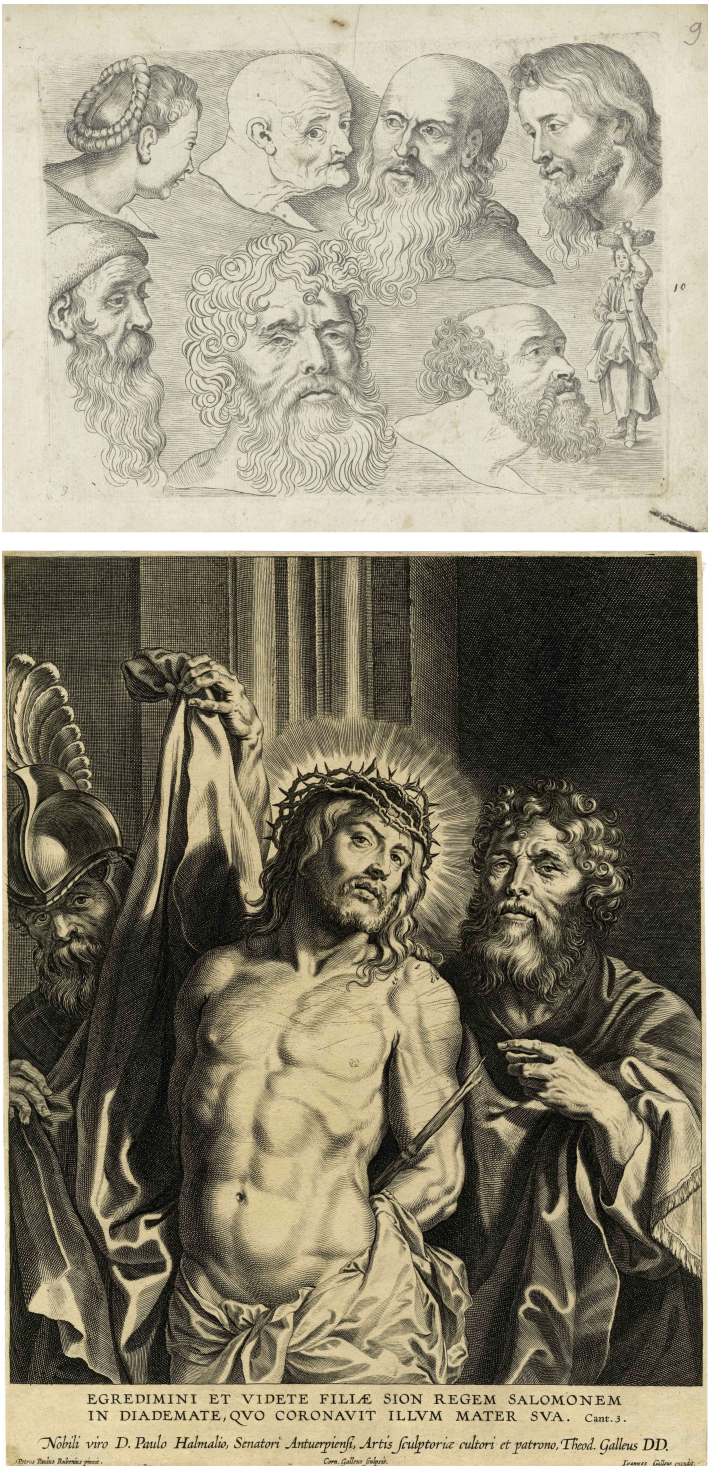
In all cases, what is so remarkable about Snijders's staging of these visual puns and relationships is how they emerged across different states of his engravings. Herein lies the most explicitly technological commentary on print's capabilities. Changes between states created a layered or stepwise performance of citations and transformations that ask the viewer to track shifts from one version to the next. In that process, a generative impulse latent within the reproductive mechanism of print is exposed. In its first state, the composition of plate 19 was sparse: a fox gazes off into the distance,



[Fig. 14]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 9*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 149 × 205 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-682.



[Fig. 15]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 9*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 149 × 205 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-682. Bottom: Lucas Vorsterman, after Peter Paul Rubens, *Tribute Money*, 1621, engraving, 273 × 363 mm, British Museum, R,3.58.



[Fig. 16]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 9*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 149 × 205 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-682. Bottom: Cornelis Galle I, after Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1630, engraving, 365 × 281 mm (sheet, trimmed), British Museum, 1891,0414.1295.



[Fig. 17]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 3*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 169 × 211 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-676. Left Bottom: Adriaen Collaert, plate 17 of *Animalivm Qvaddrvpedvm*, 1595–1597, engraving, 123 × 190 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1905-5236. Right Bottom: Adriaen Collaert, *Arion on a Dolphin surrounded by a Border decorated with Sea Creatures*, engraving, c. 1580–1600, 162 × 161 mm (sheet), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.136.715.

looking past apricots laid out in a still life before it [Fig. 18]. But in the second state, the animal confronts its own fur on the minutely described lapel of Frederick, Elector of Saxony made famous in an engraving by Dürer. This was an impressive act of transformation, requiring that Snijders burnish away the apricot and engrave the Elector in its place, perfectly positioned so that the disembodied forearm above could become the floppy brim of his hat (and, simultaneously, a mountain slope for a billy goat!).

Such state changes build a tension between erasure and generation that places the question of medium at the fore. Print here enables the compiling of citations and sources in a way that drawing on a single sheet could not. Snijders added by taking away, produced by creating space for yet more copying and for the playful recombination of forms. Whereas a drawn composition exists on a page, and changes to it require erasures that largely disappear if forms are to be replaced, a print executed in states allows reconfiguration via subtraction and addition along with a recording of that process. The forms of one state are shifted via burnishing the plate and re-engraving it for a new state, but a record remains of both.

Snijders visually metaphorized this operation directly across the sheet [Fig. 19]. There, a toucan (copied from Adriaen Collaert) has been added over a vanished carnation so as to then take away an oversized bite of fruit; the bird narrowly misses the hat of Quentin Metsys, whose face was copied into that other apricot from Hieronymous Cock and Domenic Lampsonius's 1572 *Pictorum alicquot celebrium*, a book celebrating the most esteemed Flemish artists through both engraved portraits and accompanying verse.[16] In the third state of the print, the figure of Lucas Vorsterman joins the group, having been transferred from Van Dyck's *Iconographie*, a project that acted as a seventeenth-century rejoinder to that pictorial celebration of northern masters [Fig. 20].[17] Those genealogical relationships between artists and their products emerge through print's particular productive power: to reproduce in multiple, but also to shift forms while doing so. Snijders's series, with its states, thus asks the viewer who was invested enough to acquire all (at least three) states to reconcile a visual idiom of the sketchbook with the fact that it could only have been produced in print.

Snijders was yet more self-reflexive on this point. At print 14, his series takes a turn [Fig. 21]. It shifts from the traditional order of a drawing book – the assortment of body parts and then entire

16
On the Pictorum and Hondius's re-edition, see Hans-Joachim Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert*, Hildesheim 1984, 18–44; Walter S. Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon. Karel Van Mander's Schilder-Boeck*, Chicago 1991, 143–159.

17
On the *Iconographie*, see Arthur M. Hind, Van Dyck. His Original Etchings and His Iconography, in: *The Print-Collector's Quarterly* V, 1915, 1–37 and 229–253; Marie Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *L'Iconographie d'Antoine van Dyck. Catalogue Raisonné*, Brussels 1954, 2 vols.; *Anthony van Dyck as a Printmaker* (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum and Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus), ed. by Carl Depauw and Ger Luijten, Antwerp 1999, particularly 73–217.



[Fig. 18]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 240 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-65. Left Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 2), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 176 × 238 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-458. Right Bottom: Albrecht Dürer, *Frederick III Elector of Saxony*, 1524, engraving, 193 × 126 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-1278.



[Fig. 19]
Left Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 240 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-65. Left Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 2), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 176 × 238 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-458. Right Top: Adriaen Collaert, Plate 9 of *Avivm vivae*, 1598–1602, engraving, 132 × 184 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-BI-6018. Right Bottom: Johannes Wierix, *Portrait of Quentin Massijs* from the *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae Inferioris effigies*, 1572, engraving and letterpress, 229 × 121 mm, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-67.050.



[Fig. 20]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 3), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 176 × 240 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-689. Bottom: Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Lucas Vorsterman*, c. 1630–1632, etching and engraving, 245 × 156 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1940-1589.



[Fig. 21]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685.

bodies – to various prints that comment directly on artists and their outputs, commentaries that often included these artists' own visages (of the type just discussed) in ways dependent upon state change. At that juncture, Snijders keys attention to print's power of metamorphosis. Actaeon's hounds already encircle him with jeering barks and snarls even before he has fully become the stag that will be sacrificed as punishment for his intrusion on Diana and her nymphs at their bath [Fig. 22].[18] Nessus carries off Deianira as Hercules shoots after him; but his poisoned blood will ultimately transform Hercules himself [Fig. 23]. Deianira, in a fit of rage that leads her from reason, spreads a vial of the blood on Hercules's cloak, which will sap his power and physical prowess.[19] These scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were conceived by the Italian Antonio Tempesta but printed in Antwerp by Pieter de Jode after the turn of the seventeenth century.[20] And, of course, Ovid had been a touch point for artists in the north from the time mannerists in Haarlem took up the classical source to mine for both triumphant history painting and erotic cabinet piece alike. So important was Ovid that Karel van Mander devoted an entire section of his 1604 *Schilder-boeck* – the northern counterpart to Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* – to glossing the *Metamorphoses*.[21]

Yet Snijders's fourteenth sheet is far from a commentary simply on the depths that could be plumbed from a classical text or even just an Ovidian conception of transformational poetics. Snijders sets these tales above figures of a much stranger nature. A pair of Boschian creatures, copied from a print made after a design by Arendt van Bolten, duel at dead center [Fig. 24]. At the upper corners, hybrid monsters caper. At lower left, a specific referent emerges, and one upon which Snijders lavished unusual attention. What appears to be a rooster crows and whips his lizard tail to the side. This is a basilisk – a mythical creature described by writers of natural history from Pliny onward and included in Aesop's fables. Snijders most likely copied this rendition from a related series of

18
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, London 2004, Book III, 155–191.

19
Ibid., Book IX, 101–238.

20
The scene of Nessus and Deinaira comes from: Pieter de Jode, *Metamorphoseon sive transformationum Ovidianarum libri quindecim, Aeneis fromis ab Antonio Tempesta... incisi, et in pictorum antiquitatisque studiosorum gratium nunc primum exquisitissimis sumptibus a Petro de Jode... in lucem editi*, Antwerp 1606; on these prints, see Turner, The New Hollstein. The De Jode Dynasty, Part VII, 234–325. De Jode departed from that series in his selection of a different print designed by Tempesta – notably one that features Actaeon at a more intermediary moment of transformation; see Marjoleine Leesberg, *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450–1700*, ed. by Peter van der Coelen, 10 vols., Ouderkerk aan den IJssel 2018–2020, Part VIII, 113–115, no. 938. On the relationship between Tempesta and De Jode, see Eckhard Leuschner, *Antonio Tempesta. Ein Bahnbrecher des römischen Barock und seine europäische Wirkung*, Petersberg 2005, 461–463, 532–533, 540–544.

21
Van Mander's *Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis* (Interpretation of the Metamorphoses of Ovid) is the fifth book of his *Schilder-Boeck*.



[Fig. 22]
Top: Antonio Tempesta, *Actaeon Turned into a Stag*, 1620–1630, etching, 237 × 325 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-207.808. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685.





[Fig. 23]
Top: Antonio Tempesta, *Nesus and Deinara* (Plate 83 of Pieter de Jode's *Metamorphoseon sive transformationum...*), 1606, etching, 104 × 117 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-37.857. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685.



[Fig. 24]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685. Bottom: Unknown artist, after Arendt van Bolten, *Two Grotesque Figures*, 1600–1630, engraving, 142 × 174 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-24.

emblematic fables published in Antwerp by Phillip Galle in 1578 [Fig. 25]; the figure had first appeared in a version of Aesop published in Bruges and was copied again for another in Prague in 1608. Each was published with the "same" compositions but with slightly different appended texts. Snijders and his audiences may well have known all three, meaning that, no matter the exact source, they could ultimately bring a range of associations, both textual and pictorial.[22]

In each of these books, the basilisk is described as one of the deadliest creatures, capable of killing with glance alone. Snijders stages that glance against itself by making an unusual intervention around his source. Normally satisfied with simply borrowing his figures and forms, Snijders has here gone to the unusual – indeed, singular – effort of adding an element not present in the source engraving: a mirror with the creature's outline reflected within it. The pictorial conceit echoes the procedures of print by both doubling and flipping; the mirror thus leaves the monster to face its own terrible visage and thereby prove its own downfall. The basilisk, with its wicked glance, signals that the copy was not always so innocent: proliferating visions flipped to and fro could ultimately undo themselves entirely.

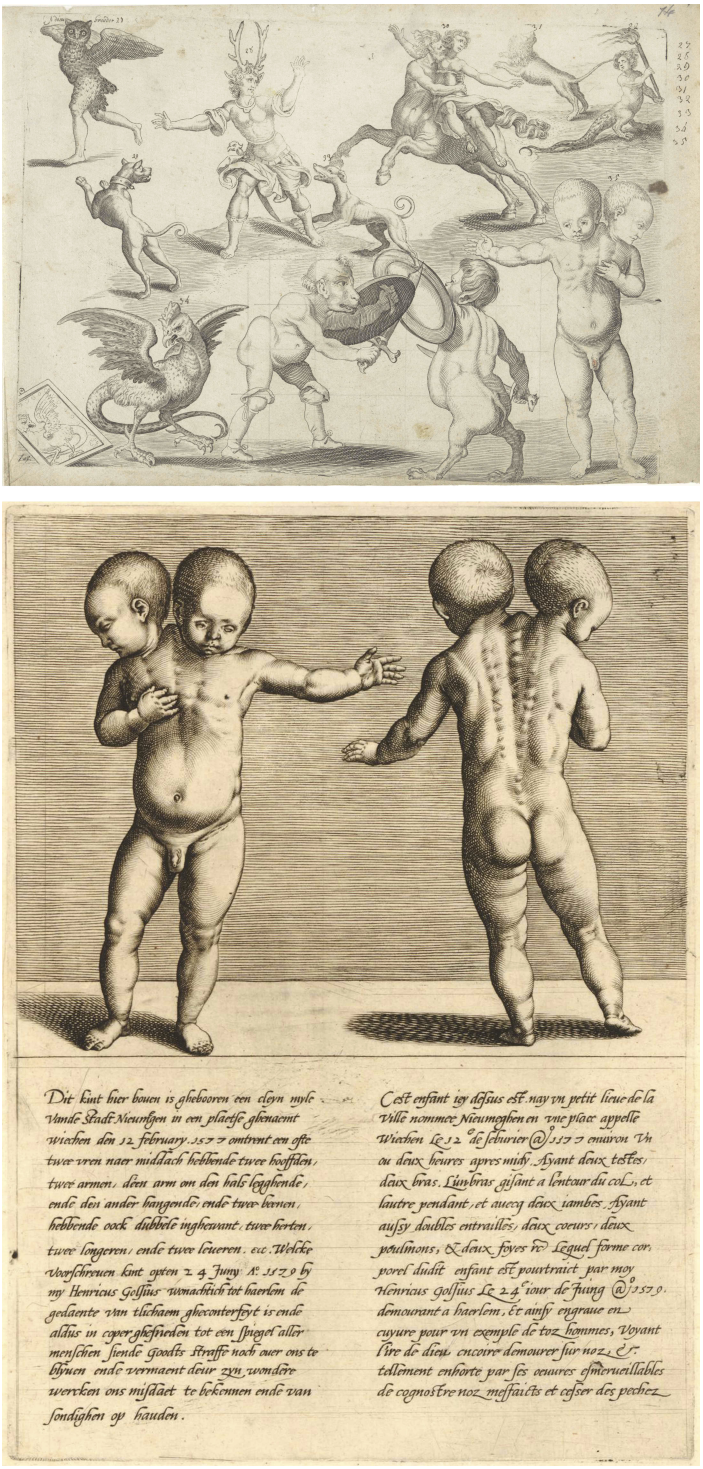
These otherworldly creatures, of both myth and marvel, are pulled into a different focus by the two-headed child at right. Copied from a little-studied engraving by Hendrick Goltzius, these conjoined twins were born – so the print tells us – near Nijmegen in 1577, having but a single pair of legs with which to move but two heads, two hearts, two livers, etc. [Fig. 26].[23] Made of god's design, and seemingly as an omen of his displeasure and potential wrath, this being was copied (*gheconterfeyt*) from life by Goltzius himself. But within the frame of Snijders's series, the figure also again highlights the mirroring and symmetry of printmaking itself. One yields to two as the sheet is pulled from the plate – matching, doubled

22
The three books are the *De warachtighe fabvlen der dieren* (1567), the *Esbatiment moral des animaux* (1578) and the *Theatrum Morum* (1608), but the edition history of copies and derivations is yet more extensive; on these publications and their genealogies, see Marc van Vaeck, Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Dutch 'Emblematic' Fable Books from the Gheeraerts Filiation, in: *Emblematica* 7, 1993, 25–38; Paul J. Smith, Cognition in Emblematic Fable Books. Aegidius Sadeler's *Theatrum Morum* (1608) and its Reception in France (1659–1743), in: Karl A. E. Enenkel and Wolfgang Neuber (eds.), *Cognition and the Book. Typologies of Formal Organisation of Knowledge in the Printed Book of the Early Modern Period*, Leiden 2005, 161–85.

23
On the print, see Pieter Roelofs, Een Wijchense peuter op bezoek bij Hendrick Goltzius, in: *Tweesromenland. Maas en Waals Tijdschrift voor Streekgeschiedenis* 93/3, 1997, 3–12; Michiel C. Plomp, The Beauty or the Different Guises of Nature. Studies of the Natural World and Landscapes, in: *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617). Drawings, Prints and Paintings* (exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Toledo, OH, The Toledo Museum of Art), ed. by Huigen Leeflang, Ger Luijten, and Lawrence W. Nichols, Zwolle 2003, 169–201, specifically 170, fig. 69. The Snijders print is cataloged in Huigen Leeflang (ed.), *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700. Hendrick Goltzius, Part I*, Ouderkerk aan den Ijssel 2012, 306, no. 185, copy.



[Fig. 25]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685. Bottom: Phillips Galle, Page 6r of the *Esbatiment moral des animaux*, 1578, 200 mm (height), Library of Congress, PQ1627 .H55 1578.



[Fig. 26]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685. Bottom: Hendrick Goltzius, Broadsheet illustrating conjoined twins born in Nijmegen, 1579, engraving, 228 × 164 mm, British Museum, 1876,0510.633.

forms united forever but mirrored or inverted.[24] Just as Snijders set about shifting his plates, burnishing away so as to form and reform, his sheet of marvelous creatures reminds us that metamorphosis was not merely the stuff of legend and of dreams but was also simply endemic to print as a medium. So too was it constitutive of the ways that generations of artists, particularly in Antwerp, used and reused each other's forms, inherently transforming them in the process.

III. The Collection's Genealogy

The only way to appreciate the full range of Snijders's pictorial citations and thus the logic of accretion and metamorphosis so central to both early modern notions of copying and printed production was to possess all the states of his prints. Printmakers not uncommonly pushed clients to acquire multiples through the creation of series, state changes, or both.[25] While many viewers might have picked up, used, and enjoyed Snijders's sheets, the delightful absurdity of his pictorial play, as we will see, forms an intensive commentary on the artistic legacies of early modern Europe that created a product uniquely geared to a class of connoisseurs and, perhaps, elite artists – precisely those viewers primed to appreciate it. Connoisseurs (*liefhebbers*) were collectors and cognoscenti increasingly looking to put their own intellects on display through their parsing of the relationships of pictures.[26] Yet were they to pick up Snijders's series, they would also have gotten a sense of Snijders *himself* as a collector and, with that, an understanding of reproductive printmaking as an act of collecting that required gathering together motifs as they moved through an industry whose aim was the multiplication of form. His series suggests that it was in print – even more so perhaps than in the heralded media of painting or sculpture or sumptuous decorative arts – that one could best collect so as to train the eye. And, moreover, that Snijders's specific register of printmaking – in which publishers took hold of all forms, both grand and seemingly less significant – offered the best vantage point from which to do so.

Even in the series' seemingly most didactic images, the learned viewer is set up to recognize emergent histories of early modern

24
In thinking about the logics of print, this essay is indebted to Jennifer L. Roberts, *Contact: Art and the Pull of Print; The 70th A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts* (June 30, 2023).

25
For general information on the innovation of the series, see Antony Griffiths, *The Print before Photography. An Introduction to European Printmaking, 1550–1820*, London 2016, 169–173; on state change, see *Rembrandt's Changing Impressions* (exh. cat. New York, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery), ed. by Robert Fucci, David Freedberg, and Deborah Cullen, Cologne 2015, particularly 20–31.

26
On the importance of the performance of the connoisseur in Antwerp, see Elizabeth Honig, The Beholder as Work of Art. A Study in the Location of Value in Seventeenth-Century Flemish Painting, in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46, 1995, 252–297; ead., *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*, New Haven, CT 1999.

art. For his diagrams of facial proportion, as we have seen, Snijders copied from the 1616 *Diagraphia* drawing manual. But by the time he did so, those same diagrams had also been taken up by the Flemish engraver Paulus Pontius for Rubens's so-called theoretical treatise [Fig. 27].[27] Snijders's redeployment of such motifs was more than simple economical reuse. For from one state to the next, the didacticism of the diagram and the seemingly incidental fact of its redeployment end up producing a freighted commentary on art historical referentiality [Fig. 28]. In this case, diagrams for novice practice give way to art, having morphed into built-up faces – Albrecht Dürer's most prominent among them, labeled with both his name and his famous monogram. Though the diagrams were copied from northern drawing books, the change of states underscores that these emerged from Dürer and his 1525 treatise on human proportion; Snijders thus positioned Dürer as Rubens's forebear and, rightly, as the origin of the printed drawing book tradition more generally.

However chaotic the sheets may seem, Snijders makes clear that these layered allusions were not matters of happenstance, but of careful coordination. On sheet 8, a collection of heads is anchored by Michelangelo's at lower right, singled out as the only labeled figure [Fig. 29]. His stark profile – craggy, wrinkled, and offset with a wispy beard – was copied from a print by Giulio Bonasone, where this bust is set in a circular frame [Fig. 30]. But Snijders's lettering on Michelangelo's collar, unlike Bonasone's grand Roman majuscules – pulls the viewer close, so that they may note how a seemingly errant curl resolves, instead, into a perfectly rounded circle carefully positioned at the juncture between multiple different types of graphic hatching [Fig. 31]. To produce a perfect circle with a burin in copper is no simple task, a rarity in the history of printmaking, and certainly does not happen by accident. Thus, though it may seem subtle, the juxtaposition works to chart Michelangelo's ascendant trajectory to the pinnacle of artistic achievement as presented by Vasari in the *Lives of the Artists*. It recalls his description of Michelangelo's forerunner, Giotto, whose nearly miraculous freehand drawing of a perfect circle, symbol of artistic cultivation, would eventually find full maturity in the master Buonarroti's perfection of the art of *disegno*. The story of the circle, then, is one of drawing's supremacy, but also of its lineage; and it was certainly circulating among northern artists and their audiences, having been commented upon by none other than Van Mander in the 1604 *Schilder-boeck*.[28]

27
On this enigmatic, now-lost notebook, see Arnout Balis, Working It Out. Design Tools and Procedures in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Flemish Art, in: Hans Vlieghe, Arnout Balis, and Carl Van de Velde (eds.), *Concept, Design and Execution in Flemish Painting (1550–1700)*, Turnhout 2000, 129–151; Peter Paul Rubens, *Théorie de la figure humaine*, ed. by Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen, Paris 2003.

28
On the origins and legacy of Giotto's "O", see Andrew Ladis, *Giotto's O. Narrative, Figuration, and Pictorial Ingenuity in the Arena Chapel*, University Park, PA 2008; Norman E. Land, Apelles and the Origins of Giotto's O, in: *Source. Notes in the History of Art* 25/1, 2005, 6–9.



[Fig. 27]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 2* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 232 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-57. Center Left: Johannes Janssonius, Plate 1 of *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria...*, 1616, engraving, 290 mm (height), Universiteit Utrecht Library, ODZ 2776. Center Right: Johannes Janssonius, Plate 3 of *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria...*, 1616, engraving, 290 mm (height), Universiteit Utrecht Library, ODZ 2776. Bottom: Paulus Pontius, after Peter Paul Rubens, *Head Studies*, c. 1630, engraving, 209 × 320 mm, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-33.278.



[Fig. 28]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 2* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 174 × 232 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-57. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 2* (known state 2), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 172 × 232 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-58.



[Fig. 29]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 8*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 188 × 255 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-681.



[Fig. 30]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 8*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 188 × 255 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-681. Bottom: Giulio Bonasone, *Portrait Bust of Michelangelo*, 1549, engraving, 238 × 176 mm, British Museum, 1868,0822.63.



[Fig. 31]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 8*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, detail, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-681.

Hendrick Goltzius would, with his protean linear capabilities, act as Van Mander's northern counterpart to Michelangelo's mastery of *disegno*, as Walter Melion has so compellingly argued.[29] And thus, on Snijders's sheet of hands, a typical part of any drawing manual, Goltzius becomes an emblem for the notion of manual dexterity itself [Fig. 32]. Goltzius gazes at a rhythmic cascade of hands that zigzag down the page, quills held delicately between fingers, as if the master is overseeing a drawing lesson. A novice hand quickly sketches a face with tentative strokes in the lower corner; above, a more assured quill finishes an *actual* hand and, finally, a third is about to begin again. That this positioning was meant to comment on art's history and Goltzius's place within it is, once again, made clear for the viewer who can spot Snijders's citation: the head of Goltzius comes from a self-portrait inserted into one of his famous *Meesterstukjes*, prints produced through his masterful, emulative ability to assume the styles of other artists [Fig. 33].[30] Yet that self-portrait would also then figure in Hendrick Hondius's 1610 *Pictorum aliquot celebrium*, a re-edition that updated and expanded upon Lampsonius and Cock's earlier book celebrating northern Europe's greatest masters.[31] This doubled, layered allusion would be compounded for the viewer who knew just how esteemed Goltzius was for his hand, which acted as a kind of metonymic emblem of the artist and his work – work that included self-portraits taking the form of a curled hand positioned against the picture plane.[32]

For the most part, Snijders describes his figures and forms – irrespective of their sources – with a fairly standard and workmanlike cross-hatching that renders his myriad copies uniformly within his own idiom. The sheet praising Goltzius's hand makes a notable departure: above the rhythmic play of hands and quills, Snijders offers an unusually calligraphic flourish [Fig. 34]. This was a clever ploy. After all, having perfected the engraver's craft, Goltzius had set about reproducing the graphic effects of the burin through the

29
Melion, Shaping the Netherlandish Canon, 95–117.

30
I thank Sophie Tiersma for drawing my attention to this reference. On the *Meesterstukjes*, see Walter Melion, Hendrick Goltzius's Project of Reproductive Engraving, in: *Art History* 13/4, 1990, 458–487.

31
On the *Pictorum* and Hondius's re-edition, see Raupp, Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung, 18–44; Melion, Shaping the Netherlandish Canon, 143–159; Sarah Meier, Hieronymus Cock, Dominicus Lampsonius, and 'Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies', in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 69/1, 2006, 1–16; Stephanie Porras and Joanna Woodall, *Picturing the Netherlandish Canon*, London 2015.

32
On the *penwerk*, see Walter S. Melion, Love and Artisanship in Hendrick Goltzius's *Venus, Bacchus and Ceres* of 1606, in: *Art History* 16/1, 1993, 60–94; Huigen Leeflang, His Artful Pen. Pen Works, Sketches, Chalk Drawings, 1587–1614, in: The New Hollstein. Hendrick Goltzius, Part II, 235–263. Goltzius's importance in the series is also noted by Fowler, Metaprints in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp, 249–250.



[Fig. 32]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 5*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 154 × 201 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-678.



[Fig. 33]
Top: Hendrick Hondius, *Portrait of Hendrick Goltzius*, 1610, engraving, 199 × 124 mm (platemark), Museum Kurhaus Kleve, AK 2073. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 5*, c. 1630–40, engraving, 154 × 201 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-678.



[Fig. 34]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 5*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, detail, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-678.

use of the quill, what Van Mander called his *penwerk*.[33] In praise of Goltzius, Snijders notably departs from a standard repertoire of engraved lines to produce a passage that mimics the inky, flowing line of the quill. The sprezzatura of a small passage – a single, unbroken line – underscores the novice hand below, tentatively sketching out the face at bottom right. That is to say, Snijders has here pushed the copy or the citation beyond the purely iconographic – much as Goltzius had done before – in using line itself to praise the pen.[34]

That effect puts Goltzius into dialog with Michelangelo in the series. The only other form engraved to look "sketched" is a seated classicizing figure, posed hand-to-chin: the tomb sculpture of Lorenzo de Medici, most likely known to Snijders from an engraving by Cornelis Cort [Fig. 35]. In choosing to re-interpret the monument as a sketch, Snijders evoked what was by then a renowned context in the Medici Chapel, which had become something of an impromptu drawing school, a place for budding artists to copy great works of art.[35] Its fame was indisputable, extending to the very printed drawing books from which Snijders copied. The 1616 *Diagraphia*, for instance, ends with something of a riff on Michelangelo's grand tomb sculpture, deflating the titan figure, who now must rest upon a shield [Fig. 36]. Across the sheet, Snijders points back to that drawing book tradition. A half-skeleton/half-man, copied from Giulio Bonasone, reminds the viewer of the exercises of the draftsman – the practice of building piece into whole, of putting flesh on the bone [Fig. 37]. It was that piecemeal compilation, when practiced with diligence and constancy, that would bring forth the abundance – the cornucopia pictured in the center of Snijders's sheet – of a Michelangelo or a Goltzius.

Snijders was obviously attentive to the genealogies that ran from south to north and, sometimes, back again. To return to where we began: an early state of plate 18 shows a self-portrait of Van Dyck, etched by his own hand and eventually made popular as part of his *Iconographie* series [Fig. 38]. Snijders has positioned him directly above Titian, who is encircled by the outline of a pomegranate in which his profiled face has been placed. It is as if Van Dyck,

33
Melion, Love and Artisanship, 60–94; Leeflang, His Artful Pen, 235–263.

34
Outside of this series, Snijders was fairly uniform in his engraving practice, rendering most copied motifs in a single style. But there are indications that he thought about the intersection of line quality and collectability for at least some of his prints. In a series of horses copied from Antonio Tempesta, Snijders actually traded the burin for the etcher's needle to approximate Tempesta's etching style (with some engraved strengthening then added). Impressions of these prints, unrecorded in Hollstein, can be found at the Graphische Sammlung Albertina, It/III/10/23-24.

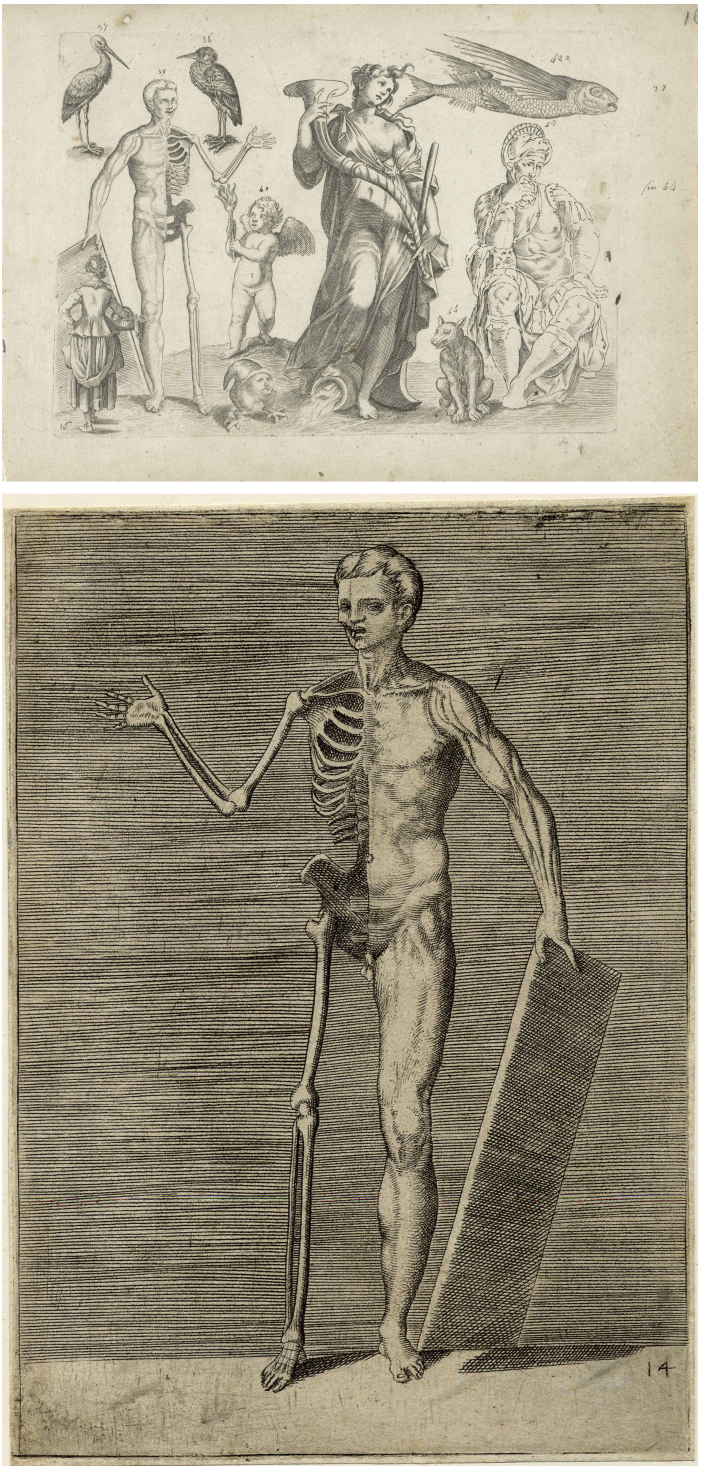
35
Raphael Rosenberg, The Reproduction and Publication of Michelangelo's Sacristy. Drawings and Prints by Franco, Salviati, Naldini and Cort, in: Francis Ames-Lewis and Paul Joannides (eds.), *Reactions to the Master. Michelangelo's Effect on Art and Artists in the Sixteenth Century*, Aldershot 2003, 114–136; Claudia Lazzaro, Michelangelo's Medici Chapel and its Aftermath. Scattered Bodies and Florentine Identities under the Duchy, in: *California Italian Studies* 6/1, 2016, 1–35.



[Fig. 35]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 16*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 228 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-686. Bottom: Cornelis Cort, *Tomb of Lorenzo II de' Medici*, 1570, engraving, 438 × 283 mm (trimmed), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-BI-6403A.



[Fig. 36]
Left: Johannes Janssonius, Plate 45 of *Diagraphia, sive ars delineatoria...*, 1616, engraving, 290 mm (height), Universiteit Utrecht Library, ODZ 2776. Right: Cornelis Cort, *Tomb of Lorenzo II de' Medici*, 1570, engraving, 438 × 283 mm (trimmed), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-BI-6403A.



[Fig. 37]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 16*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 228 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-686. Bottom: Giulio Bonasone, *Anatomical Figure*, c. 1550–1660, engraving, 156 × 107 mm, British Museum, H,5.174.



[Fig. 38]
Left: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 18* (known state 1), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 184 × 237 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-64. Right: Anthony Van Dyck, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1632–1640, etching, 245 × 155 mm, British Museum, R,1b.47.

Italianate in the extreme, has been born from the head of Titian – like Zeus birthing Athena. But the next state shows the missing link [Fig. 39]. It had been Rubens – here represented by a copy of his depiction of Plato – who acted as the bridge; he had digested Titian's lessons of color and passed them on to Van Dyck as the assistant in his studio.

The viewer must be knowledgeable enough, of course, to see that Plato had come from Rubens and thus to grasp the genealogy at stake. But the reward for the knowing observer did not end there; for the face of Titian was actually a product of none other than Van Dyck himself, who had copied and then etched this painting of the Venetian artist during his own travels through Italy [Fig. 40].[36] A circuit of Antwerp to Italy – back and forth – is completed through these faces, and through the fruit of their artistic exchange. The nature of the pomegranate – both classical and Christian symbol of abundance – signals the progenitive triangulation. But so too does the source composition from which Van Dyck and then Snijders had pulled. The aged Titian rests his hand on the belly of his much younger lover, and Van Dyck labeled his print to up the stakes of that relationship: "Behold this lovely sight! Oh, what happy fate! / That she carry the fertile fruit in her womb. / But that she carry, oh my, both life and death, is subtly / Revealed by the art of the great Titian."[37] Text and image work together to play up artistic creation as a generative act, one that here is ironically entwined with the artist's own sense of mortality.[38]

It is within that frame that Snijders's obsessive attention to insects comes into focus. Nearly every single one has been copied from models by Joris Hoefnagel, as then filtered through the prints of his son Jacob [Fig. 41].[39] On Snijders's sheets, they buzz, and crawl, and perch. First and foremost, they call to mind the widely circulated trope of intertextual and interpictorial creativity as one of pollination. Pindar, Plato, Seneca, Lucretius, Horace: all of these antique authors, revived during the early modern period, conceived of the poet's task, much like the bee's, as one of careful assembly. Humming from flower to flower and collecting the most delicious

36
For basic information on the print and sketchbook preparation, see Anthony van Dyck as a Printmaker, 240–248.

37
I thank Amyrose McCue Gill of TextFormations for her assistance with this translation, which departs from looser interpretations offered in existing literature. The inscription reads: "Ecco il belveder! Ô che felice sorte! / Che la fruttifera frutto in ventre porte. Ma ch'ella porte, ô me, vita et morte piano / Demonstra l'arte del magno Titiano."

38
On the procreative poetics of the composition, see Ulrich Pfisterer, Alternde Künstler als Liebhaber – Inspiration, (Pro-)Kreativität und Verfall. Anthonis van Dyck, in: Peter Graf Kielmansegg and Heinz Häfer (eds.), *Alter und Altern. Wirklichkeiten und Deutungen*, Berlin 2012, 55–71.

39
On the Hoefnagels, see Thea Vignau-Wilberg, *Joris and Jacob Hoefnagel. Art and Science around 1600*, Berlin 2017; Marisa Anne Bass, *Insect Artifice. Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt*, Princeton, NJ 2019.



[Fig. 39]
Right: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 18* (known state 2), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 184 × 237 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-688. Left Top: Peter Paul Rubens, *Study of Two Heads*, c. 1609, oil on panel, 69.9 × 25.1 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 67.187.99. Left Bottom: Lucas Vorsterman, after Peter Paul Rubens, *Bust of Plato*, c. 1620, etching and engraving, 135 × 94 mm (platemark), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986.1180.1368.



[Fig. 40]
Top: Anthony van Dyck and Lucas Vorsterman, after Titian, *Titian and his Mistress*, 1632–1641, etching and engraving, 302 × 231 mm, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-BI-7440. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 18* (known state 2), c. 1630-1640, engraving, 184 × 237 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-688.



[Fig. 41]
Top: Jacob Hoefnagel, after Joris Hoefnagel, Sheet 7 of *Diversae Insectarum Volatilium*, 1630, engraving, 136 × 199 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1887-A-11868. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 19* (known state 3), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 176 × 240 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-689.

of nectars, this is the task that would ultimately result in the most fragrant and pleasing of honeys.[40] Snijders's insects thus signal a traditional power ascribed to the copy within artistic training and maturation: it was through the practice of copying, whether from a master in the studio or from a drawing book, that one entered a pictorial genealogy and that one could – like the honeybee – take from the masters so as to ultimately outdo them.

Yet look a bit closer and a more ominous register opens up within Snijders's series. After all, these insects are not all pollinators in the strict sense, but rather a full array of creatures, including those better known for acts of de-generation and de-composition. His opening page hints at as much [Fig. 42]. On the only sheet on which insects overlap, one encounters an ant having found its prey, ready to dismantle the head of a fly that has expired and is now laid on its side with its unusable legs gently crossed. This is the decay of the forest floor rather than the mellifluous production of the prairie.

That duality – of pollination, yes, but also decomposition and rot – shifts a purely accretive model of intertextual borrowing (one, again, of the sketchbook) to an emphasis on a formal and mechanical process that much more closely metaphorized the engraver's task. As we have seen, Snijders's intertextual assemblages emerged, in equal parts and by necessity, from both accretion and decomposition. For Snijders, that process was not purely metaphorical or cerebral; it was mechanical. It took place on the plate itself – burnishing away and letting form disassemble gave space for new fruits. The slightly sickly tone of insects ingesting calls to mind alternative conceptions of artistic generation. And northern artists knew this well. Van Mander famously reconfigured the notion of the artist as the accretor of perfect pieces. Reporting on Pieter Bruegel's trip to Italy, Van Mander suggests that the artist had not so much sketched the Alps as "swallowed all those mountains and rocks which, upon returning home, he spat out again onto canvas and panels".[41] The perfect whole had come not from collection but from digestion and regurgitation.[42]

In that sense, we might return to Snijders's metamorphoses on sheet 14. This sheet, I have suggested, is something of a key to understanding the shifts and changes of state that the print medium allowed, that defined his pictorial logic, and that here enabled the

40
See Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy. Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, New Haven, CT 1982, 88–115.

41
Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem 1604, 215v: "al die berghen en rotsen had in gheswolghen, en t'huys ghecomen op doecken en Penneelen uytghespogen hadde." On the translation, see Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–04)*, ed. by Hessel van Miedema, 6 vols., Doornspijk 1994, vol. 1, 190.

42
On this trope and tale, see Denis Ribouillault, Regurgitating Nature. On a Celebrated Anecdote by Karel van Mander about Pieter Bruegel the Elder, in: *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8/1, 2016 (August 17, 2024).



[Fig. 42]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 1*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, detail, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-36.

staging of artistic genealogies. In the upper left-hand corner, one finds a hybrid owl-man. This is the figure of Ascalaphus, who comes, like others in the series, from De Jode's 1606 printing of Ovid's Metamorphoses [Fig. 43]. Ascalaphus was overseer of an entire orchard in Hades.[43] He was thus witness to Persephone's consumption of the arils of a pomegranate that would condemn her to remain in the underworld for part of every year. Yet the joke was on Ascalaphus: as punishment for his betrayal, he was transformed into a short-eared owl, harbinger of bad omens.

On Snijders's sheet, we see him mid-transformation. Ascalaphus chimes a note of caution around Snijders's reconfiguration of the pomegranates – these symbols of copiousness with their many arils that give way to Van Dyck, to Titian, to Rubens, and to games of artistic reference that delight [Fig. 44]. What if an artist does not end up in such a recursive genealogy via (or even perhaps because of) their acts of copying? Alternatively, what if the *liefhebber* does not grasp the chains of reference that yield meaning, thus failing to meet the challenge of their fellow connoisseur around works likes Snijders's? Ascalaphus points to this sinister side of the copy, to the bitter punishment of the pomegranate, however tempting its sweetness and its promise of seemingly infinite abundance.

IV. High-Low

Snijders's commentaries on the lofty pursuit of art, however, make for ironic or even absurd juxtapositions in the particular prints and states from which they emerge. For instance, Michelangelo's Medici tomb sculpture, produced in the sketchy idiom of the draftsman, sits below a flying fish copied from a print in a series featuring oceanic specimens engraved by Adriaen Collaert [Fig. 45]. Its tail frames the face of the figure of abundance, as if a fin could now act as a measuring device or tool for proportion. Such parodic pairings are part of the humor of these sheets – a treat for the *liefhebber*. Yet they also critically evidence Snijders's truly rapacious practice of copying, which routinely scrambled genres and idioms that we might now class as high and low. "Serious" matters and renowned masters find themselves in visual dialog with motifs pulled from a seemingly altogether different type of material. It is critical to note that art historians did not wholesale invent these distinctions and ways of thinking; these emerged and were reified in the very period in question. That is, anyone from an artist to a connoisseur was poised to understand Snijders's scrambling of genre and register and how it reflected an early modern culture of print through which forms both high and low flowed, having distinctions between them smoothed over in the process.

Pairings that bridge such registers define Snijders's series. In an early state of sheet 20, the viewer finds a still-life homage to Joris

43
See Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book V, 533–571.



[Fig. 43]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685. Bottom: Antonio Tempesta, *Ascalaphus and Proserpina* (Plate 49 of Pieter de Jode's *Metamorphoseon sive transformationum...*), 1606, etching, 104 × 118 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-H-G-139-2.



[Fig. 44]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 18* (known state 3), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 184 × 237 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-688.



[Fig. 45]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 16*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 163 × 228 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-686. Bottom: Adriaen Collaert, Plate 18 of *Piscivm vivae icones*, c. 1598–1618, engraving, 123 × 187 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2013-1-20.

Hoefnagel – himself a visual compiler of flowers, fruits, and insects – from the general layout of the scene, to the rhinoceros beetle (his veritable signature), and typical elements such as a rose and three views of plump figs [Fig. R].[44] From this state to the next, the rose startlingly becomes the Madonna and Child, its ruffled petals suddenly the Virgin's headscarf [Fig. 46]. The technical difficulty of engineering this transformation was befitting a model heralded across Europe for its artistic mastery: Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia*, as engraved by Aegidius Sadeler [Fig. 47]. Yet that citation is joined by a rather awkward giraffe in the space of one of the figs, which was only partially burnished away so that we might appreciate the formal parallel – plump bases and tall necks – between fruit and beast.

Snijders likely copied this giraffe from another print by Collaert [Fig. 48]. But it had a much longer pictorial genealogy. It appeared in the left panel of Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, but also in Conrad Gesner's *Historiae animalium*, along with Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam*.[45] Depending on one's point of view, then, this awkward and rudimentary rendition of a giraffe emerges as a copy of a copy of a copy – which perhaps had yet additional intermediary steps in its transmission across centuries. And this was far from unusual in the series. More to the point, the nature of print meant that the motifs Snijders himself copied would also be taken up by others. The mammals and fish he took from Collaert's series of animals are a case in point, finding their way into other prints shortly after their publication.[46] Snijders thus sent his sheets into an uncertain future in which citations, by dint of the nature of print itself, would multiply and perhaps be transformed in the process.

He knew this well. For his own series contains elements whose fate had shifted along the way. The fruit and flower components of Snijders's prints stand out from the other motifs of the series for having been created by the artist himself rather than copied from others. Indeed, these still life-dominated prints – numbered 17 through 20 – did not begin as part of this series. These prints were produced from plates of notably larger dimensions than the rest. And as a seemingly lone (and unnumbered) surviving impression in Brussels attests, they were originally printed as their own small

44
On the *Archetypa* and its printed production, see Vignau-Wilberg, Joris and Jacob Hoefnagel, 100–106 and 447–455.

45
Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam*, Speyer 1490, unpaginated fold-out illustration; Conrad Gesner, *Historiae animalium*, 4 vols., Zurich 1551, vol. 1, 160.

46
On the four-legged animal, fish, and bird series (all of which include specimens that find their way into Snijders's prints), see Marjolein Leesberg and Arnout Balis (eds.), *The New Hollstein. Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700. The Collaert Dynasty, Part VI*, Ouderkerk aan den Ijssel 2005, 123–187. On the notion of print as a place of chaotic multiplication and transformation, see Christopher P. Heuer, *The City Rehearsed. Object, Architecture, and Print in the Worlds of Hans Vredeman de Vries*, London 2009, particularly 99–135.



[Fig. 46]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 20* (known state 2), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 179 × 244 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-66. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 20* (known state 3), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 178 × 241 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2007-473.



[Fig. 47]
Top: Aegidius Sadeler II, after Raphael, *Madonna della Sedia*, c. 1600–1627, engraving 285 × 230 mm, British Musuem, V,4.94. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 2* (known state 3), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 178 × 241 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2007-473.



[Fig. 48]
Top: Adriaen Collaert, Plate 17 of *Animalivm Qvaddrvpedvm*, c. 1595–1597, engraving, 123 × 190 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1905-5236. Bottom: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 20* (known state 3), c. 1630–1640, engraving, 178 × 241 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2007-473.

set, with "M. Snyders fec." proudly emblazoned upon what was likely conceived as the first in the grouping [Fig. 49].[47] At some point, however, Snijders took up these plates anew, repurposing, reconfiguring, numbering, and incorporating them into the drawing book series.[48] To make these preexisting plates visually fit with the others, he aptly had to put in play changes that worked via the logic of accretion and transformation upon which the rest of the series depends. A connoisseur who either knew the original fruit and flower series or could chart the differences in scale (between these prints and the rest) could work out what had occurred. This would have yielded another insight about the mechanics of print: that latency, as much of finished products as forms in process, was another fundamental operation of the medium that Snijders's series evidences.[49]

In fact, any even remotely knowledgeable consumer would have understood that certain plates had been repurposed and thus would have been primed to see themes of reuse among the prints' forms. The uneven plate sizes disallowed cutting the series' final printed sheets to their platemarks, as was a fairly common practice. Taking the prints down in this way would, to a certain extent, have undone the series, exposing its various origins by leaving a stack of dissimilarly sized prints. In fact, all surviving impressions contain an ample border, suggesting their owners unified the group of prints by choosing a consistent size. This kept the matter of Snijders's reuse at the fore. Like the individual plates with their shifting states, the series as a whole was the product of adaptation of the materials that the artist had at hand – in this case, his own engraved copper matrices along with the printed compositions that passed under his gaze. It is thus telling that it was with these very prints that Snijders's most intense changes of state and most potent commentaries on artistic legacies and genealogies emerged, where the generative potential of fruit met the visages of masters past and present.

Snijders thus repackaged previous motifs for a viewing audience primed to understand prints, both his and others', as mere stopping points in the life of forms. In the context of Snijders's series, that is a delight. We, as viewers, follow Snijders's lead, and the copy gives way to an exuberant, playful copiousness. Copy and

47
Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België / Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Cabinet des Estampes, R/2009/7239.

48
This is what Antony Griffiths would call a "retrospective" or "false" series, another procedure of print as a medium and market; see Griffiths, The Print before Photography, 173–175.

49
This theoretical frame is shaped by Stephanie Porras, "Lateness and Latency in Early Modern Print", talk delivered at *Images on the Move. Depots. Routes. Borders. Spaces*, Warburg Institute, London, 11 May 2018. I am grateful to Porras for sharing the text of her paper; see also Stephanie Porras, *The First Viral Images. Maerten de Vos, Antwerp Print and the Early Modern Globe*, University Park, PA 2023, 47–49. Also notable on this theme is Alexandra Onuf, Old Plates, New Impressions. Local Landscape Prints in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp, in: *Art Bulletin* 96/4, 2014, 424–440.



[Fig. 49]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet Page/Still Life* (first known state), c. 1630, engraving, 179 × 244 mm (platemark), Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België / Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Cabinet des Estampes, R/2009/7239.

copiousness: these words share a Latin root and, in the early seventeenth century, were nearly inseparable concepts. The very word "copy" (*copia/copie*) had morphed from its medieval definition of abundance and plentitude to come to mean both this form of material copiousness and an object or text copied from one substrate to another.[50] The rise of printing, of course, stood at the center of that shift chronologically, but perhaps also conceptually. Never before had the copied picture or figure so quickly produced a plenitude as it came to under the pressure of the press. Snijders's prints, as we have seen, beckon viewers to dwell upon those intersections – on the copy and on copiousness and on print's role in mediating between the two – by carefully and craftily framing the copy not as a dead end, nor as a mere mechanism for disseminating original efforts, but rather as its own site of intrinsic plenitude and richness, at once material and intellectual.

Yet this kind of meta-pictorial mode sits uncomfortably, at least by certain art historical understandings, with Snijders's broader career in an industry of devotional materials that relied upon "flat-footed", "slavish", supposedly uninteresting copying – his tasks as a maker and publisher of *devotieprenten*. Period audiences understood that tension: in the rare cases when *early modern* theorists mention *devotieprenten* and their making, they are dismissive at best. In his 1604 *Schilder-boeck*, Van Mander relates the tale of Quentin Metsys's fateful entry into the painter's profession. Working as a blacksmith, Metsys was injured, became bedridden, and was thus unable to support his widowed mother. But he was presented with a fortuitous opportunity. As Van Mander explains, "Shrove Tuesday approached and in Antwerp it was the practice [that ...] the attendants of the sick or Lazarists went round [...] distributing [...] little woodcut paper saints that were hand colored [...] and they required a great many."[51] When the Lazarists visited Metsys, they advised him that from his bed "he could color in these woodcut [saint prints]. From this very modest beginning, his innate [artistic] inclination or desire was inflamed [and] he dedicated himself entirely to the art of painting."[52] In Van Mander's account, the small, printed devo-

50
"copy, n. and adj", in: *Oxford English Dictionary*. This coupling was important for the humanist rhetorical tradition; see Desiderius Erasmus, Copia. Foundations of the Abundant Style (De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo), in: *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. by Betty Knott, ed. by Craig R. Thompson, Toronto 1978, vol. 24; on its intersection with art, see Elizabeth Honig, *Copia*, Copying, and Painterly Eloquence, in: Christina Currie and Dominique Allart (eds.), *The Bruegel Family Success Story*, Leuven 2021, 207–225.

51
Van Mander, Het Schilder-Boeck, 215v: "Binnen desen middelen tÿt begon te naken den Vasten-avont en het was t'Antwerpen een ghebruyck [...] Lasarussche in de Stadt omginghen [...] en deelden over al [...] papiere Sanctkens oft Veylighkens die van Hout-print." This translation differs from but was guided by Van Mander, The Lives, vol. 1, 121.

52
Van Mander, Het Schilder-Boeck, 215v: "van dese Sanctkens af te setten soo dat hy sulcx aenghevanghen heeft. Door dit soo heel cleen begin is zijn aangeboren ghengentheyt oft lust ontsteken worden soo dat hy gantschlijck met groote liefde en vlÿt hem van doe voort heeft tot de Schilder-const."

tional image provides an important starting point (but *only* a starting point) for Metsys's artistic journey and through it an origin for the entire Antwerp school of painters. But it is an origin disavowed, left as it were in Metsys's sickbed; the artist and Van Mander move on and so too, he implies, should we.

There were more material consequences for artists, like Snijders, in an industry of print that depended so heavily upon the copy, upon siphoning off the inventions of others for the ease of reproduction in a marketplace with thin margins. In 1633, for instance, Snijders acted as a witness in a lawsuit brought against the engraver Nicolas Lauwers by Jean-Baptiste Barbé. Barbé had acquired a privilege to print and re-engrave designs by his deceased father in-law, Hieronymous Wierix; but he felt Lauwers had infringed upon this. It is not entirely clear what became of this suit, but for our purposes there are two important points. First, Barbé's claim rested on the idea that "no one should be able to copy (*contrefeyten*) or re-engrave (*naesnyden*) *in either part or whole*" the inventions for which he had garnered an exclusive privilege.[53] Such privileges were increasingly sought after by artists looking to protect their work from what they perceived as a parasitic industry of substandard printmakers willing to pilfer in order to make a profit.[54]

Second, the artists who aligned themselves as witnesses or were implicated in the lawsuit bifurcate into notably distinct artistic classes. The likes of the engravers William Collaert, Paulus Pontius, Theodoor and Joannes Galle, and Lucas Vorsterman and the painters Gerard Segers, Peter Paul Rubens, and Guillielm van Haecht lined up to defend Barbé's privilege;[55] and they are described as making their living from "painting and engraving, respectively". Aligned with Lauwers, we get a different sort of cast, a group of "engravers and art salesmen" whose names are far less familiar: Jan Cnobbaert, Alexander Voet, Martinus van den Enden, Cornelis van Thienen, Filips de Mallery, and none other than Snijders himself. The professional classification and the standing of the men in these groups could not have been lost on anyone, effectively

53
The documents pertaining to this lawsuit are found in P. Génard (ed.), De privilegiën aan de graveurs Hieronymus Wierix en Jan-Baptist Barbé geschonken, in: *Bulletin des Archives d'Anvers* 4, [1868], 460–472, quoted here 463: "niemanden [...] souden moghen contrefeyten oft naesnyden *in deel noch int geheel*" (emphasis added). For a short contextual treatment, see Filip Lemmens and Alfons K. L. Thijs, Van 'cunst' tot populair beeldmateriaal. Van Merlen twee eeuwen prentenproductie te Antwerpen (1600–circa 1830), in: Henri Pauwels, A. van den Kerkhove and Leo Wuyts (eds.), *Liber Memorialis Erik Duverger. Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, Wetteren 2006, 91–129, specifically 102–103.

54
For select treatments of copyright and privilege in this period, see Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance. Prints and the "Privilegio" in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Rome*, Leiden 2004; Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi. Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, New Haven, CT 2004.

55
An artist like Rubens had gone to great lengths to both garner and protect his own privileges; see Nico van Hout, Copyright Rubens. Cum privilegiis..., in: *Rubens et l'art de la gravure* (exh. cat. Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp and Quebec, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), ed. by id. and Paul Huvenne, Ghent 2004, 30–39.

highlighting and hardening divisions around the intellectual and the mechanical that had already begun to ossify – with print sitting at the very center of that binary distinction. There were those who invented and there were those who simply reproduced to turn a buck.[56] Not incidentally, in the course of his career Snijders both closely copied Wierix,[57] whose compositions were the subject of the suit, and also re-printed a plate featuring the Pietà that Wierix had originally engraved [Fig. 50].[58]

The timing of this lawsuit brought about by Barbé is similarly notable. No firm dating for Snijders's series has ever been offered, and the attempt to do so is made complicated by his scant biography and the lack of records related to his sales and work. The majority of prints he cites come from the first two decades of the seventeenth century. But his no less than four citations of Van Dyck's *Iconographie* amount to a *terminus post quem* that places the creation of the series – or at the very least its manipulation into such a complex and multi-faceted commentary on artistic production – right around the time of this lawsuit.[59] In the absence of other information, it would be tendentious to see these events as causal: to imagine that Snijders's series was spurred by this litigation. But with its most complicated and enigmatic states emerging within that milieu, the series' creation or existence would have amounted to something of a rebuttal to the idea of copying as derivative, as slavish, as theft. Indeed, within the emergence of the genre of the printed drawing book, within the history of printmaking, and even within the frame of the history of Flemish art more generally, one struggles to think of any word so apt to describe Snijders's series as "inventive" – copied though it so thoroughly was from parts of other prints.

Whatever the exact motivation, Snijders's sheets ruptured those implied divides, showing us that "fine" art, its history, theory and practice, were as much a part of this artist's thinking as the exigencies of an industry that seemingly cared little for such matters. If one probes even a bit below the surface, this register of Antwerp's elite artists was always part of Snijders's practice and life. Though the Hollstein entry on Snijders himself lists nothing more than small prints of saints, he owned (or at the very least published with

56
For a slightly earlier instance than the Van Mander example mentioned here, see Van der Stock's discussion of a privilege applied for by the artist Hans Liefrinck; see Van der Stock, Printing Images in Antwerp, 136.

57
On Wierix's prints and their reproduction by devotional printmakers, including Snijders, see Verheggen, Beelden voor Passie & Hartstocht, 73–76.

58
Jan van der Stock (ed.), *Hollstein's Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700. The Wierix Family*, Oudekerk aan den Ijssel 2003, nos. 179 and 179 copy h.

59
On the dating of the earliest publications and proof prints of parts of the *Iconographie* to around 1631–1636, see Arthur M. Hind, Van Dyck. His Original Etchings and His Iconography, in: *The Print-Collector's Quarterly*, 1915, 3–37 and 229–252; Mauquoy-Hendrickx, L'Iconographie d'Antoine van Dyck, vol. 1, 43–69; Raupp, Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung, 46–55.



[Fig. 50]
Left: Hieronymus Wierix, *Immaculate Virgin*, before 1612, engraving, 196 × 134 mm, British Museum, 1873,0809.959. Right: Michael Snijders, after Hieronymus Wierix, *Immaculate Virgin*, after 1612, engraving, 208 × 156 mm, British Museum, 1868,0612.393.

his name appended) the plates of such renowned northern artists as Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Hendrick Goltzius [Fig. 51].[60] In the documentary record, one gleans the same to-and-fro. On the one hand, he entered into several contracts to retain workshop staff to hand-color *devotieprenten*, and he is mentioned annually for nearly twenty years as the supplier of devotional prints for the Guild of the Innkeepers on the feast day of St. Martin.[61] At the same time, he was part of a protracted lawsuit around the rightful possession of a pair of sumptuously painted portraits by Van Dyck, featuring Margaretta de Vos and the famed Flemish painter of grandiose still lifes Frans Snijders.[62] In fact, this was a family affair; Frans and Michael were brothers – the two eldest of six children. The younger Snijders brother did not follow the elder's path to the heights of painting with an ambition that would land him in Van Dyck's *Iconographie*. Moreover, given the lawsuit and the fact that he never married, he seems to have been something of a familial pariah. Yet the series he would produce makes the implicit case that the practice of copying united poles of artistic production, even those as distant as his brother's and his own.

That trenchant critique of emergent early modern biases, once again, only registers for the viewer who had something invested in those divides, namely the elite viewer who could recognize the status of the copy and the way it was reconfigured in Snijders's series to begin with. Snijders was himself such a viewer. As an early modern engraver and publisher in Antwerp, he saw it all. And his series let you know it, pausing and juxtaposing motifs that had led long lives before ending up on these sheets. In this, one might note just how many of Snijders's own pictorial borrowings themselves came from series or compilations: from Collaert's assemblages of four-legged creatures (*Animalivm qvaddrvpedvm*), to his volume on fish (*Piscivm vivae icones*), to Lampsonius's *Pictorum*, to Hondius's later rendition of the *Pictorum*, to Van Dyck's *Iconographie*. Snijders's stacking of series underscores how multiplicity and seriality were inherent to the condition of early modern print and the dynamics of its marketplace.

Snijders may have amassed an expansive collection of prints so as to re-stage it in visual form in his drawing-cum-sketchbook. If

60
On the Pieter Bruegel *Land of Cockaigne*, see Nadine M. Orenstein and Manfred Sellink (eds.), *The New Hollstein. Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700. Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, Ouderkerk aan den Ijssel 2006, 113–114, no. 47, state II; on the Hendrick Goltzius The Hunt for Money, see Huigen Leeflang (ed.), *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700. Hendrick Goltzius, Part II*, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel 2012, 26–27, no. 205, state IV.

61
See Duverger, Le graveur et marchand imagier, 100–101.

62
These portraits are now in the Frick collection in New York (1909.1.39 & 1909.1.42); see *Van Dyck. The Anatomy of Portraiture* (exh. cat. New York, The Frick Collection), ed. by Stijn Alsteens and Xavier F. Salomon, New York 2016, nos. 10–11, 75–78. For a transcription of the document evidencing this lawsuit, see Duverger, Le graveur et marchand imagier, 109.



[Fig. 51]
Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, published by Michael Snijders, *The Lands of Cockaigne*, after 1610, 206 × 278 mm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, DG1955/156.

not, he would have had to get his hands on all of the prints from which he worked, and for a considerable amount of time; there was simply no other way to have copied them so exactingly. The visual logic of collection in the resulting series thus also pushes those who came upon it to look and to think and to *collect* more expansively, from high to low. In the process of pulling these divergent forms together, Snijders notably remade them in his own style, a frankly workmanly type of modeling that deployed a standard idiom of graphic marks. Snijders thereby shifted the interest of the eyes that looked at his sheets. For as I have argued, the intertextual schemes and the witty visual, rhetorical poetics are a delight, but a delight that actually requires looking past these prints at the level of quality, or perhaps being so visually and intellectually distracted by the forms and their spatial interplays that one stops seeing or thinking about the quality of technique to begin with. In that, Snijders's series acts as something of a trap: the viewer, having crossed a threshold that acted to separate high from low, recognizes that there is plenty of pleasure to be found there nevertheless.[63] The wit of the copy could transcend the hollow claims of originals and, perhaps so too, the virtuosity of those who traded in them.

V. Fair Use

As this essay has argued, Snijders's series pushes its viewers to expand their visual vocabularies so as to become as learned as the engraver/publisher himself. An emergent class of artistic cognoscenti in seventeenth-century Antwerp and northern Europe more generally delighted in the kind of exegesis and ekphrasis that Snijders's prints are primed to engender. In following their prompt to produce such a discourse, one comes to see the cleverness and pictorial ingenuity of these objects but also to understand the series, as a whole, as a commentary on the genres, mechanisms, and techniques of the print industry in which Snijders worked. Yet this, of course, was not the only response possible. Just as with the production of these sheets, their reception messily, if productively, scumbles traditional categories of art historical analysis.

Some of the sheets that survive are pristine, as if they spent their lives in a collector's album, ready to activate the *liefhebber*'s pleasure and be coordinated against the others in his collection. Yet Snijders's newly repackaged motifs did indeed end up in the hands of users who propelled them into a different register. That reception is now best gleaned from the marks, stains, erasures, and marginalia on prints that were manipulated. The versos of some sheets fit squarely into a culture of artistic pedagogy and practice. On one print, a now unknown artist traced feet from behind, on the verso, with red chalk [Fig. 52]; on another sheet, he or she sketched

63
My thinking on cleverness and entrapment have been shaped by Matthew C. Hunter and Francesco Lucchini, The Clever Object. Three Pavilions, Three Loggias, and a Planetarium, in: *Art History* 36/3, 2013, 474–497.



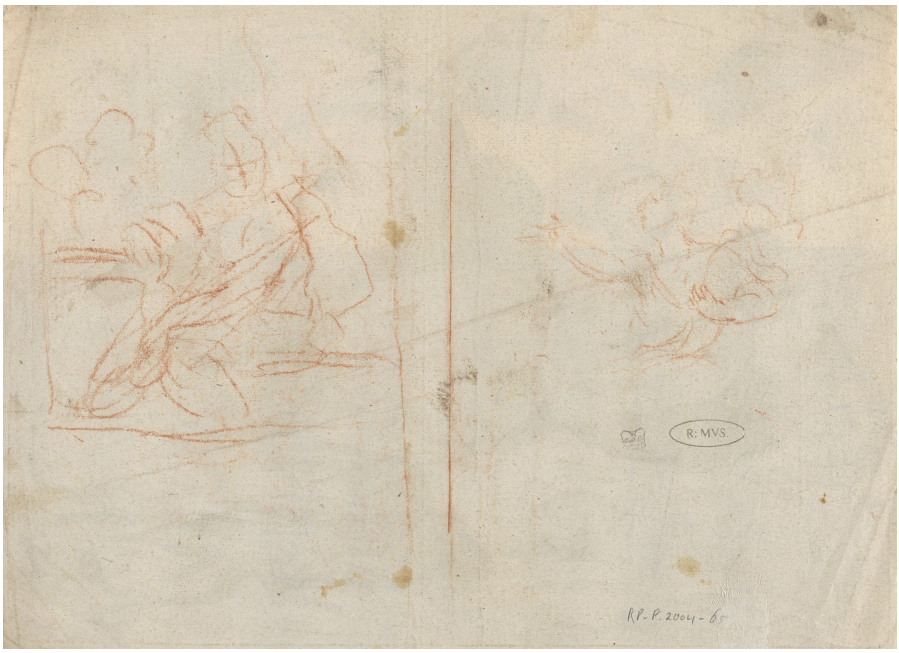
[Fig. 52]
Unknown Artist, *Tracings of Feet from Michael Snijders*, red chalk on verso of Snijders *Drawing Book Sheet 4*, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-60.

a scene, seemingly following the proportional guidelines Snijders had offered [Fig. 53]. This young hand took the rhetoric of the series earnestly – as a prompt to sketch and to invent anew. But the owner of another set of these prints had different ideas for Snijders's motifs, squaring the Boschian figure at bottom-center as an aid to transfer it to another support and exactingly reproduce it in the process [Fig. 54]. That figure, perhaps unsurprisingly, had already been taken by Snijders from a printed design by the metalworker Arendt van Bolten. With this grid, we catch a chain of reference in action: copying a copy of a copy. Via these processes, Snijders's own copies and citations then continued to cross the boundaries of high art and manual craft, inventive drawing and mechanical copying.

Indeed, those who took up his prints copied in ways that are seemingly at odds with the lofty pursuits of intertextual emulation and commentary that Snijders so deftly configured. One surviving set of impressions was heavily annotated, numbers added next to the motifs that were of seeming use to their owner – most likely to ease selection for future copying or workshop production. But these notations reveal a marked disinterest in Snijders's staging of art and its history. On their impression of plate 17 – which features a figure from no less than Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, a portrait of Raphael as engraved by Vorsterman, and the visage of Van Dyck's wife as it was shown in his own *Iconographie* – it was apparently the horned bunny (or *Wolpertinger*), the parrot, the siren, and the vignette of a donkey that were deemed useful and worthy of numeration [Fig. 55]. Finally, Snijders's sheets survive in an altogether different context of artistic manipulation. In an album of *knipkunst* (the art of cutting), his print was freed of its blank reserves and artfully arranged with other cut-up prints, including some of the same ones from which Snijders himself had in fact copied – for instance, Collaert's fish at bottom [Fig. 56].[64]

In *both* their production and reception, then, Snijders's prints bring together different registers of visual culture – high/low, art/craft, invention/derivation. These registers find themselves spliced on his sheet with little hierarchy or distinction between them. His work thus offers an opportunity for art historians to make good on repeated calls to trouble these very binaries. And Snijders's production points to the real-world stakes and institutional structures that continue to make doing so easier said than done: to see Snijders's *tekenboek* sheets (literally, physically), it is easiest to go to Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, which houses the majority of the surviving impressions. To see his other work, his devotional printing, one is better served at a place like Antwerp University's Ruusbroecgenootschap, with a specialization in religious ephemera. But

64
On this cut-up sheet, see Joyce G. H. Zelen, De schaar er in! Van knipkunst tot knipprent, in: *Boekenwereld* 30, 2014, 50–53; on the art of cutting prints in northern Europe, more generally, see Sigrid Metken, *Geschnittenes Papier. Eine Geschichte des Ausschneidens in Europa von 1500 bis Heute*, Munich 1978; Elizabeth Honig, The Gentle Art of Being 'Artistic'. Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century, in: *Women's Art Journal* 22/2, 2001–2002, 31–39.



[Fig. 53]
Unknown Artist, *Figural sketch*, red chalk on verso of Snijders *Drawing Book Sheet 19*, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-65.



[Fig. 54]
Top: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685. Bottom: Unknown artist, after Arendt van Bolten, *Two Grotesque Figures*, 1600–1630, engraving, 142 × 174 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2004-24.



[Fig. 55]
Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 17*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 175 × 251 mm (plate-mark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-687.





[Fig. 56]
Left: Unknown maker, *Collage of Several Prints*, c. 1690–1720, cut out prints on blue paper, 539 × 329 mm, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2005-439. Right: Michael Snijders, *Drawing Book Sheet 14*, c. 1630–1640, engraving, 182 × 259 mm (platemark), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-2009-685.

Snijders's broad oeuvre suggests that a revised notion of the early modern copy might have the potential to suture these still too-often fractured domains of scholarly inquiry and expand our conception of artists, their ambitions, and their modes of looking and working. And, in turn, it might help us to see the copy and the kinds of copiousness it generated as part of one holistic system, prompting a practice of art historical looking that places these many forms within single frames, even if those – just as in Snijders's own sheets – must warp and shift to encompass them.

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A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON ALEKSANDR DEINEKA'S DONBAS IMAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses both well-known and unfamiliar paintings, illustrations and mosaics depicting the Ukrainian Donbas region by the Socialist Realist artist Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969). Having been received, because of his modernism, rather sympathetically in the West, Deineka produced an array of Donbas images that can be employed as a starting point for analysing Soviet imperial ideology in art. The case of Deineka shows the extent of Soviet imperial and colonial strategies in regard to nations that were subjected to Moscow's rule, and that even Deineka, who is considered as a critical Socialist Realist, was one of the most powerful ideologues of Soviet colonial imperialism.

KEYWORDS

Socialist Realism; Aleksandr Deineka; Postcolonial; Imperialism; Colonialism; Soviet Union; Donbas; Painting; Mosaic; Posters; Illustration.

I. Introduction

Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969) is one of the very few Socialist Realist artists who has been received sympathetically in Anglo-American and western European art history. However, one of his most well-known paintings has taken on a startling new significance in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the war in the Donbas since 2014: *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* (1935). The painting depicts naked people rushing out of water in bright sunlight [Fig. 1]. It highlights the contrast between the idyllic activity of playing ball games in water during free time on a sunny day, and hard and dirty work that, for a moment, is left behind. The contrast is dramatized in Deineka's painting by the lighting conditions: the sun, at its zenith, throws stark shadows on the coal mine and railway line with a train in the background, which is completely silhouetted and thus black. The young men are now clean, but the black silhouettes of their figures in the water seem to remind us that they are coal miners. That this play with contrast is not incidental can be presumed because Deineka's earlier painting, *At Noon* (1932), which has a very similar composition, albeit with bathing women, contains neither stark light contrasts nor the coal mines [Fig. 2]. *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* is said to be the result of Deineka's *kommandirovka* (work trip) to the Donbas region in July 1935.[1] Yet neither the main concept of the composition nor the bodies come from Donbas. According to the Soviet Deineka specialist Vladimir Petrovich Sysoev, this painting is based on a drawing, *Landscape with Train* [Fig. 3], that Deineka made in 1931, and a bathing scene, pasted onto this landscape, derived from a photograph that Deineka took in the early autumn of 1932, which Sysoev found in Deineka's estate: young people bathing in a river near Deineka's Russian hometown Kursk, on the border to Ukraine.[2]

Deineka is known for breaking up the smooth surface of political reality that was so prevalent in Socialist Realism. The history of the composition *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* suggests that this painting comes from a rather unpolitical inspiration: a sketch of the countryside and a scene of leisure time from his hometown. It does not appear to conform to overtly Stalinist imagery, which distinguishes it from most Socialist Realism. But *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* does embody Stalinist ideology. Coal mining in the Donbas was of critical importance for the early Soviet Union, and the Bolsheviks took over and expanded the coal-mining area in an often brutal way that can be and has been compared to imperial and colonial strategies. People from Russian provinces on the border to Ukraine went to the Donbas to work, and with them they took the context they needed

[1] Christina Kiaer, Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s, in: *Oxford Art Journal* 28, 2005, 336; Christina Kiaer, *Collective Body. Aleksandr Deineka at the Limit of Socialist Realism*, Chicago/London 2024, 191.

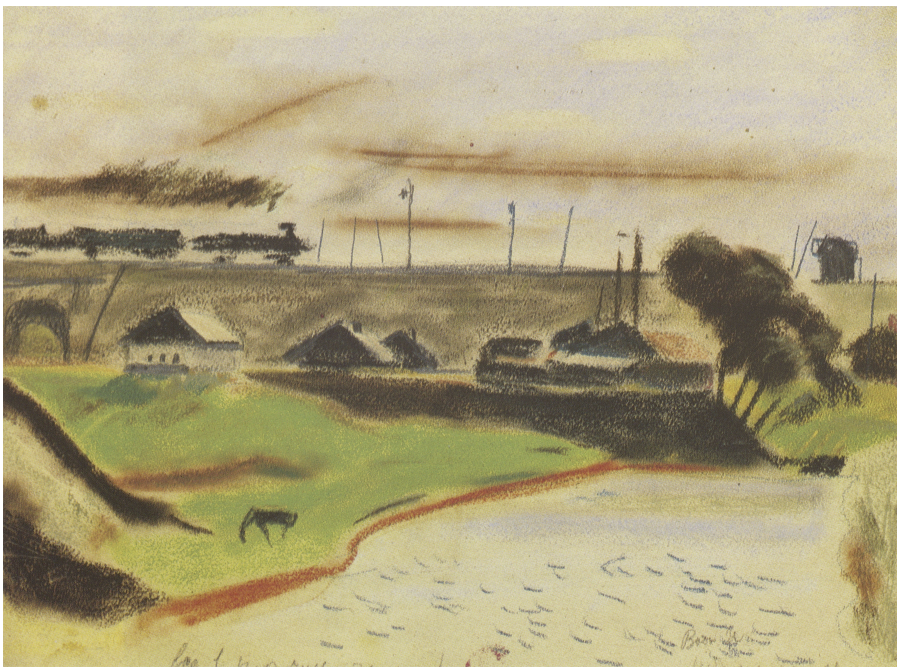
[2] Vladimir P. Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia*, Moscow 1989, 127–128.



[Fig. 1]
Aleksander Deineka, *Lunchbreak in the Donbas (Obedennyi pereryv na Donbasse)*, 1935, oil on canvas, 149.5 × 248.5 cm, Riga, Latvian National Museum of Art, in: Wladimir Syssojew, *Alexander Deineka. Malerei, Graphik, Bildhauerkunst, Monumentalwerke und literarischer Nachlaß*, trans. Tatjana Patschkolina, Leningrad 1982, 111.



[Fig. 2]
Aleksandr Deineka, *At Noon (V polden')*, 1932, oil on canvas, 59.5 × 80 cm, St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, in: *Müde Helden. Ferdinand Hodler, Aleksandr Dejneka, Neo Rauch* (exh. cat. Hamburg, Kunsthalle Hamburg), ed. by Hubertus Gaßner, Munich 2012, 245.



[Fig. 3]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Landscape with Train (Peizazh s poezdom)*, 1931, pastel on paper, 23 × 32.5 cm, Deineka estate, in: Syssojew, Alexander Deineka, 82.

to settle there. Deineka effectively pasted the people from Kursk into the Donbas. This strategy mimics the Soviet imperial strategy of sending workers to the Donbas and propagates an ideological depiction of the contented Soviet worker.

Despite the Bolshevik's self-proclamation at the beginning of the 20th century of being anti-imperialist, and regardless of Soviet support for anti- and postcolonial movements in the 1960s, the question of continuity between the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union has remained current. In her *Empire of Nations* (2005) Francine Hirsch thematizes the role and significance of the Soviet State Colonization Research Institute (Goskolonit).[3] Founded in 1922 it consisted of historians, geographers and economists not only of the former Russian Empire, but also of the British Empire, as well as experts of German colonization. The institute's function was to produce a positive conceptual framework for colonization in contrast to Western forms, and to identify lands that could be colonized in a "Soviet way", meaning economic development with an enlightenment agenda. Furthermore, its tasks included planning railroads and carrying out demographical research with the view to implementing resettlement (*pereselenie*).[4] As they insisted that Soviet *kolonizatsia* was to be different from the former *kolonizatorstvo* (exploitation), they also claimed to be anti-imperial.[5] However, historians tend to agree that the Soviet Union was using strategies that can be considered as imperial.[6] Promoting certain universal and normative values was a key imperial strategy of the Soviet Union and culture played a key role in this. Furthermore, visual representation was the main place where, for the people, the empire became reality.[7]

3
Cf. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations. Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca, NY/London 2005.

4
Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Kolonizatsionnogo Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta 1, 1924. On the relation of Goskolonit's resettlement policies to the deportations, see Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land. Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century*, Ithaca, NY/London 2014.

5
A. A. Iarilov, Puti kolonizatsionnogo stroitel'stva, in: *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Kolonizatsionnogo Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta* 1, 1924, 3–8; and ibid., 338.

6
Hirsch, Empire of Nations; Uwe Halbach, *Das Sowjetische Vielvölkerimperium. Nationalitätenpolitik und nationale Frage*, Mannheim 1992; Andreas Kappeler, *Ungleiche Brüder. Russen und Ukrainer vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 2017, 170–171.

7
Cf. Malte Rolf, Imperium und Regionalität. Sportparaden und regionale Feste im Stalinismus, in: *Osteuropa* 56/5, 2006, 99–122; see also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983. Specifically on the relation between landscape, the Soviet construction of space and power, see Klaus Gestwa, Sowjetische Landschaften als Panorama von Macht und Ohnmacht. Historische Spurensuche auf den 'Großbauten des Kommunismus' und in dörflicher Idylle, in: *Historische Anthropologie* 11/1, 2003, 72–100; Thomas Lahusen, The Russian Far East after Landscape. A Photoessay, in: *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 98, 1999, 711–724; Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (eds.), *The Landscape of Stalinism. The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, Washington 2003.

However, critical analyses related to imperial or colonial strategies in Soviet art are still rare in art history.[8] Unlike Central Asia, the Donbas does not appear as an obvious object of Soviet colonization, yet the necessity to colonize it was articulated not only in the first journal issue of Goskolonit,[9] but also directly and indirectly in various visual representations of the Donbas.

The Donbas is not like any other subject matter in Soviet iconography. Donbas was the so-called "shop window of socialism", an industrial region with tremendous economic and cultural significance. At the 11th Party Congress in 1922 Lenin said, "the Donets Basin is not an ordinary district, but a vital one, without which socialist construction would simply remain a pious wish."[10] Donbas was central for the realization of the first Five-Year Plan. It was also the cradle of the Stakhanovite movement, personified by the coal miner from the Russian city Orel, Alexey Stakhanov, who became a hero in one of Donbas's coal mines when, in August 1935, he hewed 102 tons of coal – fourteen times his usual average.[11]

The theme of the Donbas recurred throughout all the stages of Deineka's work from 1924 to 1964, and in all the forms of media that he used, such as drawings for magazines, prints, posters, children's book illustrations, painting and mosaic. We can effectively understand his oeuvre just by analysing his works that relate thematically to the Donbas. In these works, we can discover the political narratives around the Donbas that existed in the Soviet Union, and how Deineka visualized them in particular pictures. The Donbas was constitutive of the imagery of the Soviet Union on various levels. Studying newspaper articles of the *Sotsialisticheskii Donbass*, the main newspaper of the Donetsk Party regional committee (*obkom*) from 1937 to 1941 and other sources, Tanja Penter has demonstrated that a political campaign to produce an image of the Donbas as the socialist flagship region harnessed the entirety of cultural production, such as films, photo-essays, newspaper articles, liter-

8
This is implicitly the case for Aliya Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen, *Central Asia in Art. From Soviet Orientalism to the New Republics*, London/New York 2016; Michael Kunichika, The Camel and the Caboose. Viktor Shklovsky's *Turksib* and the Pedagogy of Uneven Development, in: Marina Balina and Sergei Oushakine (eds.), *The Pedagogy of Images*, Toronto 2021, 331–354.

9
Gosudarstvennyi Kolonizatsionnyi Nauchno-Issledovatel'skii Institut, ego zadachi, organizatsia i deiatel'nost', in: *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Kolonizatsionnogo Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta* 1, 1924, 309.

10
Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Political Report of the C.C., R.C.P. (B.) March 27, in: David Skvirsky and George Hanna (eds./trans.), *Lenin's Collected Works* 33, Moscow 1966, 263–309, here 300.

11
Cf. Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935–1941*, Cambridge 1988, 66–98.

ature, illustrations, posters etc.[12] Referring to Malte Rolf, Penter suggests that we could understand the representation and (socialist) self-representation of the Donbas in terms of the tension between the regions and the centre, between region building and an imperial *mise-en-scène*.[13] Rolf argues that the sports parade was a particularly relevant and effective representational tool of the imperial strategy, because it demonstrated the unity of all nations of the Soviet Union through the sports uniform. As an attempt to counter this, the regions also developed strategies of "region building", which were oriented towards producing emotional bonds within the new socialist elites.[14]

That "region building" was present in the Donbas is argued in several recent publications that deal with the historical and contemporary self-image of the region.[15] The focus of this article, however, will be how the Donbas was ideologically and visually conceived *in Moscow*, in the centre of the Soviet Union. On August 29, 1935 *Sotsialisticheskii Donbass* reported on Deineka's arrival in the region.[16] About forty other artists were also sent to the Donbas in 1935.[17] It was not Deineka's first work trip there. He travelled there in 1924 and produced drawings and sketches that served his compositions for decades to come. Deineka thus participated in the building of the image of the "shop window" rather than regional self-staging, even though some aspects of the latter might have manifested in his work.

In the Western secondary literature Socialist Realism is typically understood to have emerged and developed in a totalitarian state where artists had little or no freedom and were obligated to propagate state ideology. Christina Kiaer's essay "Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s" (2005) was one of the most significant attempts to revise the image of Deineka's work by arguing that his Socialist Realism is *not* ideological for several reasons. His modernist aesthetic – which revolves around reduced and montage-like compositions – and his choice of subject matter make him, according to Kiaer, stand out

12
Tanja Penter, Der „neue sozialistische Donbass" und der Aufstieg des Bergmanns zur kulturellen Leitfigur, in: *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen* 37, 2007, 79–95 (special issue: *Sowjetische Bergleute und Industriearbeiter. Neue Forschungen*); Tanja Penter, *Kohle für Stalin und Hitler. Arbeiten und Leben im Donbass 1929–1953*, Essen 2010.

13
Penter, Der „neue sozialistische Donbass", 81.

14
Cf. Rolf, Imperium und Regionalität, 114.

15
Victoria Donovan and Darya Tsymbalyuk, Strange and Twisted Love, in: *Region* 10, 2021, 109–136; Oksana Myshlovska and Ulrich Schmid (eds.), *Regionalism without Regions. Reconceptualizing Ukraine's Heterogeneity*, Budapest 2019.

16
Deineka. Zhivopis' (exh. cat. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery), ed. by Tatiana Iudkevich, Moscow 2010, 99 (13 September 2024).

17
Cf. Matthew Coullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, New Haven, CT/London 1998.

from all the ideological kitsch of Socialist Realism. The combination of depictions of reduced, clean and modern workplaces populated by fairy-like barefoot women, as in the most famous painting *Textile Workers* (1927), and his foregrounding of the geometrical and abstract shapes of industry with effortlessly working coal miners, as in his early magazine illustrations, made Deineka's work appear to contribute to a modernist socialist aesthetic. Here socialism is depicted as a reality in becoming, where workers are engaged in modern forms of industry, and where socialist collectivity is effortlessly creative. With these important features Kiaer is able to align Deineka with the tradition of the avant-garde – socialist in content and modernist in form. For Kiaer, "revolutionary modernist art", such as Deineka's, is "inherent[ly] internationali[st]" and "differed starkly from the totalitarian model", because it is presumed that its pictorial ambivalence produces an open-endedness of meaning.[18]

In Kiaer's recent monograph on Deineka, *Collective Body* (2024), the question debated by Deineka's peers, namely whether Deineka is formalist or socialist, has been overtaken by the question of whether he is an artist of the Putin era. Kiaer concedes that he could be appropriated as the "perfect Russian artist for the Putin era";[19] however, she adds that Deineka also represents something that Putin tries to "excise" from Russia's "nationalist history", namely the 1917 Revolution. As in her first article on Deineka, here too she tries to elaborate one aspect of Deineka that remained un-subsumable by the Soviet state ideology. In Kiaer's article from 2005, it is Deineka's modernist technique that resisted Socialist Realism; today she finds his true legacy in representing the Revolution, which she sees as resisting "Russian misuse of Soviet cultural history to defend its imperialist war".[20] What remains unaddressed in both cases is the imperialist and colonialist character of both Deineka's modernism and the Bolshevik Revolution. Addressing these is crucial to the critique of contemporary Russian imperialism and its appropriation of Deineka.[21]

18
Kiaer, Collective Body, ix and 164. In this, Kiaer broadly follows an influential politicized reading of modernism. This reading can be found in several authors associated with the journal *October*, such as Rosalind Krauss or Benjamin Buchloh.

19
Ibid., iix.

20
Ibid., x.

21
The Deineka Museum in Kursk (*Kurskayia kartinnaia galereia imeni A.A. Deineki*), on the border to Ukraine, recently published the online exhibition *Deineka's Crimean Plans* (5 August 2024). The museum has existed since 1935 and holds painting, sculpture and prints by Russian and international artists of the 18th to 20th centuries; the collection's activities focus on artists that were associated with Kursk, such as Deineka. "Deineka's Crimean Plans" shows pencil-on-paper sketches from his visit to Sevastopol in 1934. "Crimea", it says on the website, "and especially Sevastopol, was a special place for Deineka, where, it seems, dreams of a beautiful 'tomorrow', of a sunny paradise, of a utopian 'golden age', of a happy country acquired tangible outlines" (trans. M. G.). This is provocative and given the Russian occupation of Crimea and the war, can be interpreted as an attempt to justify the Russian aggression. The title of the exhibition is also problematic, because the

In the Russophone secondary literature on Deineka, the Soviet art historian Vladimir Petrovich Sysoev, who produced an extensive biography of Deineka and several monographs,[22] can be considered as a significant expert. He elaborated the most detailed and convincing account of Deineka and the counter-totalitarian argument already in the 1970s – an interpretation of Deineka as the most sophisticated, advanced and uncompromisingly modern artist within Socialist Realism. Sysoev interprets Deineka's pictorial technique as particularly vivid and convincing, allowing the viewer to imagine the desired socialist society and the new material life.[23] Furthermore, Sysoev interprets the reduced and "clean" character of Deineka's depictions as expressing the purposefulness of labour or work.[24] This interpretation generally corresponds to and predates Kiaer's argument. Deineka's contemporaries had noticed and evaluated his modernism as a fact, that he never fully departed from his early poster-making techniques and thus his oil paintings always looked a bit like posters or magazine illustrations: "The peculiarity of A. Deineka's paintings lies in the fact that his graphic techniques are almost entirely transferred into painting."[25] Sysoev takes this further by analysing the interrelations between Deineka's works and sketches, making his modernism-argument even more convincing. Interestingly, Sysoev's analysis not only brings out Deineka's modernist aspect, but also exposes an imperial subtext in the montage technique and especially in regard to his landscape paintings. Sysoev points out that Deineka's choice of motifs and figures from various geographical places and his rearrangement and reconfiguration of these is fundamentally political and aims at expressing the artist's patriotism for the Soviet Union.[26] However, Sysoev adopts Deineka's patriotism. In his accounts, and also in Deineka's own writing, we find expressions of imperial pride in being a Soviet citizen, and living and working in a country which barely knows its limits.

The main argument of this essay is that Deineka's thematic works on the Donbas present an imperial art, which is not merely the result of the ideological content and context, but is also skil-

drawings in this notebook of Deineka are normally referred to as "Crimea Sketches" ("Iz Krymskikh zarisovok"), cf. Vladimir P. Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka. Zhizn', iskusstvo, vremia. Literaturno-khudozhestvennoe nasledstvo*, Moscow 1989.

22
Two volumes in 1973/1974 that were translated into German and English; an updated edition *Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia* in 1989; and *Aleksandr Deineka*, Moscow 2010.

23
Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia, 40–42.

24
Ibid., 43.

25
"Своеобразие живописных работ А. Дейнеки заключается в том, что свои графические приёмы он почти полностью переносит в картину." F. S. Roginskaia, quoted in Deineka. Zhivopis' (trans. M. G.), 28.

26
Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia, 129.

fully reflected in their form – Deineka's compositional modernist technique. This article sets out to understand the imperialism in Deineka's work and to examine his achievements through a critical lens.

II. "Heart of Darkness". The Grand "Before 1917 and After" Narrative

The image of the Donbas before 1917 plays a key role in the constitution of the socialist image of the region, namely as a (contrast) foil. It forms the structure of the "before and after" narrative and functions for the Soviets as a justification of the conquest and exploitation of the Donbas. According to Tanja Penter, this "before and after" motif was often used in newspaper articles from the late 1930s and early 1940s.[27] The leading newspaper *Sotsialisticheskii Donbass* describes the development of the region from "a colony of foreign capital" to "the first all-Soviet boiler house" and to "a powerful fortress of socialism".[28] The significance of the "before and after" motif is also implicit in a novella for older children, which Deineka illustrated, namely *In the Bowels of the Earth* (*V nedrakh zemli*, 1929),[29] written by Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin. Deineka's illustrations for *In the Bowels of the Earth* have never been discussed or analysed in scholarly literature – neither in Western scholarship nor in the Soviet Union, but they are important because they depict the other, pre-socialist Donbas.

The images that Deineka produced here are of a very grim story about a twelve-year old boy, who works together with two adults in the coal mine: "Completely black, suffused with coal, for several weeks unwashed faces [...]."[30] The images illustrate appalling conditions that lead to tragic situations and experiences. One image depicts the daunting atmosphere of the coal miners waiting to be lowered into the mine; another portrays the gruelling postures the coal miners have to adopt, which apparently lead to one of the workers having a seizure. Following this, the coal mine threatens to collapse, and the boy has to rescue him. The following image depicts the boy's desperate attempt to save the coal miner. The last illustration shows the moment when the boy finds himself in safety, surrounded by people and by the "director", who speaks

27
Penter, Der „neue sozialistische Donbass", 81–82.

28
Quoted in ibid., 81.

29
Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/Leningrad, 1929 (13 September 2024). The novella first appeared in 1899 in the newspapers *Kievskoe slovo* (*Киевское слово*) in Kyiv and *Priazovskii krai* (*Приазовский край*) in Rostov-on-Don. In 1908 the novella was included in the collection *Detskie Rasskazy*.

30
Kuprin, V nedrakh zemli, 8 (trans. M. G.).

Russian with a strong, foreign accent, which is an allusion to the fact that only western Europeans occupied managerial positions [Fig. 4a, Fig. 4b, Fig. 4c, Fig. 4d, Fig. 4e and Fig. 4f].

The novella *In the Bowels of the Earth* is a sketch of the beginnings of industrialization in the Donbas, which has been extensively studied by US-American historian Charters Wynn in his influential book *Workers, Strikes and Pogroms* (1992).[31] He describes the double exploitation of the region, the role of foreigners and work immigrants and the social constitution of the region. In 1869 the Welsh industrialist John Hughes founded the "New Russian Society for Coal Mining, Steel and Railway Production". Prior to that he presented to the Russian government his plans to develop the region and received an agreement to do so. The settlement Iuzovka (Hughes'ovka) was named after him, which after 1917 developed into a city which since 1961 has been called Donetsk (between 1929 and 1961 the name was Stalino). Hughes put in operation modern ironworks and opened coal mines.[32] However, according to Wynn, it is only after the construction of the ("Ekaterinin") railway that Hughes's business became profitable and attracted more investment, from foreign capital. Broadly speaking, given the quantity of foreign investment, and the amount of European skilled labour and know-how, we could speak of this endeavour as a double colonization, where the profit was channelled to Europe and the coal and steel to Russia. Wynn and Penter both describe the division between the skilled workers, such as engineers and managers, who came predominantly from western Europe, and the unskilled workers, nearly all of whom were recruited from villages in the European part of Russia, many of them from the Kursk region.[33] The coal miners lived in settlements in the so-called *zemlianki*, in dugouts in the earth. Some lived in barracks, which were later built by the foreign companies, or rented their own accommodation.[34] The hygienically catastrophic living and appalling work conditions are well documented and thoroughly described in Wynn's and Penter's studies. The housings were "breeding grounds for contagious diseases"; "Even at mines with bathing facilities, miners lived coated with coal dust."[35] Life at the mines resembled forced-labour camps. Russian unskilled workers were paid three to four times less than their

31
Charters Wynn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms. The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905*, Princeton, NJ 1992.

32
Ibid., 20.

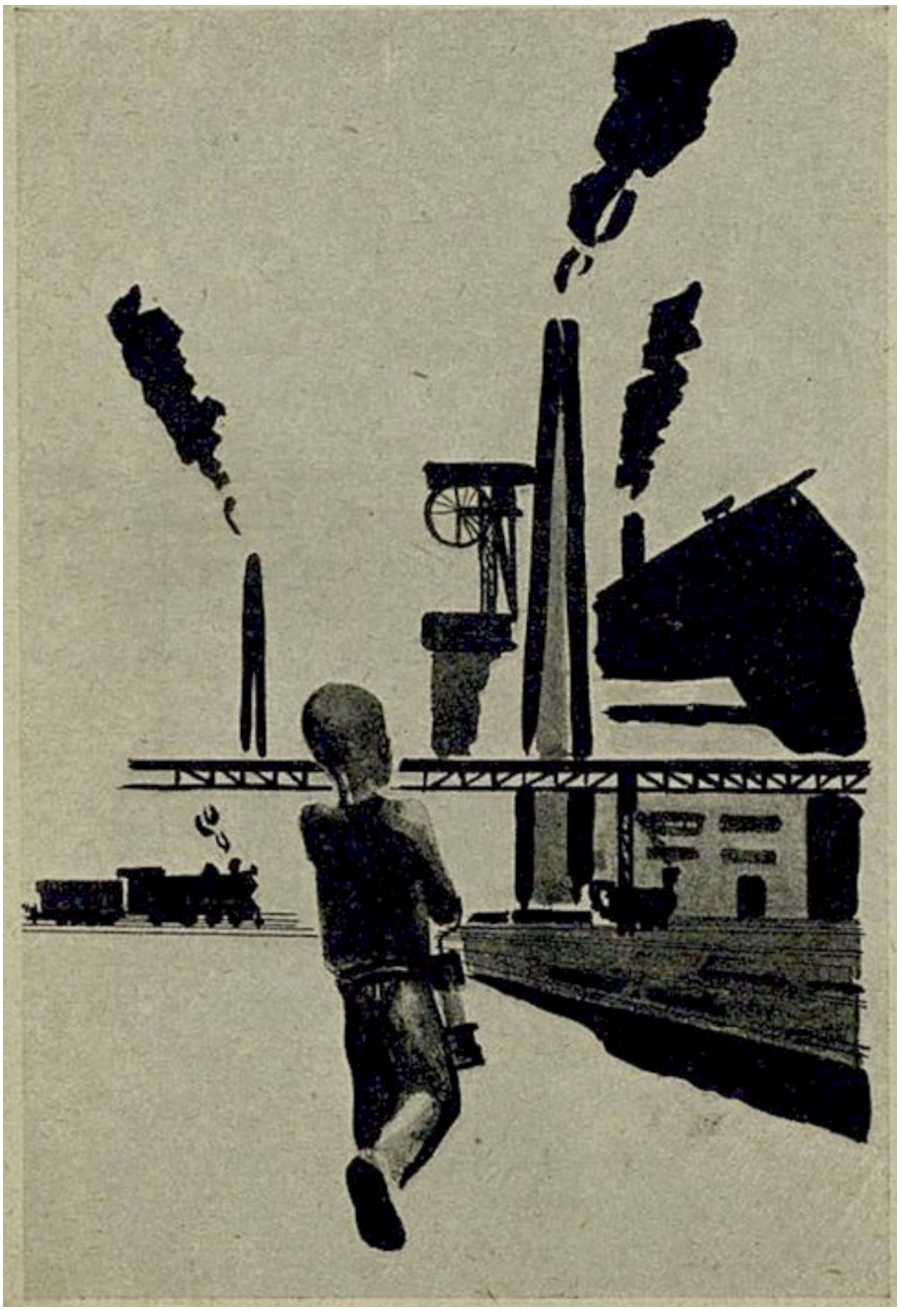
33
Ibid. and Penter, Kohle für Stalin und Hitler.

34
Wynn, Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms, 34.

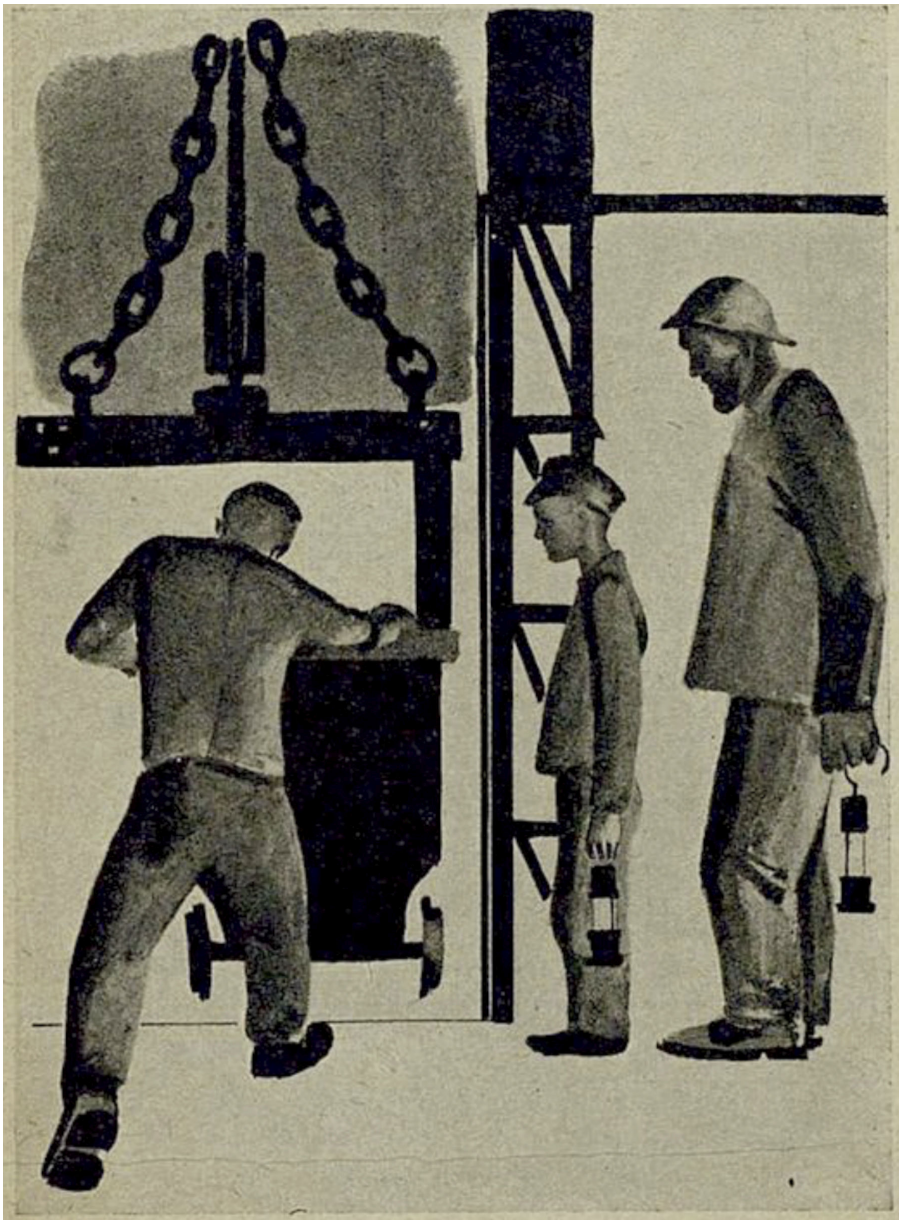
35
Ibid., 36.



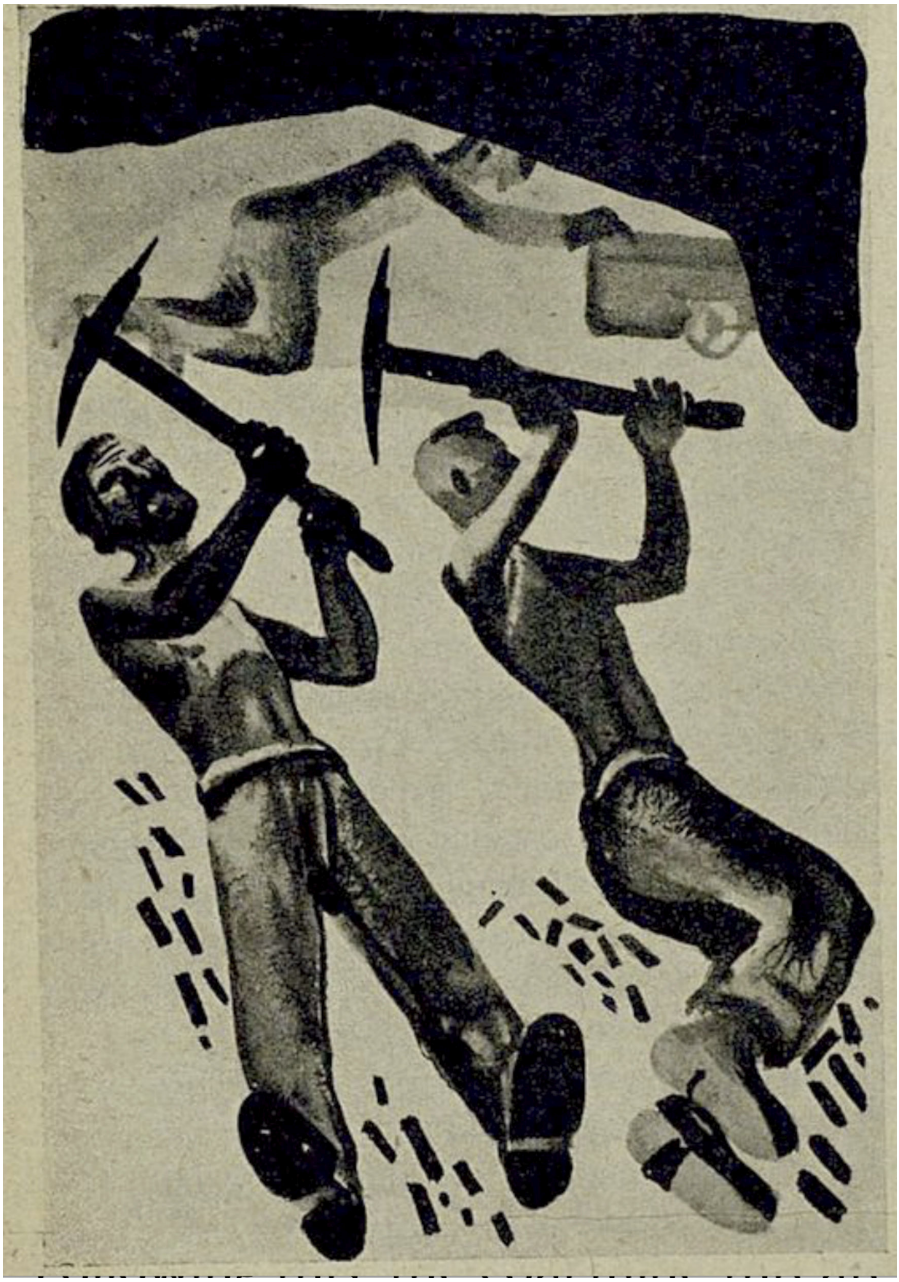
[Fig. 4a]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration to Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/ Leningrad 1929, cover (13 September 2024).



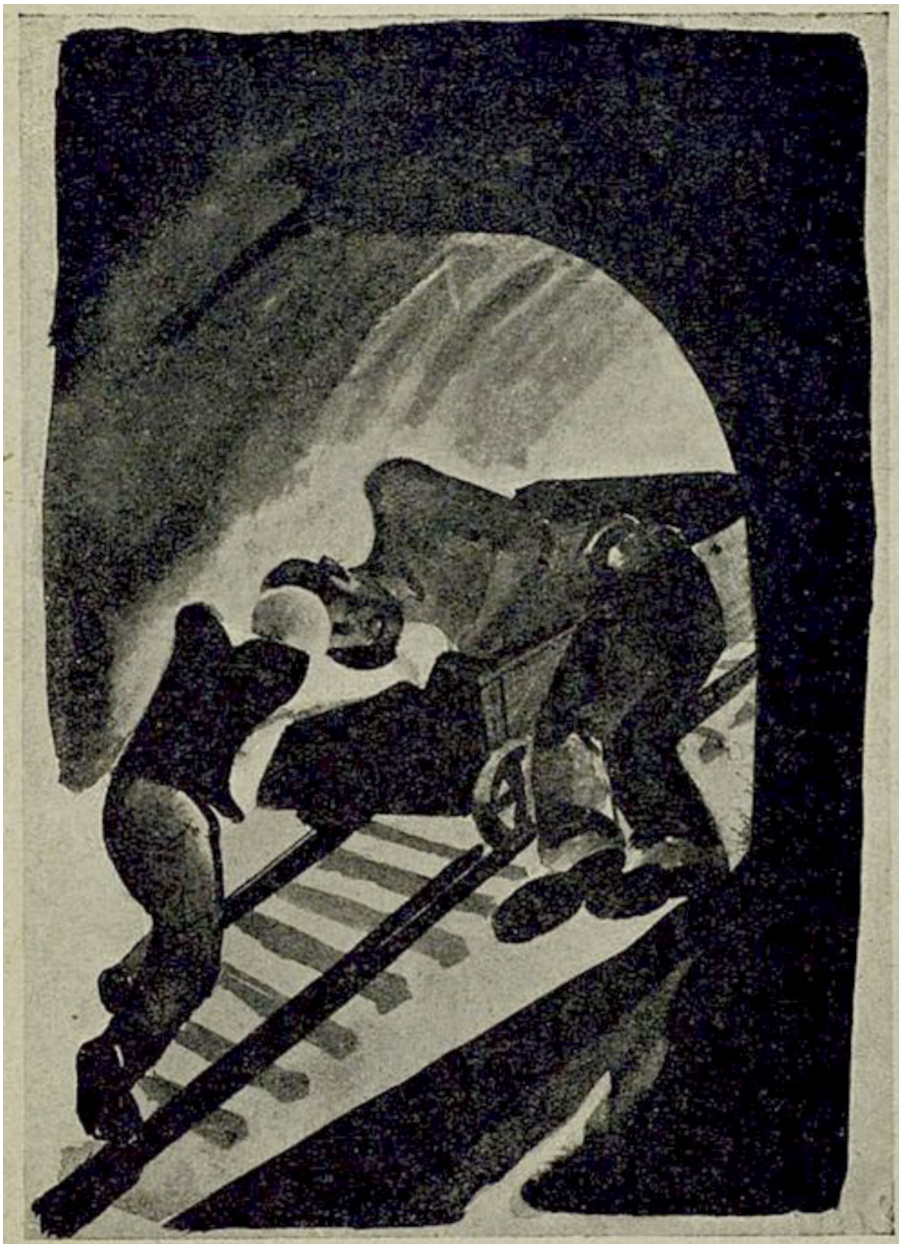
[Fig. 4b]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration to Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/ Leningrad 1929, 7 (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 4c]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration to Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/ Leningrad 1929, 11 (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 4d]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration to Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/ Leningrad 1929, 19 (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 4e]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration to Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/ Leningrad 1929, 25 (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 4f]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration to Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin, *V nedrakh zemli*, Moscow/ Leningrad 1929, 27 (13 September 2024).

foreign counterparts.[36] "Local [Ukrainian] peasants looked upon work in underground mines as convicts' labour", since historically the first miners were convicts exiled to work in the Donbas.[37]

This image of a hell on earth, suffered by the predominantly Russian coal miners, is contrasted by Wynn with the lives lived by chiefly western European elites:

> In Iuzovka, where the New Russia Company owned large mines as well as its steel mill, the director had two mansions: one downtown with beautiful gardens, and the other outside town, a new estate that was built on a large tract of wooded land.[38]

The mansions would come with horses, stables and brooks. Larger company colonies included social centres, usually named the English Club or the Engineers' Club, and, according to Wynn, could not be joined by workers.

After the February 1917 Revolution, Ukrainian nationalists, as many other nationalities of the peripheries, demanded independence from the fallen Russian Empire. But the Bolsheviks had other plans for them. Ukraine had been considered a Russian colony,[39] that Lenin wanted to "decolonize".[40] This meant giving it independence not as a bourgeois capitalist nation-state, but as a socialist state.[41] When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they immediately began to try to gain control in Ukraine. After the First All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in Kharkiv, in December 1917, the Bolsheviks began a war against those Ukrainians who did not want to compromise on their idea of "decolonization" – which basically meant Sovietization. The war lasted until 1919 and many workers from the Donbas were recruited for the military operations of the Red Guards.

36
Ibid., 40.

37
Ibid., 42.

38
Ibid., 36.

39
"Украина окончательно превращается в 19 в. в русскую колонию, в которой русское правительство усиленно начинает искоренять всякие следы национальных особенностей, а украинский народ окончательно становится угнетенным, задавленным национальным гнетом и крепостным правом." *Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia* 9, ed. by N. L. Meshcheriakov, Moscow 1931, 116. "In the 19th century Ukraine is fully turning into a Russian colony, in which the Russian government vigorously begins to eradicate all traces of national characteristics, and the Ukrainian people become completely oppressed, crushed by national oppression and serfdom" (trans. M. G.).

40
Cf. Matthieu Renault's concept of Lenin's "decolonization": Matthieu Renault, *L'Empire de la Révolution. Lénine et les Musulmans de Russie*, Paris 2017.

41
Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, The National Question in our Programme, in: *Iskra* 44, 1903 (8 August 2024).

Bolshevik posters were produced in relation to the military mobilization, explaining the reasons why the Bolsheviks needed East Ukraine to become "theirs". A poster by the famous artist Alexander Apsit (Latvian Aleksandrs Apsītis), with the title "Why do we need the Donets Basin?" (*Dlia chego nam nuzhen Donetskii Bassein*, 1919), explains the imperial motivations in an arrangement of six vignette-like illustrations accompanied by text [Fig. 5]. At the centre of the poster is a Red Army soldier, standing in a dominating pose above the Dnepr River, holding a weapon in his left hand and a flag of the Russian (!) Socialist Federational Soviet Republic (1917–1922) in his right. The text below the image reads:

> The Donets Basin has got to be ours! To the weapons, Red Army soldiers! To the weapons, workers and peasants! Let's crush the gangs of the Tsarist general Denikin, who in favour of the kulaks and landlords want to starve the revolutionary peasants and workers.

This explicitly military and imperial image, combined with the text in the centre and an illustration of Red Army soldiers reaching for weapons below, is framed by four "reasons" why the socialist Russian population would benefit from conquering the Donbas. The first vignette shows an industrial cityscape with fuming factory chimneys: "Once the Donets Basin is ours then we will have coal. Then all our factories and production sites will start working." This states that Donbas is not theirs yet, but it has to become theirs, in order for industrialization to progress. The next illustration and text yet again links livelihood and the possession of Donbas: "Once the Donets Basin is ours, we will have steel", explaining that steel is needed for the production of necessary tools and agricultural machinery.

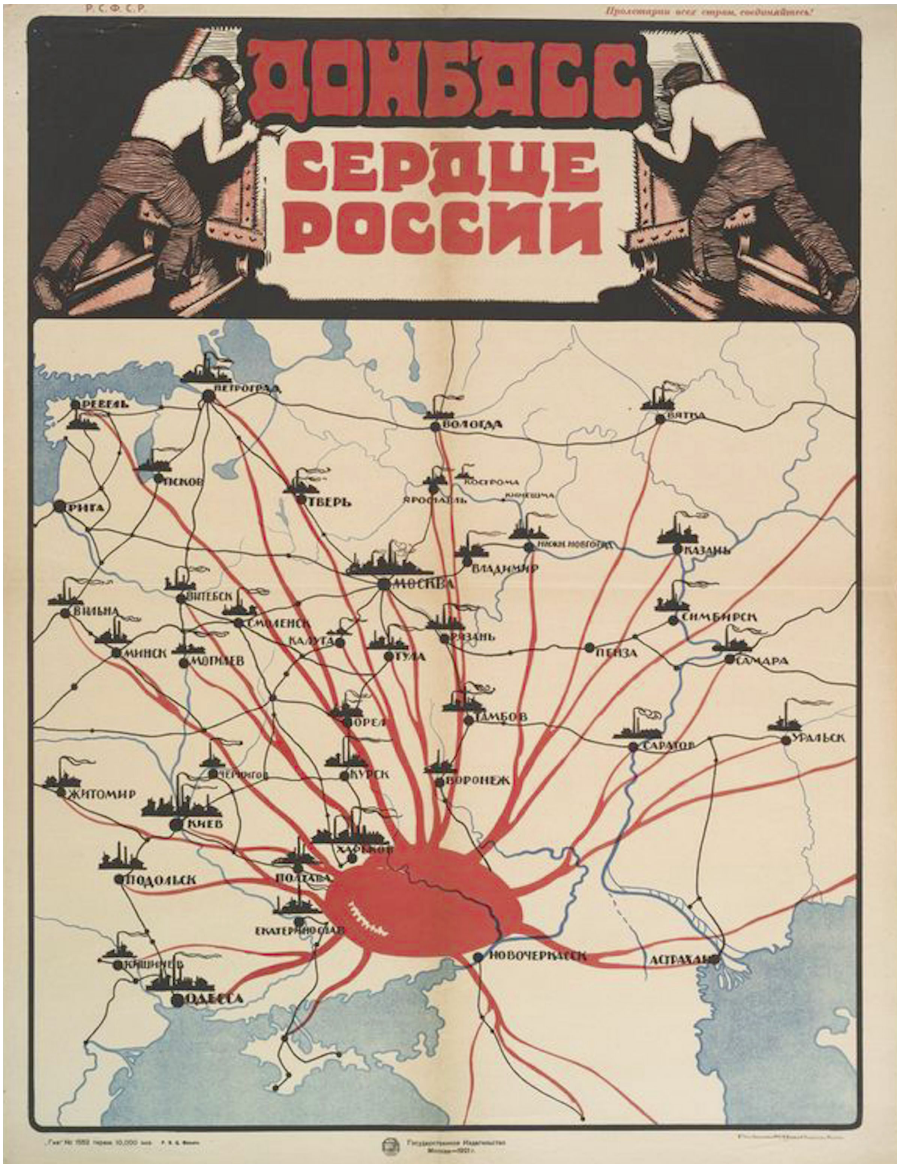
Another famous poster is titled *Donbas – The Heart of Russia* (*Donbass – serdtse Rossii*, 1921) [Fig. 6]. It was issued when industry in the Donbas needed reanimation. Enormous efforts were required to revive industry prospects after the years of the Civil War. On the poster the region is represented as a heart, from which the veins lead to all the important factories and industrial areas, such as in Moscow, Minsk, Vologda etc. Why it is called the heart of Russia, and not the heart of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFRS) is not clear, but it demonstrates that powerful visual and literary images were used to promote renewed imperial attention to the region.

The "before and after" motif is also used in the Goskolonit publication of 1924. The central conceptual argument revolves around distinguishing the Soviet colonization strategy from those of Western and Russian empires, namely to colonize the lands on the borders of the RSFRS in a better, more cultured way.[42]

[42] *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Kolonizatsionnogo Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta* 1, 1924.



[Fig. 5]
Aleksandr Petrovich Apsit (Aleksandrs Apsītis), *Why do we need the Donets Basin (Dlia chego nam nuzhen Donetskii Bassein?)*, 1919, colour lithography, 69 × 72 cm (varying sizes), in: Digital archive of the Lotman Institute Bochum (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 6]
Author unknown, *Donbas – the Heart of Russia (Donbass – serdtse Rossii)*, 1921, colour lithography, 54 × 70 cm, in: Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library, The New York Public Library Digital Collections (13 September 2024).

In the Bowels of the Earth was published in 1889 in the Russian Empire newspapers *Kievskoe Slovo* in Kyiv (1886–1905) and *Priazovskii Krai* in Rostov-on-Don, after Kurpin had lived in the Donbas in 1886. The novella was published four years after labour unrest had begun in the Donbas-Dnepr Bend due to poor health and work conditions and partly fuelled by anti-Semitism, which was sweeping the whole of Ukraine in the decades prior to this moment.[43] However, while Deineka was illustrating the novella for the first single-book edition in 1927, the context of this literary text changed. Now the grim illustrations of the ill, suffering and exploited workers are images of the Tsarist imperial past, which the Bolsheviks and Soviets succeeded to overcome. The publication of the book with those illustrations was meant to be read as a justification of the conquest and colonization of the Donbas, of the eviction of Western capitalists who were responsible for the suffering and as a justification of the replacement of Russian imperial power with Soviet power. An interesting fact, however, is that for his illustrations of the "dark" pre-revolutionary history of the Donbas, Deineka used the sketches that he made after the Revolution, namely in the 1920s. If we look closer at his first large oil painting, *Before the Descent into the Mine* (*Pered spuskom v shakhtu*, 1925), we discover the same motif and similar poses in one detail as the book illustration showing the boy and the coal miner waiting to go down into the mine. This and many other motifs will reappear in his later works, producing a contrast between the past and the idealized present.

III. The Donbas Drawing Series for Magazines and the First Painting

Given his family name and according to Sysoev, we can assume that Deineka's ancestors were Ukrainian.[44] After studying at the Railway College in Kursk and attending a local art club, he entered the Kharkiv Art School in 1915. During the mobilization in 1919 Deineka joined the Red Army, where he found employment in organizing agitational events.[45] Following his demobilization in 1919 he was sent to Moscow and entered the VKhUTEMAS, where he studied graphic arts with Vladimir Favorsky. He left VKhUTEMAS without graduating and began to work for the magazine *U Stanka* (At the Bench), which sent him on his first work trip to the Donbas in 1924. According to Sysoev, Deineka never sketched as much from life as

43
Wynn, Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms, 117.

44
Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia, 10.

45
Ibid., 16–18.

he did during this first trip.[46] In particular, Sysoev draws attention to Deineka's attempts to capture objects and coal mine workers in motion, depicting what is characteristic for the work they do. For decades these sketches were fundamental to the whole of his oeuvre.

One of the most iconic depictions is of a hauler – a coal mine worker – pushing a heavy trolley loaded with coal. We can see this portrayal in a draft drawing *S vagonetkoi* (1925), where the man pushes the trolley while a woman walks across a steel girder bridge, traversing the railway track [Fig. 7]. The hauler is depicted with his arms stretched to signal the amount of strength required to pull the heavy trolley. On a drawing for the cover of the magazine *Daësh'*, the haulers are women, also with their arms stretched to increase leverage, signalling that their entire body weight is needed to pull the trolley [Fig. 8]. According to Sysoev's interpretation, in the Donbas Deineka finds his "heroes", namely free men and women, who are affirming themselves in a purposeful activity, and whom Deineka captures in poses and gestures that express their freedom and independence as workers.[47] The haulers are clearly working under high levels of exertion, but as they strain, they look graceful. This is particularly clear when contrasted with his illustrations for the novella *In the Bowels of the Earth*. There the young boy is straining hard to push the trolley onto which he had loaded the coal miner who had fainted after his seizure. The boy's posture is cramped from his effort, we see his bony shoulders and his bowed head, expressing desperation and exhaustion [Fig. 4e]. In his work for the periodicals the men and women depicted are healthy, strong and determined. It is not impossible, that for his enthusiastic pictures of coal-mine work that he made for periodicals Deineka was able to observe moments when the workers looked powerful and liberated. But more likely, Deineka's fascination with sportsmen and -women also played an important role here. The muscular and dynamic workers' bodies can be read as the bodies of sportsmen and -women. In the illustration for the cover of *Daësh'* the women are barefoot and their calves exposed, revealing their muscles. Being an ideal object of the aestheticization of strain, physical exercise in sport activities was perhaps more the real source of his depictions.

In his first oil painting, *Before the Descent into the Mine* (*Pered spuskom v shakhtu*, 1925), the aestheticization of the workers as sportsmen is even more poignant, because they are not depicted in movement but as anticipating work. In comparison with the illustrations of the novella (1927), which, in one case, depicts exactly the same moment of waiting for the lift down to the mine, we see Deineka's intention to depict the boy and the poor worker as ordinary, whereas the men of socialist work are portrayed as athletes: they are wearing fitted, partly revealing clothes, and despite some of them

46
Ibid., 40.

47
Ibid., 24.

having a slightly hunched back, they still look trained and prepared for the most challenging work [Fig. 9].

Most commentators have noticed that Deineka's early magazine drawings and his first oil painting do not have any concrete background. Kiaer has suggested that the emptiness helps to construct the depiction of the process of dialectical development, and the space is constituted purely through the relation between the human bodies to one another.[48] According to Alexandra Köhring, the reduced spatiality leads to the effect of a certain internality, focusing on the importance of collective labour.[49]

The effect of the abstract background, or the empty spaces and pauses in the compositions, is partly explained by Sysoev by its particular effect on the page of a magazine, where the words and typography are able to interact with the images.[50] Sysoev's observation particularly makes sense when we compare the agitational drawings with the illustrations in Kuprin's novella, where we also have empty backgrounds: here we also have empty spaces that have yet to find substance. In this case, however, we cannot make the same argument about dialectical development and socialist collectivity, because the images illustrate the pre-revolutionary Donbas.

I would here like to propose a different reading of the empty backgrounds. In these early Donbas pictures, for example in the picture for the magazine *At the Bench* (1925), we already observe a full set of Donbas iconography: the haulers pushing and pulling the trolleys, the steel girder bridge, the railway track and smoking locomotives. The steel girder is pictorially very dominant, presumably because it represents the importance of coal, namely for steel production and industrialization, and the building of railway tracks. The train and the railway represent the exploitation of the Donbas coal, which is then distributed across the Soviet Union. In other words, all that seems to exist in the Donbas is the industry and its workers. It exists in an empty space, some sort of wasteland, with no specific character or features. This produces the idea of a clinical environment, where there is no distraction except from the standardized industry, and no one seems to have to deal with the fact that it is a foreign land. Intentionally or not, Deineka produces spaces in which the workers do not have to interact with the "background", i.e., the Ukrainians and their environment. This blacking out of the context has a "tradition" in the Donbas. Stephan Velychenko's *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red* (2015) describes how easy it was in the mid-19th century for Russian immigrants to settle

48
Kiaer, Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour?, 327.

49
Alexandra Köhring, Farbkörper und Arbeiterkörper. Zu Aleksandr Dejnekas Darstellung der Bergleute im Donbass, in: Monica Rüthers and Alexandra Köhring (eds.), *Helden am Ende. Erschöpfungszustände in der Kunst des Sozialismus*, Frankfurt/New York 2014, 43–59, here 51.

50
Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia, 42.



[Fig. 7]
Aleksandr Deineka, *With the Carriage. In the Donbas (S vagonetkoi. V Donbasse)*, drawing for the magazine *U Stanka*, 1925, ink, gouache on paper, 28.8 × 29.6 cm, Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery Moscow, in: Müde Helden, 166.



[Fig. 8]
Aleksandr Deineka, illustration for the cover of *Daësh'*, No. 2, 1929, in: Syssojew, Alexander Deineka, 17.



[Fig. 9]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Before the Descent into the Mine (Pered spuskom v shakhtu)*, in: Müde Helden, 164.

down in Ukraine, and how they lacked consciousness not only of foreigners, but also of colonists.[51] The century-long rule by Saint Petersburg, which involved the Russification of high culture, print media and administration, made it possible for those Russian immigrants not to feel like immigrants. As a consequence, "like other colonies, Ukraine was a place where officials were ignorant of their subordinates' languages, because they expected the ruled to learn the ruler's language".[52] This contextualization not only explains the spooky emptiness of the Donbas, but it is also in line with Deineka's actual admiration of the imperial qualities of the Soviet Union.

IV. The Landscape of the Imperial "Motherland", and the Russian *Gesamtworker*

If in the drawings from the 1920s Deineka's backgrounds are empty, undefined and abstract, in the 1930s they become more concrete: we see horizons, the countryside, trees, grass, huts and other dwellings. But it is not always a specifically Ukrainian landscape in the background, and furthermore, this landscape is populated by workers of a particular type, namely the shock-workers (and from late 1935, "Stakhanovites"). Deineka's most well-known 1930s painting is *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* (1935) [Fig. 1], which was introduced at the beginning of this article. Sysoev states the following about Deineka's landscape compositions:

> Geographical attachments did not have a substantial meaning for him. Everywhere he found something new and interesting for himself, which inspired his creative imagination, helping him to find composed (*sobiratel'nye*) images, containing thoughts and feelings that are necessary for the understanding of the entire historical life of the Fatherland. And the spaces of the Earth the artist perceived as the expanses of the homeland.[53]

The joining together of two different landscapes that led to the painting *Lunchbreak in the Donbas*, namely somewhere near Kursk and the industrial Donbas, is a vivid expression of this borderless sensibility. In the background, we see a mine heap and a train

51
Stephan Velychenko, *Painting Imperialism and Nationalism Red. The Ukrainian Marxist Critique of Russian Communist Rule in Ukraine, 1918–1925*, Toronto 2015.

52
Ibid., 34.

53
"Географические привязанности не имели для него существенного значения. Повсюду он находил для себя много нового, интересного, питавшего его творческую фантазию, помогавшего находить собирательные образы, вмещавшие мысли и чувства, необходимые для понимания всей исторической жизни Отечества. И пространства земли художник воспринимал как просторы Родины." Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia, 94 (trans. M. G.).

heading eastwards (perhaps towards the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic). Present in almost all his prints, drawings and paintings of the Donbas, the railway has become Deineka's marker of the region. The railway may be read as a symbol of the Donbas's exploitation: coal is mined and immediately lead away. The Donbas iconography is not an iconography of the prosperity and economic development of the region, but an image of the extraction of resources and their transportation to the centres where value is produced. Deineka did not make images of developed infrastructure, impressive architecture or attractive city life in Donetsk.

With the montage of young people bathing somewhere near Kursk we can also understand *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* as representing the historical relation between the Russian and Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire. People from Russian provinces on the border to Ukraine went to the Donbas to work,[54] and with them they took the context they needed to settle down. Either we can interpret the painting emphatically as an image of settler colonists, taking advantage of the joys of their new land. Or we can read the montage in a more nuanced sense, as expressing the complex social composition on the borders between Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia, where historically not only Russians lived in Ukraine, but also Ukrainians in Russia, including Deineka himself. Both, however, suggest that this painting articulates the imperial or – as the Bolsheviks but also Ukrainian socialists referred to it[55] – colonial relations. From Deineka's biography (military service in the Red Army, career in Moscow), but also from his personal writings,[56] we can assume that he was not critical of Soviet imperialism or colonialism. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case: by employing the compositional technique of montage he reproduces a certain pride in being part of the Soviet near-borderlessness.

Deineka's *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* was painted only two years after the big men-made catastrophe of the Great Famine, or Holodomor, which recently was acknowledged as genocide. The image of five young, clean, healthy-looking and blond men bathing during a lunchbreak in the Donbas is not an impossible image, but socially and morally obnoxious. Even if the Holodomor was over by 1935, it is nearly impossible that Deineka was not aware of it, or, of the long-term effects it had on the society of the region. This observation confirms the overall impression that Deineka, just like many of his contemporaries, was prepared to overlook the objectionable aspects of Soviet politics and society.

54
Siegelbaum, Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 56–57.

55
Stephen Velychenko, The Issue of Russian Colonialism in Ukrainian Thought. Dependency Identity and Development, in: *Ab Imperio* 1, 2002, 323–367.

56
Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Zhizn', iskusstvo, vremia.

V. After the Holodomor in the Donbas

During the Holodomor, in 1932/33 the Donbas region had comparatively low numbers of deaths. The forced requisition especially affected the rural population and not so much the cities, where the industrial workers lived. The death rate during the famine in Ukraine was double the death rate in the Donbas.[57] That and other revelations from Barbara Falk's study suggest that workers, most of whom lived in the Donbas, had priority access to food. At the same time, the situation was tense even for the workers, insofar as purges were carried out, with the view to avoid the collapse of the provision and thus industrial work, which involved getting rid of "counter-revolutionary" elements, non-efficient workers and "class enemies".[58] People, especially homeless children, from other parts of Ukraine fled to the Donbas in the hope of finding food, but they were not successful. The kolkhozes (collective farms) in the rural regions around the Donbas were affected by the famine – kolkhoz peasants as much as "kulaks", Ukrainians as much as Germans and Greeks.[59] According to the reports of the *raion* committees to the regional committee of the Party in Donetsk, the famine was partly played down, and reports of deaths and cannibalism were identified as counter-revolutionary kulak agitation.[60] The reason for this, according to Penter, was the fear of being accused of opportunism, had they organized help for the population in their *raions*. However, according to Penter, the Donbas rural region was affected comparatively less by the famine, which might be explained by its geographical proximity to the coal mines and their provision. She comes to the shocking conclusion that as a result the Donbas workers might have felt superior and that this existential experience of famine solidified existing images of the Donbas as a special Soviet industrial region.[61]

Deineka's painting portraying a woman cycling down a road between farm fields, titled *Collective Farm Woman on a Bicycle* (*Kolkhoznitsa na velosipede*, 1935) [Fig. 10], is believed to have resulted

57
Barbara Falk, *Sowjetische Städte in der Hungersnot 1932/33. Staatliche Ernährungspolitik und städtisches Alltagsleben*, Cologne 2005, 138; Penter, Kohle für Stalin und Hitler, 98.

58
Falk, Sowjetische Städte in der Hungersnot 1932/33; Penter, Kohle für Stalin und Hitler, 100.

59
Penter, Kohle für Stalin und Hitler, 102.

60
Ibid., 103.

61
Ibid., 107–108.



[Fig. 10]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Collective Farm Woman on a Bicycle (Kolkhoznitsa na velosipede)*, 1935, oil on canvas, 120 × 220 cm, St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum, in: Müde Helden, 248–249.

from Deineka's Donbas trip in 1935.[62] As additional evidence supporting her argument that Deineka was unusually free not only in his modernism but also in the choice of his subject matter, Kiaer refers to this painting, which, according to her, has a "solitary figure as a sign for the collective, and [...] is utterly unlike paintings of collectivization by other artists".[63] Deineka refuses, according to Kiaer, to validate Stalin's premature claim that "life has gotten better, life has gotten merrier".[64]

This painting could be considered a fantasy image, because there were hardly any bicycles in the Donbas. At the First Stakhanovites Conference (*Pervoe Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie rabochikh i rabotnits-stakhanovtsev*) on November 14–17, 1935 – that is, in the same year that Deineka's painting was made – a participant expressed the wish for a "cultured life": "We want bicycles, pianos, phonographs, records, radio sets, and many other articles of culture."[65] In 1936 the newspaper *Pravda* reported that 500 bicycles were received.[66] The fact that in Deineka's painting it is a woman who echoes the findings of Siegelbaum suggests a certain gender character to owning a bicycle, alongside nice clothes, amongst the female Stakhanovites, making them "marriageable girls".[67]

Given that hardly any bicycles were in evidence, Kiaer interprets Deineka's painting as not precisely critical of Soviet propaganda, but at least more realistic, in the sense that there is only one woman on a bicycle.[68] But the depiction of a well-nourished woman on a bicycle in the Donbas region is still unrealistic, not only because of the bicycle, but also because even the coal miners from the Donbas were suffering hunger. The fact that people died, including in the rural areas of the Donbas and on collective farms, can be seen in the macabre emptiness of the farm fields. The woman represents a shock-worker (later a Stakhanovite),[69] who, following

62
Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969). An Avant-Garde of the Proletariat (exh. cat. Madrid, Fundación Juan March), ed. by Manuel Fontán del Junco, Madrid 2011, 18; Kiaer, Collective Body, 277.

63
Kiaer, Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour?, 338.

64
Ibid.

65
Conference procedure 1935, 30; quoted in Siegelbaum, Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 228.

66
Ibid.

67
Ibid., 320–231.

68
Kiaer, Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour?, 340.

69
Shock-workers, like Stakhanovites, was not a title limited to industrial workers, but included kolkhoz (collective farm) workers, service and other industry workers. Cf. Siegelbaum, Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 11.

Penter's reflection, had become even prouder by surviving the Holodomor.

We are dealing here with a representation of a conspicuously isolated, elite, and very likely Russian, worker. In this scenario, Ukraine becomes merely the background, a scene for her heroism and specialness. Even if this painting is, according to Kiaer, an expression of Deineka's modern free spirit, it can also be read as an example of eyes closed to Soviet state crimes.

VI. The Clean Coal Worker

The composition of Deineka's painting *Donbas* (1947) [Fig. 11] seems to be based on the artist's sketches and work from the 1920s, where we find exactly the same composition in the illustration "V Donbasse" for the magazine *U Stanka* (no. 3, 1924) [Fig. 12]. In the foreground are two women: one is shovelling coal and the other is standing back and looking into the distance. She is looking in the same direction as the wind is blowing, which is indicated by the depiction of the smoke. The smoke is white, as are the faces and bodies of the workers, especially the ones in the foreground. The dresses of the female workers are painted in pastel yellow and they wear pastel pink head scarves. Apart from two stains on the legs of the shovelling woman, that could also be just shadows, neither of the women seem to be dirty from all their work with the coal – nor are the other workers in the background. Deineka intentionally paints their faces immaculately clean despite the dirty work they are doing (only what appears to be sunburns indicate the damage of working outside). This corresponds to the obsession with cleanliness in relation to the Stakhanovite movement that was propagated in the press. Siegelbaum writes:

> A cultural appearance was important, however, not only for marriageable girls and not only during leisure hours. [...] A Stakhanovite textile worker, Milovanova, wrote in her factory's newspaper that before leaving for work she made it a practice to clean her shoes, look into the mirror, and carefully arrange her dress.[70]

Even though *Donbas* does not depict textile workers – while Deineka's *Textile Workers* (1927) corresponds exactly to this ideal of cleanliness – we can argue that the choice of bright colours for the dresses worn by the coal-shovelling women is intentional with the view to represent the Stakhanovites' cleanliness ideal. Stakhanovites, all the workers who are associated and who associate themselves with the highly efficient work of the coal miner, present an elite class of workers, who earn wages higher than the average worker and who

70 Ibid., 231.

wear nice clothes, apply perfume (*Crimean Rose*) and play the piano. Deineka must have been aware of the cleanliness campaign, because the magazine he was working for, *Daësh'*, published an article titled "How to Maintain Body Cleanliness in Industrial Production" and the notes "A hot bath and shower for the milkmaids" and "After work – a shower" in a special issue dedicated to the political campaign of cleansing the state apparatus (*Chistka gosapparata*, no. 1, 1929). Deineka illustrates the article with an ink drawing of three naked men in the shower. The workers in his paintings are Stakhanovites who represent the entire body of workers in the Soviet Union. It is especially in Deineka's oeuvre that we see the extent to which Stakhanovite superiority is being internalized.

Thus, we can discern a stark contrast between Deineka's early impressions of Donbas industry, with dark, dirty and determined workers, and his later Donbas workers as pale, pastel and pretty. Furthermore, there is a shift in the composition technique. If in his early drawings for the magazines the iconography of coal-mine work as people pushing wagons full of coal, railways and steel girder bridges form the composition, in this painting it is pushed into the background. Now it functions merely to signal that we are in a coal-mining site – the Donbas. What is foregrounded here is instead the actual product of coal mining – the glimmering and glittering coal, an almost jewel-like cipher for the Soviet Empire.

The depiction of coal is rather rare in Deineka's drawings or other paintings. Even though its blackness and the darkness of the coal mines seem to be echoed in the often-used colour black, representation of the coal itself was avoided, possibly because visually it does not (unlike steel constructions) directly signify modernity.

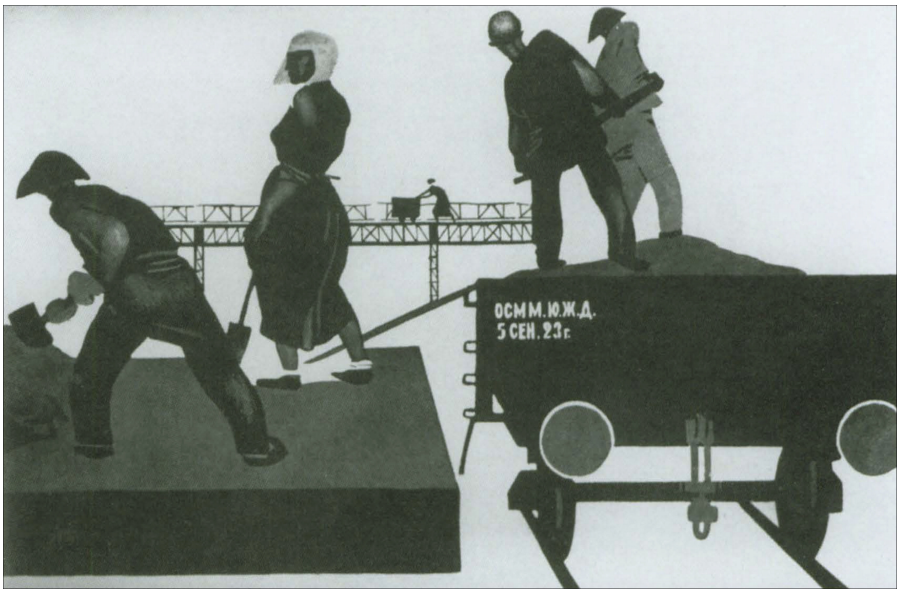
Deineka's sketch *Unloading Coal*[71] suggests that possibly the scene in *Donbas* is meant to be about the particular motif of unloading coal. The shovelling of coal in *Donbas* is a scene that could have happened anywhere in the Soviet Union. It could be argued that Deineka here drew on the familiar sight in the Soviet Union of coal being delivered by truck, unloaded on the road, and shovelled up by everyone rushing to distribute the coal in the village or town. The use of this familiar sight of coal shovelling adds to the ambivalence that is ever present in Deineka's work: is the scene set in Ukraine or are we faced with generalized imagery, an imperial strategy of producing a "nowhere and anywhere"?

The Donbas is made significant indirectly through the presentation of the most important product of mining, namely the coal. Its glimmering, shining appearance makes it a desirable commodity – echoed by the "marriageable" pretty red-cheeked women in pastel dresses. This commodity iconography complements the iconography of the aestheticization of labour, insofar as the outcome and the direct purpose of labour is represented and thus the need to work

71
Aleksandr Deineka, *Unloading Coal (Na razgruzke uglia)*, sketch for the painting *Donbas*, 1947, paper, pencil, colour pencil, 22.8 × 25 cm, private collection, in: Deineka. Zhivopis', 319.



[Fig. 11]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Donbas*, 1947, tempera on canvas, 179 × 197 cm, Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery, in: Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969). An Avant-Garde of the Proletariat, 51.



[Fig. 12]
Aleksandr Deineka, *In the Donbas (V Donbasse)*, 1924, illustration for the magazine *U Stanka*, No. 3, 1924, in: Vladimir P. Sysoev, *Aleksandr Deineka. 1889–1969*, Moscow 2010, 10.

in the Donbas and its significance are made more graspable. This could be read as an echo of the poster by Apsit discussed above, "Why do we need the Donets Basin?" (1919), which illustrates the purpose of conquering the Donbas. Consequently, Deineka's *Donbas* (1947) explains "why we need to work in the Donbas".

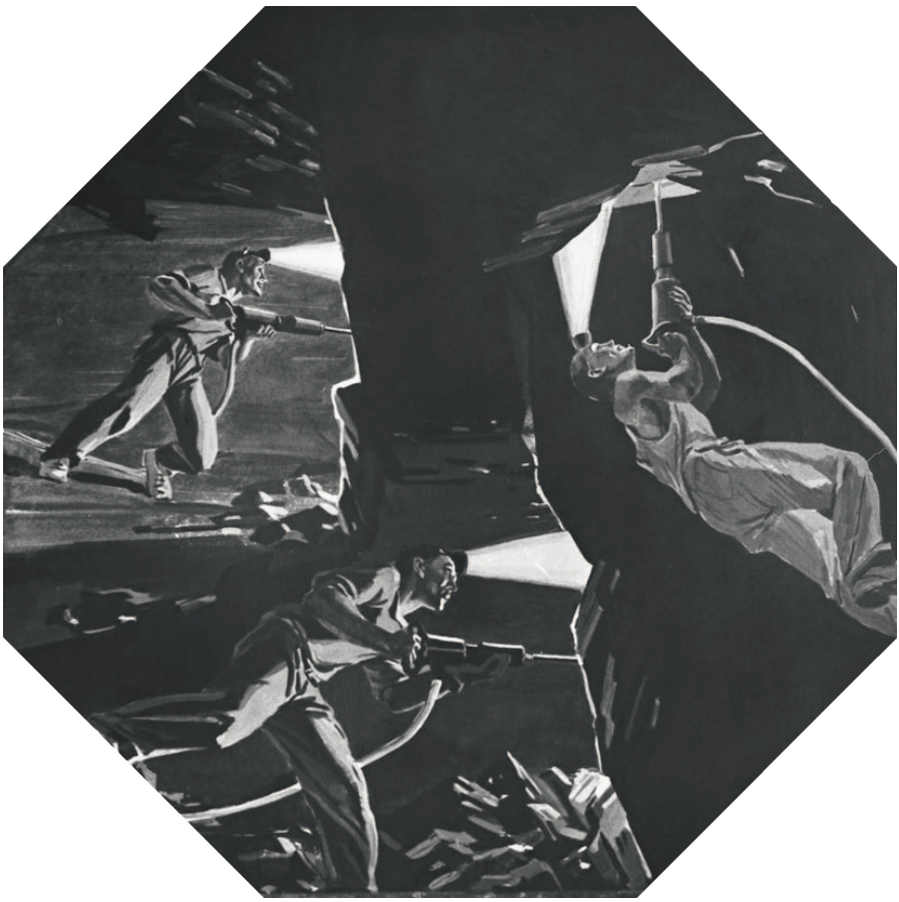
VII. Underground. The Donbas in Moscow's Metro Stations

Deineka's depictions of the Donbas also extend to the mosaics he was commissioned to design for two metro stations in Moscow: the panel *Blast Furnaces at Work* (*Domny v rabote*, 1938) for Mayakovskaia station, and the sketch for an unrealized panel *In the Pit Face* (*V zaboe*, 1940) for Paveletskaia station – a station that was initially to be named Donbasskaia (Donbas station).[72]

In the Pit Face depicts three miners in action underground with their drilling machines [Fig. 13]. The miners are wearing helmets with modern electric lamps, as opposed to the dangerous oil lamps they used to carry [cf. Fig. 9 and Fig. 4c]. Their drills are also powered via electrical cables. As in his earlier poster *Mechanizing Donbas* (*Mekhaniziruem Donbass*, 1930), and with similar iconography [Fig. 14], the space of *In the Pit Face* is divided into three parts, each of which has a different angle. The result is a modernist, quasi-cubist space, composed of multiple perspectives. This vividly depicts the dark interior space of underground mining, which naturally lacks a horizon line and general source of light to orient and unify the space, and consists instead of the numerous temporary and partial views illuminated by the miner's lamp. *In the Pit Face* deploys these modernist pictorial devices in order to show how Soviet technology has transformed mining, enabling humanity to access, illuminate and exploit the vast resources of the Earth, creating a new artificial world out of what was inaccessible, dark and unused. It announces that the Soviet Union had conquered the Earth.

In the Pit Face is part of a cycle of fourteen panels which Deineka designed for Paveletskaia. Only six of the panels (excluding *In the Pitface*) were realized at Novokuznetskaya. The motifs for the other panels include aeroplanes, athletes and football players, an apple harvest (in the Donbas), factories and construction sites [Fig. 15]. All these other panels, except *Metallurgy*, have the vast sky as their background. They are views up into the sky, without land or a horizon line. This choice plays on the position of the mosaics on the ceiling above the viewer. More importantly, the sky provided a spectacular depiction of the Soviet Union's modernity and power. The sky was no longer a natural realm above and beyond humanity; it was now the scene of some of the most impressive achievements of Soviet industry and technology. The Soviet Union had conquered the heavens. Although *In the Pitface* does not feature the sky –

72 *Deineka. Monumental'noe iskusstvo. Skulptura* (exh. cat, Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery), ed. by Tatiana Iudkevich, Moscow 2011, 148 (4 October 2024).



[Fig. 13]
Aleksandr Deineka, *In the Pit Face (V zaboe)*, 1940, sketch for the metro station Paveletskaia, St. Petersburg, Photo archive NA RAKh, in: Deineka. Monumental'noe iskusstvo, 224 (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 14]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Mechanizing Donbas (Mekhaniziruem Donbas)*, 1930, colour lithograph, 82 × 101 cm, Moscow, V.I. Lenin State Library, in: Syssojew, Alexander Deineka, 21.



[Fig. 15]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Collecting Apples in the Donbas (Sbor yablok v Donbasse)*, mosaic panel for the metro station Paveletskaia, installed at the station Novokuznetskaia, Moscow in 1943, ca. 3 m diagonally, in: Deineka. Monumental'noe iskusstvo, 228 (4 October 2024).

rather its opposite – it shares the absence of a horizon line. Moreover, both the earth and the sky, underground and overground, are depicted as formerly blank or empty spaces that the Soviet people have occupied and mastered.

The other mosaic panel representing Donbas, *Blast Furnaces at Work* [Fig. 16], is part of the cycle for Mayakovskaia, in which the sky is again the principal theme. The architect who designed Mayakovskaia, Alexey Dushkin, was committed to pay tribute to Vladimir Mayakovsky's words from the poem *Good!* (*Khorosho!*, 1927): "Above me / the sky. / Blue / silk! / Never / ever / felt / so good!"[73] It was Deineka's idea to show the rich life of the Soviet Union as it could be experienced over a period of 24 hours.[74] The cycle consists of pictures starting with very bright colours, representing the morning and the daytime: branches of apple blossom, a sailor on watch, a glider and aeroplanes flying above the Kremlin [Fig. 17]. *Blast Furnaces at Work* belongs to the panels representing the evening and night, which include the Kremlin at night, a parachutist, a high-altitude balloon (*stratostat*), light projectors and bombers – a sort of Soviet "night-watch", composed of military defence, surveillance, power and the Donbas.

Blast Furnaces at Work depicts blast furnaces fuming into the night sky in the Donbas.[75] In this "nocturne" the fumes represent the active work in progress in the Donbas even at night. Fumes have a particular meaning in Deineka's work. During his first work trip to the Donbas in 1924 he also made drawings of the settlements on the outskirts of the industrial hub. In his drawing *Outskirts. Donbas* (*Okraina. Donbass*, 1924) he sketched several dwellings or huts, a few trees and a person walking towards the dwellings.[76] Seemingly similar shapes and composition are used for his illustration of Kuprin's *In the Bowels of the Earth*, only that the trees have become fumes from tall furnace chimneys, and the huts have become coal-mining

73
"Надо мною / небо. / Синий / шёлк! / Никогда / не было / так / хорошо!" Vladimir Mayakovsky, Khorosho!, in: *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh 2. Poemy, p"esy, proza*, Moscow 1988, 349–424, here 420–412 (trans. M. G.).

74
Sysoev elegantly characterizes the cycle as follows: "The artist conceived the whole complex as a poetic story about a journey from Moscow to the southern industrial centre of the country, during which the viewer mentally traversed hundreds of kilometres, accumulating various impressions, illuminated by the light of a great poetic idea – of a bright generalizing fiction." ("Весь комплекс художник задумал как поэтический рассказ о путешествии из Москвы к южному индустриальному центру страны, во время которого зритель словно мысленно преодолевал сотни километров, накапливая разнообразные впечатления, озаренные светом большой поэтической идеи, яркого обобщающего вымысла.") Sysoev, Aleksandr Deineka. Monografia, 201 (trans. M. G.). The great poetic idea of the Soviet Union, that Sysoev does not try to conceal, presumes that which we now think of as colonialism.

75
Ibid., 188. Interestingly, this Donbas nocturne features on the cover of the 2011 catalogue on Deineka's monumental art: Deineka. Monumental'noe iskusstvo.

76
Aleksandr Deineka, *Outskirts. Donbas (Okraina. Donbass)*, 1924, paper, pencil, 11.9 × 17.9 cm, private collection, in: Irina Ostarkova, *Deineka. Grafika*, Moscow 2009, 425 (13 September 2024).



[Fig. 16]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Blast Furnaces at Work (Domny v rabote)*, 1938, mosaic panel installed at the metro station Mayakovskaia, Moscow, 1.43 × 2.23 m, in: Syssojew, Alexander Deineka, 161.



[Fig. 17]
Aleksandr Deineka, *Kremlin at Daytime (Kreml' dnem)*, fragment, 1938, mosaic panel for the metro station Mayakovskaia, Moscow, 1.43 × 2.23 m, in: Deineka. Monumental'noe iskusstvo, 38 (4 October 2024).

factories [Fig. 4b]. The same leap from countryside to industry is made in his compositions for the paintings *At Noon* (1932) and *Landscape with Train* (1931) – on which the *Lunchbreak in the Donbas* (1935) is based. The trees in both paintings take the shape of fumes, and the clouds take the shape of train fumes. Fumes represent the transformational character of labour and work – the ultimate appropriation (or destruction) of nature and landscape.

In the light of my analysis of Deineka's paintings and illustrations, which appear to be quite different to his mosaics, we can nonetheless observe that they share techniques and strategies that concern a colonial and imperial imagination. The empty landscape is a vivid motif for a colonial vision in general: a vision of unoccupied, and therefore easily colonizable, space. This image is, of course, deceptive and expresses wishful thinking. It nonetheless works as a visual justification of colonization. The empty sky of Deineka's mosaics obviously shows no land, but this heightens their representation of a formerly unpopulated, unused and completely available space for occupation or exploitation. The mosaics show how the Soviet Union colonized the sky. As we have seen, *In the Pit Face* provides the same vision of the earth. This colonization of the sky remains more indirect or metaphorical than Deineka's representations of the Donbas landscape; however, this landscape is only just below *Blast Furnaces at Work* and above *In the Pit Face*. As in Deineka's paintings and illustrations, which depict Ukrainian territory as an empty backdrop that is populated only by the colonizers, the mosaic panels work with a similar technique: the sky is no longer empty, as it supposedly was before the Revolution, but populated by technology, industry, agriculture and empowered people. Thus, the mosaics function with a similar ideological implication, namely the aestheticization of colonized space. The mosaic cycles express not only the relevance of the railway in the Soviet Union's imperial and colonial imagination, and particularly the Moscow–Donbas railway line, they also consolidate the particular visual thinking that is characteristic of Deineka's Donbas works. Soviet achievements and dedicated workers are presented against an originally "unpopulated" background. They appear as "foreign bodies" – dislodged and dislocated. From a critical point of view on Soviet modernity, they are "wrong images", but in their modern and abstract appearance they are absolutely "right". They aestheticize the modern taking over of space and visually make sense of a successful Soviet colonization.

VIII. Conclusion

The outcome of this article is that Deineka's representations of the Donbas should be regarded as contributing to the ideological justification of the Soviet Union's imperial and colonial ventures in that region. This departs from the prevailing receptions of Deineka's work, which either do not address the imperial or colonial dimen-

sion of the Soviet Union (Sysoev), or argue that Deineka's modernism was critical of Soviet ideology (Kiaer). On the contrary, we have seen how Deineka's modernist strategies are crucial to justifying the Soviet Union's colonization of the Donbas region. Deineka's pictures conceal a great deal, but they also reveal and make sense of the modern, displaced and abstract experience of Soviet imperialism. He produced images of this experience for Soviet citizens, in order to enable them to see Soviet ideology positively, not negatively or critically.

This conclusion evinces two main implications for further research. On the one hand, it raises the question of whether and how Deineka's other work, for example, his Crimea paintings, can be understood in terms of Soviet imperialism and colonialism. His modern visualizations of imperialist and colonialist ideology might serve as an explanation of why his recent reception in Russia has been so positive. On the other hand, it raises the question of how other avant-garde or modernist artists relate to Soviet imperialism. Whether modernist compositional techniques could in some cases be interpreted as imperial or colonial still needs to be analysed in their specific political and historical context. However, the article has shown that these techniques resonate profoundly with the imperialist content of Soviet ideology, and especially in seemingly "neutral" Soviet themes of work, technology, leisure and travel.

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WITHIN THE FABRIC OF PUBLIC SPACE

TEXTILE INTERVENTIONS IN CURRENT PROCESSES OF DECOLONIZING MONUMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The debate on decolonizing monuments has provoked a great deal of covering and shrouding of public sculptures. This paper looks at three examples and shows how textile interventions alter a monument's visibility and, as products of (post)colonial trade or communal handicraft, add semantic layers. Ranging from The Kudzu Project's marking of Confederate monuments in Charlottesville, VA, through the covering of the Robert Milligan statue by protesters in London, to a curated artwork by Joiri Minaya in Hamburg, the examples span both geographical regions and the recent history of the debate. The paper proposes that textile ephemerality questions concepts of history embedded in the traditional materiality of public sculptures and provides a model for imagining other practices of commemoration.

KEYWORDS

Monuments; Iconoclasm; Textiles; Decolonization; Activism.

I. Monumental Materiality

Two unveilings: on Juneteenth 2021, a bright blue sheet of tarpaulin was removed outside the City Hall of Newark, New Jersey [Fig. 1], while, on the same day, in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, solemn black covers came off [Fig. 2]. Both fabrics unveiled monuments to the late George Floyd, the Black man who was killed by a police officer during his arrest in May of the previous year. The first is a larger-than-life bronze statue of him sitting on a bench,[1] the second a huge bronze-colored bust atop a marble base.[2] It seems peculiar that the killing of George Floyd, the very incident that fueled the questioning and tearing down of colonial and Confederate monuments in the U.S. and – to a lesser extent – worldwide, is again creating not only new monuments but even representational images.[3] While the two monuments employ different techniques and materials, both refer to bronze as a traditional material for monuments and both attempt a naturalistic depiction. By choosing bronze and marble as materials, materials associated with durability, even eternity,[4] they continue the concept that monuments are thought to preserve a memorable image for generations to come – or even for eternity. By opting for naturalistic imagery and – in the case of the seated figure in Newark – offering direct physical contact with the monument, a central function of mimetic sculpture becomes prominent, that is, to serve as a three-dimensional substitute for a human being.[5] Leon Pinkney, who commissioned the latter monument, recalls that "people spoke to the statue like George Floyd was

1
The statue was created pro bono by sculptor Stanley J. Watts who is known for religious and patriotic motifs, for example *To Lift a Nation*, the memorial commemorating 9/11 in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Linda Armstrong, George Floyd Statue Finds Temporary Home at Faison Firehouse Theater, in: *Amsterdam News*, June 3, 2021 (September 9, 2024).

2
Architect and artist Chris Carnabuci had created the image from layers of the rather modest material CNC-cut Baltic birch plywood, but it was coated in bronze-colored resin. He was later asked to contribute to the exhibition *seeinjustice* in Union Square at the George Washington Statue, New York, October 1–31, 2021, for which he added busts of Breonna Tayler, another victim of police violence, and of the civil rights activist John Lewis. Cf. Sarah Cascone, An Artist's Busts of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and John Lewis Go Up in New York's Union Square, in: *artnet*, October 1, 2021 (September 9, 2024).

3
Neither of the monuments was commissioned by an institution or a government entity but created on the initiative of individuals, and only later authorized by Floyd's family.

4
Cf. Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien. Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe*, Münster 2019 [1994].

5
The function of sculpture as a substitute for a person who is absent or deceased is already part of the etiology of sculpture narrated by Pliny the Elder in the myth of Butades (*Natural History* 35.43.151). In addition to its application in monuments, this purpose of three-dimensional likenesses is visible in tomb reliefs, and the practice of creating death masks and effigies.

alive".[6] The power ascribed to the monuments is also visible in the ways both Floyd statues have been attacked since their unveiling: the bronze in Newark was defaced and vandalized within a week of its installment as was the bust in Brooklyn. When the bust was moved to Union Square in Manhattan, it was again attacked,[7] and in the course of the cleaning, it was soon covered again.

The short succession of unveiling and cloaking of the Floyd bust points to the role textiles play in the monument cult (*Denkmalkult*). They serve as ceremonial cloaks lifted during a monument's inauguration and temporary protective sleeves or coverings for removal or transport. The unveiling of monuments marks their coming into being, that is, into the frame of public representation. When a monument is covered again [Fig. 3], textiles serve as the negation of the image: the textile coverings themselves, most of the time, do not carry an image or meaning, but the act of unveiling/veiling marks the monument as being inaugurated or "not on view". This is even more striking when – as was the case with the Floyd monuments – a naturalistic image is disfigured by textile folds. Veiling generates abstraction: mostly mimetic, figurative sculptures become material entities. Artist Elizabeth Price commented on this with *Renderer for an Unspecified Statue* (2022), a silk-satin patchwork shroud.[8] When veiled, the monument enters a kind of limbo. Currently, this limbo is often extended for a longer period: the coverings, wrappings, veilings, and shroudings mark monuments as being under debate, on probation, still erect but simultaneously in flux.

Historically, textile forms used in public spaces, such as tapestries, flags and banners, or canopies are – not unlike monuments – related to the representation of power, but they mostly serve as *temporary* additions to stone, metal, concrete, and glass. The contrast between the fixed monumental object and the ephemeral veiling of statues echoes that of architecture and textiles as described by Anni Albers in her well-known essay: "If the nature of architecture [monuments, statues] is the grounded, the fixed, the permanent, then textiles are its very antithesis."[9] She describes the reversible potential of the two-dimensional textile to take on temporary forms as its "nomadic nature"; this is also visible in temporary wrappings or additions to monuments. When monuments

6
He uses similar words to describe George Floyd's brother Terrence Floyd's encounter with the statue: "After seeing the statue he felt as if he was with his brother again. He said the fingers of the statue resembled George Floyd's." Armstrong, George Floyd Statue.

7
Mark Morales and Lila Watts, NYPD Investigating Vandalism of the George Floyd Statue in Brooklyn as a Hate Crime, in: *CNN US*, June 25, 2021 (September 9, 2024).

8
For Price's work, see Dan Hicks, Can We Imagine Public Art Beyond 'Toxic Monumentality'?, in: *Artreview*, January 28, 2022 (September 9, 2024).

9
Anni Albers, The Pliable Plane. Textiles in Architecture, in: *Perspecta* 4, 1957, 36–41, here 36.



[Fig. 1]
Screenshot from PIX11 News, George Floyd statue by Stanley J. Watts unveiled in Newark, *Youtube*, June 17, 2021 (September 22, 2024), 00:00.



[Fig. 2]
Screenshot from WION, George Floyd statue by Chris Carnabuci unveiled in Brooklyn, *Youtube*, June 20, 2021 (September 22, 2024), 00:39.



[Fig. 3]
Chris Carnabuci, *Bust of Georg Floyd*, 2021, wood, height 1.8 m, vandalized, Brooklyn, New York © Meghan Heintz.

are veiled, the degree of recognition of what is hidden also plays a role.[10]

While some politically motivated coverings have occurred using whatever textiles were at hand, sometimes the textile covers themselves bear meaning. A prominent historical example is the covering of the head of a Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad with a U.S. flag to indicate victory and its tearing down [Fig. 4], which the Americans would carry out shortly thereafter. More recently, the bust of Leopold II in Ghent was covered [Fig. 5]: Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists wrapped its head in a white fabric drenched in red paint and inscribed with Floyd's final words: "I can't breathe."[11] Here, while the words point to the death of Floyd, the red paint refers to protest, and also signifies the blood on the hands of the Belgian colonizers who were led by King Leopold. In this way, a current protest against racism is reconnected to its historical origins in colonialism and slavery.

The number of examples of textile interventions within the current debate has led us to ask how the ephemeral qualities of textiles serve as a prominent model for the critique of monuments: how are key qualities of textiles, such as flexibility and transitional temporality, employed to intervene in monuments; to hide, distort, and reconfigure well-known figures in public spaces? How do transcultural histories and handicraft modes of production enmeshed in fabrics create temporary layers of meanings in an ongoing "controversy of remembering and forgetting"?[12] According to Henri Lefebvre, "monuments constitute the strong points, nexuses or anchors"[13] within the *texture* of space. *Texture* here refers to the fabric mediating between structural properties of space and the practices that produce and reproduce space. As we will see in these interventions, textiles also texture the texture of space.[14]

Before tracing these questions, to further contextualize the following analyses, we will look at two aspects of the monument debate, the cycle of *de/constructing (contested) images* and *the additive and subtractive strategies* involved in dealing with contested

10
Cf. Britta Szidzik, *Verhüllung als Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert*, Dissertation, University of Göttingen, 2015, chap. 3.

11
"I can't breathe" has, in fact, already been used by civil rights protestors and the Black Lives Matter movement since the death of Eric Garner in 2014. They were his last words when he was suffocated by a police officer employing a forbidden stranglehold. See Henry Kaap, «I can't breathe!» Polizeigewalt und anti-rassistischer Protest in den USA, in: *kritische berichte* 1, 2016, 86–95.

12
Thomas Macho, Die Bedeutung von Denkmaldebatten, in: *Deutscher Kulturrat*, September 2, 2020 (September 9, 2024).

13
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford/Cambridge 1991 [1974], 221.

14
"When formal elements become part of a texture, they diversify, introducing both repetition and difference." Ibid., 150.



[Fig. 4]
Jerome Delay, Cpl. Edward Chin of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines Regiment, covers the face of a statue of Saddam Hussein with an American flag before toppling the statue, Firdos Square, Baghdad, Iraq, on April 9, 2003 © picture alliance / ASSOCIATED PRESS, Jerome Delay.



[Fig. 5]
The attacked bust of Leopold II in Ghent, 2020 © Wannes Nimmegeers.

monuments. The three case studies – while being situated in different regions and carried out in different modes – outline the field of textile interventions in the process of decolonizing monuments. They stretch from planned interventions on Confederate monuments in Charlottesville, VA, to the spontaneous veiling of a statue in the London Docklands, to a piece carried out by a Dominican-American artist in Hamburg, Germany, as part of a curated exhibition in public space. This selection not only reveals the globality of the current monument debate and occurrences of textile interventions, but also traces its most recent history starting from the incidents in Charlottesville in 2017, continuing with a veiling at the height of the BLM protests, and ending with an example in the realm of contemporary art.

II. De/constructing (Contested) Images

The case of the already troubled short lives of the George Floyd monuments also illustrates the circular movement of monument cult and iconoclastic gestures: monuments are being erected while others are torn down, these new monuments are again contested and become targets. Smaller-scale cases of *damnatio memoriae* have occurred since antiquity: effigies, busts, inscriptions, and written names, such as those in annals, have been removed or erased to prevent commemoration. And the rise and fall of political regimes have always gone hand in hand with the erection and destruction of monuments – this cycle is a historical continuum. The mentioned actions often point to the core of fundamental societal conflicts (*soziale Grundkonflikte*[15]). The case of George Floyd highlights this.[16] When Floyd was killed in May 2020, two months of the COVID-19 pandemic had already served as a lens through which ongoing racial inequalities and injustices in the U.S. became dramatically clear: not only were African Americans more greatly affected by the virus for a variety of reasons,[17] but they were also more severely hit by the societal consequences of the lock-down, such as unemployment and poverty. George Floyd's death not only created new monuments but first and foremost fueled an ongoing debate about monuments underway since the aftermath of the Charleston church shooting in

15
Horst Bredekamp, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte. Bilderkämpfe von der Spätantike bis zur Hussitenrevolution*, Frankfurt a. M. 1975, 12.

16
In 2020 Caesar Alimsinya Atuire discussed the BLM protests after George Floyd's death as a *kairos* moment for the monument debate in this journal: id., Black Lives Matter and the Removal of Racist Statues. Perspectives of an African, in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual – Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* 2, 2020, 449–467.

17
Maritza Vasquez Reyes, The Disproportional Impact of COVID-19 on African Americans, in: *Health and Human Rights Journal* 22/2, December 2020, 299–307.

June 2015.[18] Also worthy of note is that the Rhodes Must Fall movement had already begun at the University of Cape Town in March 2015, leading to the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes in April of that year and sparking a debate on the decolonizing of monuments and educational institutions across South Africa. The debate made clear that especially the cities of the global North are "inhabited" by a variety of statues that represent only certain social groups and classes and have a violent impact on others. It is not surprising that these monuments thus provoke counter-violence, attacks, or at least public criticism.[19]

Within our discipline these developments can be looked at under the term iconoclasm. Until the late 1960s, art historical research only rarely dealt with the *destruction* of images.[20] The early research on iconoclasm in Germany, for example by Martin Warnke and Horst Bredekamp,[21] is anchored in the general politicization of the discipline in the 1960s. The ontological question of what an image *is* became directly linked to why images have such strong power,[22] and it seemed more and more important to inquire into the downside of power, that is, when images provoke opposition, antipathy, or fear – and finally – violent acts of destruction. The term iconoclasm is not always applicable as it produces a dichotomy between "making and breaking"[23] and does not integrate the ambivalent, interstitial transformative processes.[24] Other terms were coined recently: the term posticonoclasm has been proposed as a cultural-theoretical post-concept, like postcolonialism, not only focusing on the aftermath of an iconoclasm, but alluding to the con-

18
The Charleston church shooting served as a major catalyst in the discussion of Confederate memorabilia and monuments, because the perpetrator, Dylann Roof, had posted photos of the Confederate battle flag on his website.

19
Bredekamp, Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte, 12–13.

20
David Freedberg, *Iconoclasm*, Chicago/London 2021, xiii. Research in this field has often focused on religiously motivated and historical forms of iconoclasm, but more and more contemporary iconoclasms are accounted for, cf. *Iconoclash. Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* (exh. cat. Karlsruhe, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien) ed. by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, Cambridge, MA 2002; Uwe Fleckner, Maike Steinkamp, and Hendrik Ziegler (eds.), *Der Sturm der Bilder. Zerstörte und zerstörende Kunst von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart*, Berlin 2011.

21
Martin Warnke (ed.), *Bildersturm. Die Zerstörung des Kunstwerks*, Munich 1973; Bredekamp, Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte.

22
Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich 1990.

23
Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art. Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, New Haven, CT 1997, 28–29.

24
Richard Wrigley, Breaking the Code. Interpreting French Revolutionary Iconoclasm, in: Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (eds.), *Reflections of Revolution. Images of Romanticism*, London 1993, 182–195; Richard Clay, Re-Making French Revolutionary Iconoclasm, in: *Perspective. Actualité en histoire de l'art* 1, 2012, 181–186.

tinuation of effects of iconoclastic acts.[25] A more general approach offers the term "visual scepticism".[26]

Interestingly, already in 1973, Martin Warnke remarked that the preconditions that had made iconoclasm a legitimate form of articulation for millennia had become obsolete in his day, because contemporary states and societies no longer fall back on visual practices of representation, which is what made iconoclasm possible in the first place.[27] As he states, a society based on idolatry seems to be "an anachronism".[28] The latest removals and attacks, however, suggest that the status quo Warnke cited in the 1970s is no longer valid. In light of the current decolonization process, the continuation of these "visual practices of representation" become evident in many instances. They are perpetuated by the visibility of monuments honoring historical figures with their likenesses in public, but also by creating new "heroes" while the representations of old heroes are defaced or taken off their pedestals. A cursory overview of the recent monument debate shows what the case of the Floyd statues already suggests, that the iconoclastic cycle of destruction and construction deemed invalid by Warnke remains – or is again – underway. However, its modes vary greatly, as the overview in the next section will show.

III. Dealing with Contested Monuments. Subtractive and Additive Strategies

In dealing with contested monuments some propose what we call "additive" strategies, that is, the monument in question should stay in place but with the addition of (more) educational context.[29] Another additive strategy that has become popular recently is to leave monuments of Confederate soldiers, colonizers, and slave traders in place, but erect new statues honoring women or BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).[30] Although this raises the

25
See Birgit Mersmann, Posticonoclasm. Image Controversies over Virtual and Physical Reconstructions of Destroyed Cultural Heritage, in: ead., Christiane Kruse and Arnold Bartetzky (eds.), *Image Controversies. Contemporary Iconoclasm in Art, Media, and Cultural Heritage*, Berlin/Boston 2024, 181–199.

26
See Margit Kern's research project *Visual Scepticism. Towards an Aesthetic of Doubt* and her forthcoming book *Visuelle Skepsis. Wie Bilder zweifeln*, Berlin 2025.

27
Warnke, Bildersturm, 9.

28
Ibid.

29
Cf. Katie McClymont, The Fall of Statues? Contested Heritage, Public Space and Urban Planning. An Introduction, in: *Planning Theory & Practice*, May 22, 2021, 767–795.

30
Striking examples are probably the 2013 placement of a monument of Rosa Parks in the United States Capitol's National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C.; the addition of a like-

difficult question of *which* monuments should be added to "even out" the current situation, the strategy is championed by a surprisingly diverse group of people, from feminist writer Rebecca Solnit to historians of the American Civil War, such as D. Scott Hartwig.[31] The strategy is no less complicated than former strategies of subverting conventional modes of commemoration with so-called counter-monuments,[32] as is the strategy of adding an educational framework – discussed in the United Kingdom as "retain and explain policy".[33] Who provides the framework and how? The sheer number of recent projects inviting artists to develop and propose interventions on contested monuments suggests that temporary alterations and additions are more popular options than the placement of a permanent, additional plaque.[34]

What we call "subtractive" strategies are those proposing the removal of the contested monument, partial demolition,[35] and so-called "de-plinthing".[36] However, the mode of dismantling can vary; for example, it can be based on a democratic decision and carried out by government representatives – as has often been the case

ness of Black tennis player Arthur Ashe to Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, in 2015; and the Women's Rights Pioneers Monument installed in Central Park in 2020. Here, Sojourner Truth was later added to the duo of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, after the responsible initiative, *Monumental Women*, received sharp criticism for only showing white women.

31
Rebecca Solnit, Across America, Racist and Sexist Monuments Give Way to a New Future, in: *The Guardian*, January 2, 2019 (September 9, 2024); one statement proposes Charlottesville should "preserve the statue, add panels discussing its history, rename the park, and commission a memorial to the more than 250 men born in Albemarle County who served in United States Colored Troops units". Gary W. Gallagher, Empty Pedestals. What Should Be Done with Civic Monuments to the Confederacy and Its Leaders?, in: *Civil War Times Magazine*, July 18, 2017 (September 9, 2024).

32
Especially in Germany, counter-monuments or counter memorials emerged in the 1980s to disrupt dominant narratives and challenge the viewer's perspective through an anti-heroic style, countering the monumental aesthetic used by the Nazis. Corinna Tomberger, The Counter-Monument. Memory Shaped by Male Post-War Legacies, in: Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (eds.), *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, Basingstoke 2010, 224–232. This was also mirrored in the arts, e.g. by Gordon Matta-Clark's Non-u-ments to counter grandeur and glorification. Peter Muir, *Gordon Matta-Clark's Conical Intersect. Sculpture, Space, and the Cultural Value of Urban Imagery*, Farnham, Surrey 2014.

33
McClymont, Fall of Statues, 768.

34
In Hamburg – to name but one example – several initiatives were founded (*Decolonize Bismarck, Intervention Bismarckdenkmal Hamburg, Bismarck's Critical Neighbours*) to newly contextualize the local Bismarck Monument. Four workshops especially invited artists to propose temporary and permanent solutions. Cf. Behörde für Kultur und Medien, *Bismarck neu kontextualisieren* (September 9, 2024).

35
An example of a partial demolition is the "decapitation" of a statue of Christopher Columbus in Boston in June 2020. See Kelly Grovier, Black Lives Matter Protests. Why Are Statues so Powerful?, in: *BBC*, June 12, 2020 (September 9, 2024); another is the "unhorsing" of the statue of a British soldier in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, see Simon Tomlinson, Memorials to British Colonials Attacked Across South Africa as Protesters Demand Statues Honouring 'Racist' Figures from its Past Are Removed, in: *Daily Mail Online*, November 29, 2022 (September 9, 2024).

36
McClymont, Fall of Statues, 768.

since 2015.[37] In other cases, protesters topple statues without permission.[38] And there is a third option, namely, destruction by force of the people, controlled by the government. "On a scheduled day," proposes Megan Kate Nelson, "a city government or university administration would invite citizens to approach a Confederate memorial, take up a cudgel, and swing away."[39] As a group effort, the destruction would be "a way for an entire community to convert a symbol of racism and white supremacy into a symbol of resistance against oppression".[40] The symbol would persist in the form of the "broken pieces left in situ".[41]

This example points to further questions related to subtractive strategies: first, should plinths also be removed, or should they remain? The empty plinth, like the remnants of a destroyed monument, could serve as a new or transformed monument pointing to the former occupant. Second, what should happen with the removed statues? Here, many practices are known: removed statues have ended up in museums and in private collections, in parks and gardens.[42] A number of authors demand designated areas for the removed monuments following the example of former Soviet countries, which gathered the insignia of the former regime in the Fallen Monument Park in Moscow, the Memento Park in Budapest, and the Grutas Park in Lithuania.[43] The question of the empty plinths leads to a combination of subtractive and additive strategies, namely, substitution: for example, Mexico City announced in September 2021 that they would be placing a replica of *The Young Woman of Amajac*, a pre-Hispanic sculpture of an indigenous

37
An extensive list is provided by Wikipedia, see *Removal of Confederate Monuments and Memorials*, February 17, 2023 (September 9, 2024).

38
A widely circulated example is the defacing and toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol on June 7, 2020.

39
Megan Kate Nelson, quoted in Empty Pedestals. In a similar way, the late historian Tyler Stovall compared a video of a crowd smashing a monument to Confederate soldiers in Durham, North Carolina, to "how the slaves gained their freedom: not through reasoned debate, but by the sword". Id., Irena's Lamp, in: *Perspectives on History*, December 1, 2017 (September 9, 2024).

40
Nelson, Empty Pedestals.

41
Ibid.

42
An example are the monuments honoring the colonial protection troops in Hamburg, which were brought to the so-called Tanzania Park, open to the public only on request. Project *afrika-hamburg.de*, Tansaniapark, May 1, 2005 (September 9, 2024).

43
Radley Balko, We Should Treat Confederate Monuments the Way Moscow and Budapest Have Treated Communist Statues, in: *The Washington Post*, June 26, 2017 (September 9, 2024).

woman, on a neoclassical plinth from which a statue of Columbus had been removed.[44]

While all these arguments are more or less situated within the cyclic order of iconoclasm, some radical subtractive arguments show that Warnke's prognosis of an end to this cycle was also partially correct. British sociologist Gary Younge explained "[w]hy every single statue should come down",[45] tackling the widespread claim that tearing down statues would lead to misunderstanding, disrespecting, or even altering history.[46] By provocatively adding "[f]rom Cecil Rhodes to Rosa Parks, let's get rid of them all", he takes Rosa Parks as a case in point to show how recently popular statues of women and BIPoC honor a single historical figure and therefore distort history to a narration of Great Men – or Women. He also questions the objectivity of the historical narratives embodied in monuments by pointing out that Confederate monuments were constructed mainly in the Jim Crow era,[47] and did not represent a public consensus at that time. He concludes that monuments contribute to a concept of history that "attempts to set our understanding of what has happened in stone", pointing out how this contradicts a view of history as "a living discipline" continuously changing and developing.[48] Younge's choice of words highlights the relation of the concepts of history embodied in monuments to the materials employed. He continues, the "statue obsession" would "*petrify* historical discourse, *lather it in cement*, hoist it high and insist on it as a *permanent* statement of fact, culture, truth and tradition that can never be questioned, touched, removed or *recast*".[49] The following examples will show how, by way of their materiality, textile interventions question these concepts.

44
Johnny Diaz, Mexico City to Replace Columbus Statue with Indigenous Woman Monument, in: *The New York Times*, September 7, 2021 (September 9, 2024).

45
Gary Younge, Why Every Single Statue Should Come Down, in: *The Guardian*, June 1, 2021 (September 9, 2024).

46
In several well-known tweets posted in the week after the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, then-president Donald J. Trump equated monuments with "history".

47
Jim Crow is the name of a fictional black stereotypical figure – a so-called "blackface" performed by a white comedian – that also refers to the racial segregation laws of the American South, in place in the decades between the abolition of slavery in the U.S. and the official end of racial segregation through the *Civil Rights Act* in 1964. Cf. David Brown, *Race in the American South. From Slavery to Civil Rights*, Edinburgh 2022.

48
Younge, Why Every Single Statue.

49
Ibid. (emphasis added).

IV. Meshing Southern Myths. The Kudzu Project in Charlottesville

The demand to remove Confederate monuments in the U.S. seems very recent due to the traction gained after the killing of George Floyd. Indeed, more than 200 monuments have been removed since then.[50] However, already in 2015 – in reaction to the Charleston church shooting – cities, including Charlottesville, Virginia, debated ways of dealing with Confederate heritage. Charlottesville appointed a special commission for the proposed removal of the equestrian statues of General Robert E. Lee from a public park and Confederate General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson from Court Square.[51] When early in 2017 the city council voted for their removal, a temporary injunction ensued, followed by rallies organized by neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. This culminated in the so-called Unite the Right rally, a gathering of far-right groups in Charlottesville on August 11 and 12, 2017, during which a man deliberately drove his car into the crowd, injuring thirty-five people and killing counter-protester Heather Heyer. In the aftermath of the attack, both statues were shrouded with black tarpaulin [Fig. 6]. The shrouding of the very monuments whose proposed removal triggered violent protests and the death of a person seems tantamount to forcibly dressing them for mourning. The Confederate heroes are denied visibility through the veiling and at the same time gain visibility as the black tarpaulin introduces difference to the familiar texture of park and square.[52]

In this context, The Kudzu Project, a group of knitters from Charlottesville, began their work, orchestrating the first intervention on the statue of a Confederate soldier in front of the Albemarle County Courthouse. The placement of Confederate monuments in front of courthouses exemplifies how statues, even if they might often be overlooked, are performatively "active" insofar as they constitute their own reality (the representation of a political power, a state, etc.). With Lefebvre's words, one could say, spatial textures anchored by monuments imply "a meaning [...] for someone who lives and acts in the space under consideration, a 'subject' with a body".[53] In this case, they continue to represent a former regime that enslaved Black people. Since the beginning of the monument

50
Very few monuments were removed before the 2010s. See Removal of Confederate Monuments and Memorials (September 9, 2024).

51
Until surrendering in 1865 Lee led the main military force of the South, the Army of Northern Virginia, and served as General in Chief of the Confederate States Army; Jackson is regarded as the second most important general after Lee.

52
Here Robert Musil's often quoted claim that "there is nothing more invisible than a monument" is inverted. Id., Monuments, in: *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, trans. by Peter Wortsman, New York 2006, 64–68, here 64.

53
Lefebvre, Production of Space, 132.



[Fig. 6]
Henry Shrady, completed by Leo Lentelli, The Robert E. Lee statue, 1924, bronze, 7.9 × 3.7 × 2.4 m, covered in black tarpaulin, 2017, Charlottesville, Virginia © Agnostic-PreachersKid, Creative Commons (October 1, 2024).

debate, many Black people have shared how these strategically placed materializations "are physical reminders" of how they "do not belong and should not anticipate equity".[54]

The soldier was covered with a knitted net of kudzu by the project: vines, leaves, and branches knitted from various shades of green wool, leaving only the rifle visible [Fig. 7].[55] The name *kudzu* is derived from that of a family of frugal plants similar to ivy, which can grow on barren soil, cover large surfaces, and climb as high as 30 meters.[56] The project was inspired by another example of questioning Confederate monuments by way of the plant: artist Dave Loewenstein's image *Defunct Monument I – Racism* shows a pale photograph of the Jefferson Davis Monument in New Orleans covered in curled felt-tip-pen lines in two shades of green, depicting kudzu vines [Fig. 8].[57] Its format and framing with rounded edges suggest that of an old postcard, thereby alluding to the role postcards of monuments have played in practices of commemoration.[58] The actions of The Kudzu Project also circulate in the form of images: although the first veiling with kudzu was immediately discovered, removed, and discarded,[59] the November 9 incident was broadcast on TV and also lives on in photographs via the project's homepage and social media. The removal must have been as hasty as the draping, as a single strand of kudzu vine was left draped over the soldier's rifle.[60] This accidental leaving of a single tendril has served as a blueprint for the group's subsequent interventions: they temporarily shroud Confederate monuments with knitted kudzu, take a picture, and leave behind a lone strand of kudzu together with

54
Michael Dickinson, Black Realities and White Statues. The Fall of Confederate Monuments, in: African American Intellectual History Society (ed.), *Black Perspectives*, June 18, 2020 (September 9, 2024). Poet Caroline Randall Williams has pointed out how her body and those of many descendants of slaves are the genetic results of slaveholders raping Black women. Ead., You Want a Confederate Monument? My Body Is a Confederate Monument, in: *The New York Times*, June 26, 2020 (October 17, 2023).

55
Cf. *The Kudzu Project* (September 9, 2024). The statue was erected in 1909 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The date of The Kudzu Project's first activist intervention was the first day of the trial of white supremacist Christopher Cantwell, who was convicted for assaults committed during the Unite the Right rally.

56
In a similar fashion, Berlin artist Dior Thiam suggested the project *Let them grow* – a planted veil of growing ivy vines – for the Bismarck Monument in Hamburg.

57
Cf. The Kudzu Project. The Jefferson Davis monument was one of the first to be removed after the Charleston church shooting, namely on May 10, 2017.

58
See Sara Amy Leach, Patriotic Postcards Sent with Memorial Day Greetings, in: *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, May 27, 2022 (September 9, 2024).

59
The founder of The Kudzu Project in conversation with the authors, October 11, 2021.

60
Members of the project were able to retrieve the knitted ensemble, but to date, the project has never been installed atop a monument for a longer period of time.



[Fig. 7]
At Ready, Statue of a confederate soldier in front of Albemarle County Courthouse (1909, bronze), covered with knitted kudzu, *The Kudzu Project*, 2017 © Tom Cogill.



[Fig. 8]
Dave Loewenstein, *Defunct Monument I – Racism*, 2016, inch print on archival paper, 33 × 48 cm © Courtesy of the artist.

a few paragraphs about the project and the history of the monument in question.[61]

By showing a well-known monument covered in leaves or marking it with a single vine of kudzu the project raises the question of how to deal with contested monuments without taking them down. How can deconstruction occur without destruction or dismantling? The project itself offers answers: if monuments cannot be dismantled, "[p]lant kudzu around them and allow it to grow over and eventually obscure them".[62] The proposal to "just not care", to not tend to Confederate monuments but let them slowly be grown over by weeds and grass has been stated a few times since: journalist Graeme Wood suggested this for the Robert E. Lee equestrian statue in Richmond, citing the example of post-war Germany's (non)treatment of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg.[63] The act of covering with knitted kudzu is even quicker than the growth of this fast-growing vine, which engulfs anything that is not constantly tended. The project's ephemeral, nocturnal action declares the statue of the soldier a thing of the past for a few moments as captured in the documentary photos; something no longer taken care of, overgrown by kudzu. This suggestion – even as an interim solution before taking down the monuments – could also be seen as letting grass (kudzu) grow over the past. The project's founder is very critical of this aspect. Like ruins covered in ivy, those covered in kudzu "elicit romantic notions about the past", she says, drawing a connection to the romanticized ideology of the "Lost Cause", which "claimed that noble Confederate generals and soldiers fought the Civil War to protect states' rights rather than the institution of slavery".[64]

It is worthwhile to focus on the materiality of the action: the material depicted, the kudzu plant, and the material used, wool structures knitted by a group of anonymous individuals. The choice of the plant is relevant for several reasons: kudzu (*Pueraria montana*) is a non-native, invasive plant. Arriving in the southeast of the U.S. in the late nineteenth century from Japan, it quickly spread, also because it was marketed as an ornamental plant for pergolas, as cattle fodder, and as a cover plant to prevent further soil erosion in the Southern states. For these uses it is highly suitable since it reproduces asexually without pollination, can root wherever a stem finds soil, and is parasitic, decreasing or suffocating the plants it grows

61
The founder of The Kudzu Project in conversation with the authors, October 11, 2021. In the winter of 2017–18, the project draped knitted vines over the Robert E. Lee High School sign in Staunton, the Confederate soldier statues outside the Nelson County and Albemarle courthouses, and the obelisk outside the Augusta County Courthouse.

62
Cf. The Kudzu Project.

63
Graeme Wood, A Solution to the Confederate-Monument Problem, in: *The Atlantic*, June 8, 2020 (September 9, 2024).

64
The Kudzu Project, *Toppling Monuments notes*, internal document shown to the authors.

on top of. However, kudzu is itself a transcultural product of global trade, and its spread is linked to the history of slavery in two ways. First, the plant – as slaves – was "imported". Second, the erosion of soil that kudzu was meant to remedy had been caused by the massive cultivation of cotton.[65] The plant now predominantly grows in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, North and South Carolina, and Mississippi.[66] So, kudzu is a floral remnant of slavery. Thus, the artificial vines of The Kudzu Project have a triple function: they materialize a historical distance marking the statues as things of the past. By providing a romanticization of their own, they point to the romanticized ideology already encapsulated in the monuments, most of which were not erected directly after the Civil War, but in the Jim Crow era or even in the 1950s and 1960s, counteracting the developments of the Civil Rights Movement.[67] Taking into account the history of the spread of kudzu, it is also a visualization of the impact that the slave-based economy had on the ecosystem.

The production of the kudzu vines must also be considered: the project started with a call to action by a knitter from Charlottesville stating her cause and providing knitting instructions. The fact that systematic textiles can be transferred into – and transmitted via – code is highly convenient here.[68] Information was disseminated via personal networks – not via social media, since confidentiality was paramount as the conflict in Charlottesville had already become violent. While The Kudzu Project itself speaks of "guerilla knitting",[69] more broadly, the project can be subsumed under the term craftivism.[70] Its definition reveals a view of activism as related to an anonymous mass – such as a protest march – and blends it with

65
The installations by the artist Precious Okoyomon, for example, employ kudzu because of its role as a (failed) solution to the ecological strain caused by excessive cotton cultivation. Cf. *Precious Okoyomon. Earthseed* (August 22, 2020–November 1, 2020), Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt a. M. (September 9, 2024).

66
It has therefore also been called "the vine that ate the south". The Kudzu Project, Toppling Monuments notes. For a nuanced history of the plant and its relation to the South, see Bill Finch, The True Story of Kudzu, in: *Smithsonian Magazine*, September 1, 2015 (September 9, 2024).

67
Cf. Ryan Best, Confederate Statues Were Never Really about Preserving History, in: *FiveThirtyEight*, July 8, 2020 (September 9, 2024). However, more than thirty Confederate monuments were erected in the past twenty years, cf. Gesine Krüger, Denkmalsturz, in: *geschichte der gegenwart*, June 21, 2020 (September 9, 2024).

68
See Weaving Codes, Coding Weaves, in: *Textile Cloth and Culture* 2/2, 2017; for the history of the distribution of knitting instructions, see Lisbeth Freiß, Die Handarbeitsanleitung als Strategie zur weiblichen Produktion. Eine historische Studie bürgerlicher Frauenjournale des 19. Jahrhunderts, in: Critical Crafting Circle (ed.), *Craftista! DIY Aktivismus, Feminismus und Neue Häuslichkeit*, Mainz 2011, 29–42.

69
Cf. The Kudzu Project.

70
"Craftivism", a blend of "craft" and "activism", was coined by Betsy Greer in 2003. Ead., Craftivist History, in: Maria Elena Buszek (ed.), *Extra/Ordinary. Craft and Contemporary Art*, Durham, NC/London 2011, 175–183.

the proposed promise of craft as a personal gesture and rewarding pastime. An underlying aspect of craftivism is surely the soothing quality of crafting by hand, offering something to do in times of conflict to counteract the feeling of powerlessness.[71] In the case of The Kudzu Project, the domestic and peaceful quality of knitting served as a possibility to "take action" when the public debate had become violent and dangerous. The participants could literally partake in the activism from their sofas. Moreover, the clandestine, collective knitting served as a tool for intergenerational and communal communication, albeit mostly among women, thereby continuing the gendered history of handicrafts: as the initiators describe, since knitting expertise was found in older women of the local community, the task to knit kudzu also enabled a discussion about why the monuments that had been acceptable for so long should now be removed.[72] Thus, knitting kudzu collectively served as a vehicle to discuss contested heritage, and also to teach about the myth of the Lost Cause.[73]

V. Layers of Colonial Trade. Covering Robert Milligan in London

While the ephemeral action in Charlottesville was taken note of mostly within the region and the U.S.,[74] other images of interventions on monuments have been spread through social media outlets, as was one of a textile veiling of a public sculpture at the West India Quay of the London Docklands. The photograph shows the bronze statue of Robert Milligan (1746–1809) with the head and chest covered by a patterned fabric, while around the figure's neck and in front of the pedestal are two pieces of cardboard with the words "Black Lives Matter" painted on them [Fig. 9].[75] The image was presumably taken on June 9, 2020, the same day the monument

71
Thus, the project can be related to a tradition of wartime knitting in the U.S. Anne MacDonald has shown that women continued to knit in wartime, although it no longer contributed materially to the war effort due to faster industrial textile production. Ead., *No Idle Hands. The Social History of American Knitting*, Boston 1988, here 295.

72
Cf. Erin O'Hare, Locals Craft Their Own Brand of Activism, in: *c-ville*, January 17, 2018 (September 9, 2024).

73
The Confederate statues of Lee and Jackson in Charlottesville were removed in 2021. While the fate of the latter is unclear, the Robert E. Lee monument will be melted down and the material repurposed for a new monument for the same park. Its content and form is to be defined in public discussions, cf. Jasmine Liu, Charlottesville's Robert E. Lee Monument Will Be Melted Down and Turned Into a New Artwork, in: *Hyperallergic*, 2021 (September 9, 2024).

74
This intervention and one at Staunton's Robert E. Lee High School were covered by local TV, cf. The Lone Strand, in: *The Kudzu Project*, December 13, 2017 (September 9, 2024).

75
We have briefly mentioned the case of the shrouding of the Robert Milligan statue in a previous publication: Leena Crasemann and Anne Röhl, Hard-Pressed. Textile Activism,



[Fig. 9]
Richard Westmacott, Statue of Robert Milligan, 1809, covered with waxprint fabric in London, on June 9, 2020 © Chris McKenna, Creative Commons (October 1, 2024).

was removed by local authorities. The likeness of the Scottish merchant was sculpted in the year of his death by Richard Westmacott and erected at the West India Docks in 1813. Now, the Museum of London Docklands is based at these docks and houses the removed statue in its collection.[76] Milligan, who was significantly involved in the development of the Docklands,[77] was not only a slave trader, but also personally owned more than 500 slaves.[78]

The statue is what England's government heritage agency, Historic England, calls *contested heritage*. Contested heritage is described as:

> [B]uildings, monuments and places [that] sometimes bring us face to face with parts of our history that are painful, or shameful by today's standards. We recognize that there are historic statues and sites which have become symbols of injustice and a source of great pain for many people.[79]

Regarding the concept of contested heritage, the whole ensemble – the warehouse now serving as a museum and the Docklands, completed in 1802 and until today an architectural trace of the country's former imperial power – can be described as such, with the statue of Milligan representing the pinnacle of this imperial harbor ensemble. The docks were built to unload cargo from the colonies and ensure the import and further distribution throughout the country of goods, such as sugar, rum, coffee, and cotton from the Caribbean plantations. At that time, Great Britain was a major participant in and profiteer of the transatlantic triangular trade.[80]

In dealing with contested heritage, Historic England proposes first and foremost what we call additive strategies, namely, not to remove statues and sites that have become contested,

1990–2020, in: *FKW // Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und Visuelle Kultur* 68, 2020, 29–51 (September 9, 2024).

76
The statue was moved several times before, for example in 1943, and re-erected in 1997.

77
Madge Dresser, Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London, in: *History Workshop Journal* 64, 2007, 162–199. The plaque on the plinth reads: "To perpetuate on this spot the memory of Robert Milligan, a merchant of London, to whose genius, perseverance and guardian care the surrounding great work principally owes it's [sic] design, accomplishment and regulation, the directors and proprietors, deprived by his death on the 21st May 1809 of the continuance of his invaluable services, by their unanimous vote have caused this statue to be erected."

78
Kristy Warren, Slavery Legacies. Removing Controversial Statues in London, in: *London Museum*, July 3, 2020 (September 9, 2024).

79
Contested Heritage, *Historic England* (September 9, 2024).

80
Cotton was a central material and product of colonial global trade. Sven Beckert, *King Cotton. Eine Geschichte des globalen Kapitalismus*, Munich 2019.

> but to provide thoughtful, long-lasting and powerful reinterpretation, which keeps the structure's physical context but can add new layers of meaning, allowing us all to develop a deeper understanding of our often difficult past.[81]

The removal of the Milligan statue apparently contradicts this additive approach. Most likely, it was possible because it happened at the height of the heated BLM demonstrations, shortly after the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol. By temporarily veiling its head, an additive strategy was followed, if only for a short time. In that way, textile "layers of meaning" were added, which will be discussed in the following.

For the covering of Milligan, the protesters chose a fabric, a wax print or so-called Dutch wax print, that has its own colonial history. The technique goes back to a batik practice from Java, Indonesia, which was spread to Europe by the Dutch colonizers and adapted for industrial production, especially in England. In the nineteenth century, these fabrics entered the West African textile market.[82] The wax print itself can be understood as a cultural palimpsest, which bears its own history of transcultural exchange. However, today it is often seen as genuinely West African. Wax prints became known to a wider audience with the large installation by Nigerian-British artist Yinka Shonibare at *documenta 11* in 2002 in Kassel, Germany. The textile intervention by the protesters in London not only emphasized the symbolic coding of the cloth as "African" to critique Milligan's involvement in British slavery, it also was clearly meant to be legible as an attack on the image and the depicted: Milligan's head was covered, as though he were being led to the executioner.

Especially in connection with the harbor location, the fabric points to the colonial history of this site and the construction of an essential "Africanness" that was at stake in the Western imperium at that time. The textile intervention therefore combines different layers already present in the texture of the given space: the history of the cotton used to create the textile cover as an important product of the former British trade at the London docks; the pattern of the wax print fabric, which symbolizes African design, while also being the result of a historical transcultural exchange; the clash of materials and their inscribed temporalities, bronze representing timelessness, while the textile is granted just a brief moment in the monument's history; and the current racist structures confronted by the BLM activists, including their roots back to Milligan's times. The textile, with its own colonial history, is used here as a materialized postcolonial critique.

81
Contested Heritage.

82
Ruth Nielsen, The History and Development of Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire, in: Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (eds.), *The Fabrics of Culture. The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, The Hague 1979, 467–498.

Significantly less known than the picture of the covered head before its removal is a previous shrouding of the same statue with black fabric. The occasion was the opening of the London Sugar and Slavery Gallery in 2007. While the statue was – at the time – not part of the Museum of London Docklands' holdings, the curators of the newly opened London Sugar and Slavery Gallery decided to cover it, thereby admitting that its visibility would have contradicted the museum's first permanent exhibition on slavery. Whereas the shrouding of the statue in 2007 during the opening months only seems like an erratic decision, the spontaneous wax print cover provides an additional layer of meaning.

The relationship of veiling and veiled can be compared to Ibrahim Mahama's dressing of buildings with jute bags. In the context of *documenta 14*, in the summer of 2017, the artist wrapped the two buildings of the so-called *Kasseler Torwache*, part of the imperialist layout of the city [Fig. 10]. The jute sacks are used as packaging for cocoa, coffee, rice, beans, and coal in Mahama's home country Ghana, but are imported for this purpose from India and Bangladesh, two countries that are known for their mass production of textiles. Mahama bought new bags and then exchanged them for used ones that show the traces of the transported goods they have contained and also the inscriptions of transport and handling during trade, such as stamps, discoloration, stains, and invisible marks, such as the touch of the workers, their sweat. Absolutist architecture thus appears in the mantle of its own preconditions: the labor and trade relations that were based on exploitation and (racial) hierarchies.

These textiles, the wax print on the one hand, and the jute bag on the other, both originate from a conventional context of use and were deprived of their original purpose in the public textile interventions. Wax prints have a widely ramified history in the field of clothing and fashion, and are related to colonial history and the global textile trade. Jute sacks, in turn, serve as utilitarian textiles for transporting goods within global trade routes that developed centuries ago and continue to this day. The visible traces to be discerned on the jute are materially deposited, indexical references that adhere to the individual object, but are also inscribed on the textile in a figurative sense – the jute bag as a medium of transport and global trade. And the wax print is a textile that emerged through and is marked by transcultural processes of exchange and appropriation. Both types of fabric thus figure as textile witnesses within constellations shaped by colonialism.

VI. (Dis)covering Discoverers. Joiri Minaya's *The Cloaking* in Hamburg

In the harbor of Hamburg, two statues flanking the *Kornhausbrücke* (Kornhaus Bridge) over the *Zollkanal* were covered with colorful fabrics in 2021 [Fig. 11]. Rather than an unauthorized act by protest-



[Fig. 10]
Ibrahim Mahama, The wrapped Kasseler Torwache in the context of *documenta 14*, on July 11, 2017 © Muck, Creative Commons.



[Fig. 11]
Joiri Minaya, *The Cloaking*, 2021, Kornhausbrücke Hamburg © Courtesy of the artist.

ers, the covering of these statues of Christopher Columbus and the Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama was an artwork by the Dominican artist Joiri Minaya. The fact that a textile wrapping or veiling offers a material appeal through the folds, adds volume, and transforms the object into a different form, has certainly contributed to the success of this artistic strategy, which has many precursors.[83] The intervention *The Cloaking* was part of the festival THE GATE curated by Ellen Blumenstein in Hamburg's so-called "HafenCity".[84] Minaya had already tried to realize her first cloaking in Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas in 2017: she proposed dressing the statue of Columbus in front of the city's Government House with a colorful flower design cloth. This intervention was not supported by the authorities and was never carried out.[85]

For her artistic interventions, she uses fabrics that she designs herself.[86] The light blue background of the fabric that covers the figure of Vasco da Gama can be associated with waves and the sea, and the yellowish-green fabric with the large overlapping leaf patterns covering the Columbus statue is reminiscent of lush vegetation. The patterns of the stretch fabrics are based on research in botanical collections and archives.[87] In addition to drawings, natural history specimens of herbaria provided a source of inspiration. The image repertoire points to former scientific practices in botany and their embedded colonial history, traceable in the collecting, naming, archiving, and displaying of plants and animals. Minaya added the adapted plant elements to brightly colored ornaments that are associated with the tropics and concepts of the exotic. The decorative patterns can be placed in an iconographic tradition that includes wallpaper patterns. In the eighteenth century, pictorial wallpaper visually transferred the exotic, wild landscape to the interior – initially as a silk wall covering.[88] Some of these refer back to even earlier baroque interior decorations, when luxury and exoticism were

83
Britta Szidzik has discussed artistic practices of wrapping, covering, and encasing objects with textile materials, which range from liturgical contexts to the avant-garde to the wrappings by Joseph Beuys, Franz Erhard Walther, Christo, Jean Claude, and others. However, in most of these cases the semantics of the actual material used – burlap, plastic foil, cloth, tarps, and synthetic fabrics – seems to be secondary to material qualities such as color, density, weight, handling, etc. Cf. Szidzik, Verhüllung als Kunst.

84
June 4–September 30, 2021.

85
The reason given was that until then the statue was not a matter of national conversation, so Minaya started involving the public through postcards showing a photomontage of the planned cloaking, see *The Cloacking Series* (September 9, 2024).

86
Interview with Joiri Minaya, October 4, 2021.

87
Ibid.

88
Cf. Katharina Eck and Astrid Silvia Schönhagen (eds.), *Interieur und Bildtapete. Narrative des Wohnens um 1800*, Bielefeld 2014.

combined in chinoiserie or grotesques [Fig. 12]. The patterns echo such iconographies.

The creation of a tropical, colorful pattern connotes exotic phantasies and is bound to cultural and scientific assumptions, which are challenged here. Elements of critique are embedded in the creation of the pattern for the cloaking of the statues, as the selected plants transport certain meanings: the yellow-green stretch cloth [Fig. 13a] shows the *Sansevieria* or snake plant and an aloe vera plant; in the blue pattern [Fig. 13b] we see *Ricinus communis*, the castor oil plant, from which castor oil and the highly toxic substance ricin can be obtained. While castor oil was brought to America by slaves, the snake plant was used for rituals by Native Americans in the South Florida region. However, the patterns Minaya creates can be traced back not only to botanical finds in herbaria. She also refers to a specific system of pictorial signs to create the patterns for her wraps, namely *Adinkra*[89], a symbolic language of the Ashanti ethnic group that is widespread in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. In the case of the crossed leaves on the yellow fabric, the formation shown draws on the *Adinkra* symbol *Akofena*, the so-called "sword of war", which was common in heraldic shields of former Akan states and represented legitimate state authority.[90]

The discourses about textile patterns linked to an ideal image of the tropics and to exotism are well known in many Latin American countries.[91] Wilhelm von Humboldt already associated the tropics with a brightly colored, seemingly wild flora and fauna, which corresponded with the exoticist knowledge production of his period. Through strategies of appropriation and self-exoticization, such historical imaginaries merged with the production of a national, Brazilian identity in the development of Brazil's own cultural ideas and images of tropicality.[92] Minaya's textile pattern designs draw precisely on these themes to negotiate issues of cultural authenticity, exotic encodings, and processes of appropriation and re-appropriation. By covering the statues of Columbus and de

89
Kwesi Kumah, *African Familiar Proverbs & Quotes. A Collection of Wits, Wisdom, Phrases, Quotations, Proverbs and Adinkra (Cultural Symbols)*, vol. 2, Mauritius 2019.

90
Samuel Baah Kissi, Peggy Ama Fening, Eric Apau Asante, The Philosophy of Adinkra Symbols in Asante Textiles, Jewellery and Other Art Forms, in: *Journal of Asian Scientific Research* 9, 2019, 29–39.

91
See Alexandra Karentzos, Traveling Fashion. Exotism and Tropicalism, in: Elke Gaugele and Monica Titton (eds.), *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique*, Berlin 2019, 230–245.

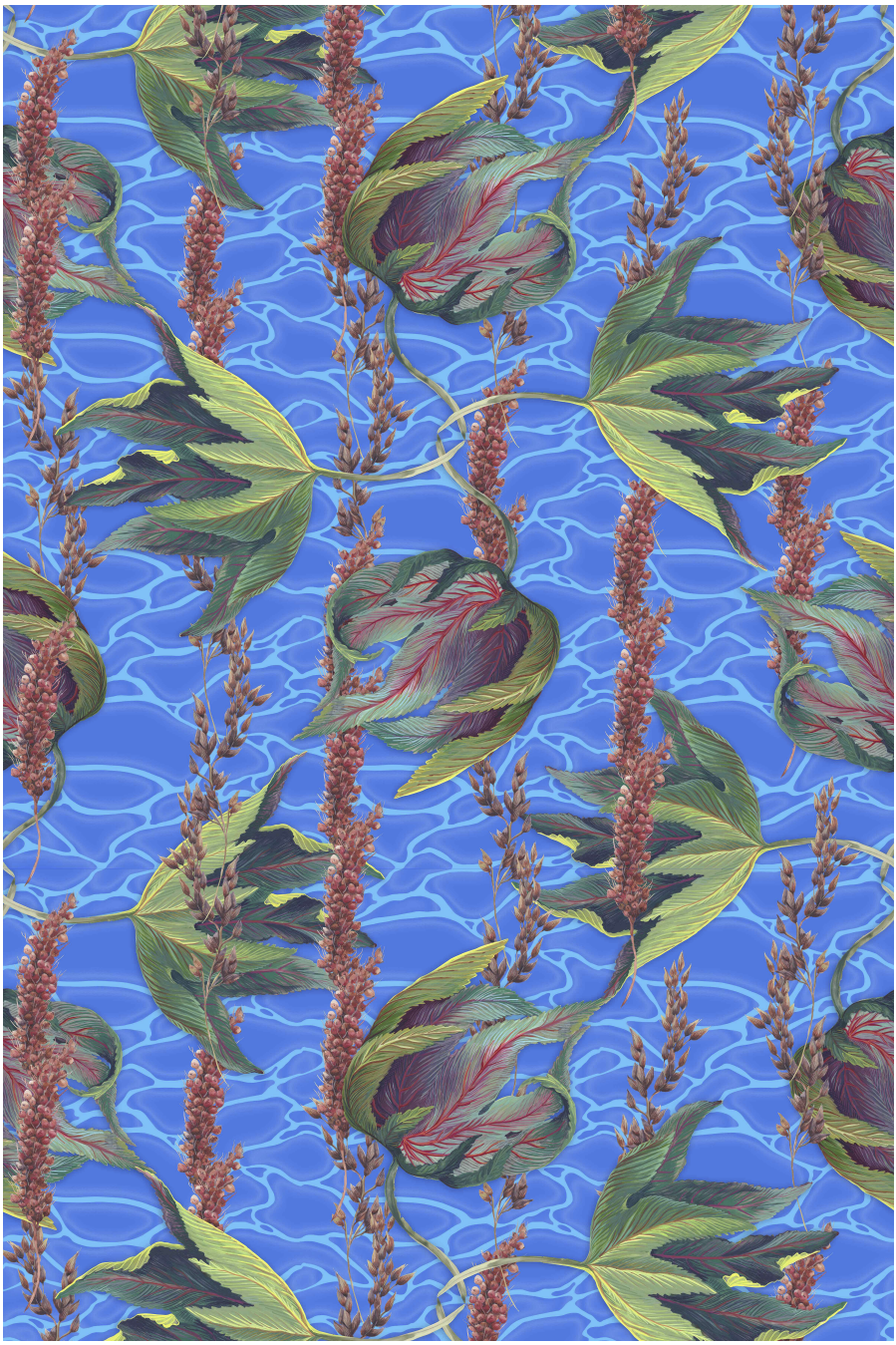
92
During Brazilian modernismo the concept of *antropofagia* emerged in art and literature around 1928. Here, the transformative incorporation of dominant hegemonial designs, knowledge, and technology was elevated to a structural principle. See Rafael Cardoso, *Modernity in Black and White. Art and Image, Race and Identity in Brazil, 1890–1945*, Cambridge 2021, 172–208. This continued in the so-called *tropicália* movement from the 1960s onward, influenced by Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark. The question of exotic consumption resonates here, which bell hooks summed up with the formula of "eating the other" in order to discuss processes of cultural encounter. Cf. bell hooks, Eating the Other. Desire and Resistance, in: ead., *Black Looks. Race and Representation*, Boston 1992, 21–39.



[Fig. 12]
Unknown designer, *Wallpaper with heron*, ca. 1882, woodblock print on paper on linen, distemper, 49 × 52 cm, Chemnitz, Kunstsammlungen © Kunstsammlungen, Chemnitz, T3/24.



[Fig. 13a]
Joiri Minaya, Detail of the textile pattern used for *The Cloaking*, 2021, Hamburg © Courtesy of the artist.



[Fig. 13b]
Joiri Minaya, Detail of the textile pattern used for *The Cloaking*, 2021, Hamburg © Courtesy of the artist.

Gama with tropical-looking patterns, they themselves appear as "tropicalized".[93]

The wrapping can be fully understood only in the context of its site specificity. Columbus and Vasco de Gama, two "symbolic figures of the conquest of the world",[94] flank the passage to the so-called *Hamburger Speicherstadt*, the warehouse district of the harbor. The common metaphor of Hamburg as "gateway to the world" unfolds multiple levels of meaning, to which the festival title THE GATE also refers. On the one hand, the two statues function as symbolic door-openers to foreign continents – for which they are honored until today – while on the other hand, the metaphor of the gateway refers to the free trade that had arisen at that time and continued until its peak in the nineteenth century, when the city's harbor was one of the largest European trading centers. By this time, the harbor was involved in the transatlantic triangular trade and shortly thereafter, Hamburg became the empire's colonial metropolis.[95] Goods such as sugar and textiles were distributed and shipped via the port, and people's migratory routes crossed in Hamburg; travelers, tourists, and researchers began their journeys to the colonies here, and indigenous people were brought to the Hamburg zoo as exotic objects of study.[96] The two statues show who was honored in public and who was made invisible and categorized as subaltern. In this way, the negative impact of the positive connotation of freedom and cosmopolitanism associated with the metaphor of the gate is emphasized.

Let us take a closer look at the textile design: accurate seams on the cloth show that the dresses were made explicitly for these figures and not simply thrown over as loose drapery.[97] Throughout the design process, Minaya first works with paper collage, so an imaginary wrapping in 2D precedes the actual on-site veiling of the statues. The connection to dresses and dressing is also indicated in the title, *The Cloaking*, which at its base refers to a piece of clothing, namely, the cloak. By cloaking the statues, they are indeed temporarily given a new costume, apart from their actual clothing carved from sandstone. The overlaid piece of textile, a proper enveloping, finds its appropriate reflection in the added layers of symbolic

93
Karentzos, Traveling Fashion.

94
Hier schlägt das koloniale Herz der ‚Hafencity', Project *afrika-hamburg.de*, January 15, 2010 (September 9, 2024).

95
The founding of local institutions such as the Colonial Institute, the university, and the Ethnological Museum is connected to this role of Hamburg's port.

96
Carl Hagenbeck opened the zoo in 1907, where he also staged ethnological shows. Cf. Eric Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's Empire of Entertainment*, Seattle 2008.

97
They were produced in collaboration with the Hamburg costume studio *Gewandwerk*. Interview with Joiri Minaya, October 4, 2021.

meaning since the cloaking re-contextualizes the statues as markers of a colonial city's history. In this way, Minaya presents a view of history as a palimpsest-like layering.

Due to the stretchy material the textile coverings have an exact fit so that the contours of the head, feet, and posture can be deduced. But some elements also appear alienated and are made unrecognizable, such as the rudder or the disk in Columbus's hand. Due to the thin folds of the stretchy fabric with its plant pattern, the figures undergo a transformation and, in their abstract plasticity, look almost like giant cocoons or – from a distance – undefinable objects growing on the two bridge pillars. With the covering, Minaya inverts the subject-object relation of modern science underlying colonial discoveries: while the statues of Columbus and da Gama are honored as exploring and conquering subjects gazing at the "other" – the sea, far away continents and their inhabitants, plants, and nature – the figures are now swallowed by their former object of exploration. At the same time, the palimpsest of indigenous botanical knowledge, symbols of empowerment, and colonial means of categorization and cataloging referenced in the patterns reveals the short-sightedness of the subject-object hierarchy in Western thought.

VII. Gestures of Care and Carelessness

In contrast to previous research on iconoclasm, we are not concerned with the act of (permanent) destruction. Instead, we focus on textile gestures as critical temporary interventions on monuments that are still in place, operating within the given texture of space. Both the historical ideas and values as well as the stone- or bronze-built manifestations that have emerged from it have been repeatedly negotiated in the context of monument debates. Contrary to new fixed additions – like plaques – or subtractive strategies – like definitive dismantlings – the use of textiles allows new re-interpretations that are limited in time, but herein lies their critical potential. By way of cloaking and veiling, monuments are taken out of their static mode and are made flexible in their historical and political meanings. The textiles involved do not destroy, they provide another aesthetic layer, that is, they *add* and they *texture*. They reshape monuments and take them out of their material continuum without attacking their matter, serving as a slice in the field of visibility by means of a flexible response without immediate erasure. The textile layering takes a stand and provides new actualizations or even re-interpretations – if only temporarily. However, though ephemeral, these additions provide clearly visible and, to a certain extent, even touchable material interventions, altering not only the monument but the surrounding public space, an alteration more drastic and quicker to recognize – and maybe even to process – than a written plaque.

The discussion of the three examples outlines a field of textile interventions that evoke additive effects in the wider context of iconoclasm. They also show that while image-making is a cultural practice involving the site, the technique, and the body, the images of iconoclastic acts or interventions circulate widely on the internet and social media, making the actual site globally accessible. In this way the documented interventions – as much as iconoclastic gestures themselves – contribute to a political battle that is fought in part via images.

While in all three cases textiles are used to temporarily hide monuments that stood in plain sight for decades, there are differences in how their visibility is altered. While Minaya's *Cloaking* [Fig. 11] turns the statues of Columbus and da Gama as a whole into brightly colored patterned objects, the statue of Robert Milligan [Fig. 9] and the Confederate monuments partially covered in knitted kudzu tendrils [Fig. 7] are still very much visible. The different textiles here mark the monuments as disputed or even threatened. The relationship of cover and statue again differs: the single kudzu tendrils point to the material reality of the monument by indicating how they could be overgrown by the rampant plant. The way the wax print covers Milligan's head symbolically mirrors the process of wrapping the heads of accused persons who are soon to be hanged or beheaded in hood-like cloths. This form of attack on the statue aims at an "execution in effigy", that is, the attack is based on the imagined connection of image and body; the image becomes a substitute.

While the latter two show a more spontaneous handling than Minaya's bespoke tailoring, the prefabricated textile cloth itself is inscribed with its own layers of meaning, so the additive strategy differs. Both the wax print and *The Cloaking* disrupt the mimetic representation of the sculptures with an ornamental "all-over". The patterned fabric alludes to African fashion and culture, and the wax print technique, as such, signifies global trade and transcultural crossovers. In Minaya's work, the textile also bears meaning, as the plant motifs act as postcolonial re-appropriations of botanical collections. The contrast here is not only one of materiality, but also of different traditions of representation: the patterned fabric has just as much of a semantics as the sculpted likeness it momentarily covers.[98]

The textile interventions allude to the role textiles traditionally play in the course of a monument's life, they mark the moment of transportation, inauguration, or even dismantling but textiles are also employed to shelter a sculpture or clean it. In short, there is

98
Modernity's relationship to pattern and ornament has been difficult. Around 1900, ornament became the "other" to abstraction, epitomized by Adolf Loos's infamous text *Ornament as Crime* (1908), which associates ornaments with cheap mass production, femininity, and indigenous cultures. Thus, unsurprisingly, Arthur C. Danto had to champion the ornament as a third category of art alongside representation and abstraction as late as 2007, cf. id., Pattern and Decoration as a Late Modernist Movement, in: *Pattern and Decoration* (exh. cat. Yonkers, Hudson River Museum), ed. by Anne Swartz, Yonkers, NY 2007, 7–11.

an element of care attached to sculptures being veiled or cloaked. Monuments need to be cleaned, protected, and renovated, an effort, which in the case of Confederate monuments in the U.S., is costly for taxpayers.[99] While not focusing on textile interventions, Mechtild Widrich has titled her recent study on the current monument debate "monumental cares". In her understanding the act of caring can be "literal and figurative at the same time",[100] referring to the critique of monuments as much as their maintenance. In two of the examples in this paper, different ways of caring intersect: Minaya's *The Cloaking* [Fig. 11] quasi continues an effort made to care for the material substance of the monument as it coincidentally acts as protective sheath for the statutes in question. The immense caring effort of knitting a pattern for statues carried out by The Kudzu Project, however, does not contribute to the statues' well-being. Hiding monuments in knitted kudzu-leaves instead foreshadows the idea of not taking care of controversial monuments and leaving them to the forces of nature.[101]

Common to all three case studies of textile, monumental interventions is that they do not contradict a potential future demolition, but rather, mark a moment of negotiation. Textiles have great flexibility. Not only are they quickly on hand and reversible, but through their specific materiality they refer to a different time horizon beyond the spontaneous or planned moment of attaching. This "textile stage" of the monument debate marks an interim stage. However, the reversible flexibility of textile interventions could also serve as a model for new monuments adapting to the changing character of history. Younge asks us to imagine "concepts of monuments which refer to themselves as temporary".[102] One way would be to make use of materials that are not meant to last forever, another would be to raise monuments that are maintained for a set term, similar to an election cycle, in which they are voted in as political representatives.[103] In this way, what is constant is not the monuments, but rather, the production of so-called cultural heritage and its mediation and negotiation.

99
Taxpayers have directed $40 million to Confederate monuments over the past ten years. Cf. Brian Palmer and Seth Freed Wessler, The Costs of the Confederacy, in: *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 1, 2018 (September 9, 2024).

100
Mechthild Widrich, *Monumental Cares. Sites of History and Contemporary Art*, Manchester 2023, 4.

101
The question of providing care or not was especially poignant for the local parish police jury of Lake Charles, Louisiana, where a Confederate monument was blown down by a hurricane two weeks after the jury had voted to keep it. Cf. Younge, Why Every Single Statue.

102
Ibid.

103
There is already a cultural tradition of creating ephemeral statues by way of delicate materials prone to visible signs of weathering and decay. Cf. Zoë S. Strother, Iconoclasm by Proxy, in: Latour and Weibel, Iconoclash, 458–459.

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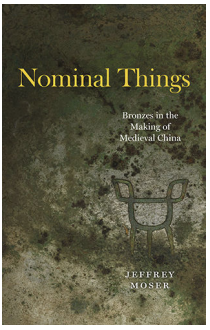
REVIEWS
REZENSIONEN

JEFFREY MOSER, *NOMINAL THINGS. BRONZES IN THE MAKING OF MEDIEVAL CHINA*

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2023, 293 Seiten mit 50 Farb- und 28 Halbtonabb., ISBN 978-0-226-82246-4 (Hardback).



Rezensiert von
Phillip Grimberg

Mit *Nominal Things. Bronzes in the Making of Medieval China* ist Jeffrey Moser, Spezialist für das mittelalterliche China an der Brown University (USA), ein großer Wurf gelungen. Moser untersucht, wie und zu welchem Zweck chinesische Gelehrte – insbesondere des elften und zwölften Jahrhunderts – Ritualgefäße aus der chinesischen Bronzezeit (16. bis 3. Jahrhundert vor unserer Zeit) sowie deren Inschriften als physische Zeugnisse der Vergangenheit sammeln, katalogisieren und illustrieren und ihre Forschungsergebnisse einer über Jahrhunderte gepflegten historisch-exegetischen Tradition gegenüberstellen. Die Bronzeobjekte werden dabei zu „nominalen Dingen", zu Objekten also, die ihre jeweiligen Kategorisierungen und Beschreibungen *qua* Inschrift den Betrachtenden vermitteln. In der Untersuchung dieser Objekte stellen die Song-zeitlichen Gelehrten mithin große Diskrepanzen zwischen den Inschriften der Objekte und ihrer inhärenten Materialität, ihrer Form und Dingbedeutsamkeit fest, welche sie zu einer Neubewertung überkommener konfuzianischer Narrative zu Tradition und Verfasstheit der Riten und der im Ritenkontext verwendeten Gefäße heranziehen.

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL
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Moser gelingt es vorzüglich, diese Erkenntnis mit dem Aufkommen einer stärker empirisch geprägten Wissensproduktion zu verbinden, die in der „Antikenbegeisterung" der Zeit – *jinshixue* (金石學, wörtlich „Lehre von Metall- und Stein-[Inschriften]") oder *guqiwuxue* (古器物學, wörtlich „Lehre von antiken Objekten") im Chinesischen, *antiquarianism* in englischer Übersetzung des Phänomens – ihren Niederschlag findet. Dabei legt der Verfasser eine theoretisch bestens fundierte Studie vor, die eine präzise Kenntnis des Forschungsstandes ebenso verrät wie einen sicheren Umgang mit dem vorhandenen Quellenmaterial. Moser betont in seiner Einleitung (S. 20), dass es ihm insbesondere um die Begründungszusammenhänge, das „Warum" des forschenden Sammelns Songzeitlicher Gelehrter geht, und nicht so sehr um das Personal selbst oder ihre jeweiligen Strategien und Modi des Sammelns und Katalogisierens.

Und hier liegt das eigentliche Verdienst dieser Studie: Der Autor unternimmt eine historisch-kritische, philosophisch kenntnisreich unterfütterte Bespiegelung der Motivlagen chinesischer historischer Exegeten und Epigrafen bis zum Ende der Nördlichen Song-Zeit (960–1127) und führt dabei den Beweis, dass die Grundannahmen einer quellenkritischen, evidenz- und materialbasierten historischen Forschung, die Sachbefund und textliche Überlieferung kritisch gegeneinander abwägt, wesentlicher Bestandteil zeitgenössischer Debatten über die Interpretation der konfuzianischen Klassiker und die habhafte Faktizität des Materials, die erhaltenen bronzezeitlichen Ritualgefäße, waren.

Das kapitale Werk ist in drei Abschnitte mit mehreren Unterkapiteln unterteilt: Der erste, mit „The Lexical Picture" überschriebene Teil (S. 24–81) folgt einer ausführlichen Einleitung (S. 1–22) und untersucht die komplizierten Verflechtungen, die zwischen „naming, lexicography, and classical exegesis in medieval China" (S. 18) bestehen und in der „Richtigstellung der Bezeichnungen" (*zhengming* 正名) als ein zentrales Anliegen konfuzianischer, aber auch mohistischer und legalistischer Philosophie im Streben nach einem ethisch fundierten Gemeinwesen im mittelalterlichen China Wirkung entfalten.

Im zweiten Abschnitt, „The Empirical Impression" (S. 82–169), zeigt Moser auf, wie die Gelehrten des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts die häufig augenfälligen Diskrepanzen zwischen Objekt und Text, zwischen „nominaler" Selbstbezeichnung der Ritualgefäße und den häufig anderslautenden Bezeichnungen und Bedeutungszuschreibungen in den überkommenen Klassikern zu einem evidenzbasierten, kritischen Ansatz der historischen Forschung und der Klassikerexegese verbanden und mit den protowissenschaftlichen Disziplinen der „Lehre von Metall- und Stein-[Inschriften]" sowie der „Lehre von antiken Objekten" Geburtshelfer einer Wissenschaftstradition werden sollten, die bis heute in der chinesischen material- und objektbezogenen Forschung – etwa der Archäologie – nachhallt.

Der dritte Abschnitt, „The Schematic Thing" (S. 170–214), untersucht schließlich die unmittelbaren Folgen der im vorangegangenen Abschnitt dargelegten, sachkulturell überformten wissenschaftlichen Revolution exegetischer Traditionen und objektrelationaler Neubestimmungen durch die Gelehrten der Song-Zeit, aus der diese ein „system of visual and functional schemata" entwickelten (S. 19).

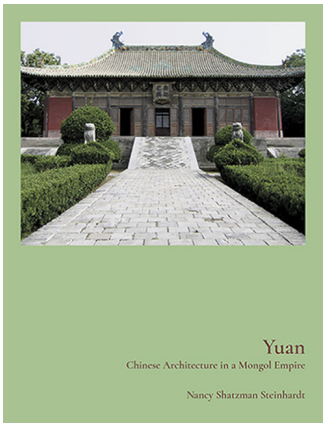
Dem schließt sich eine stimmige Conclusio (S. 215–223) an, gefolgt von einer kurzen Danksagung (S. 225–227) sowie einem Glossar (S. 229–234), einem umfangreichen Endnotenapparat (S. 235–255), einer Sammlung der verwendeten chinesischen Quellentexte und Originalzitate (S. 257–264), einem Literaturverzeichnis (S. 265–281) und einem nützlichen Index (S. 283–293).

Bei *Nominal Things. Bronzes in the Making of Medieval China* handelt es sich um eine in jeder Hinsicht auf der Höhe der Zeit befindliche Veröffentlichung, die aufgrund der Dichte und der komplizierten Verwobenheit ihres Gegenstands mit einer Vielzahl unterschiedlicher und in sich höchst komplexer Fragestellungen der chinesischen Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte sowie nicht zuletzt ihrer brillanten, aber anspruchsvollen Prosa einem Publikum von Eingeweihten vorbehalten bleibt und sich kaum, wie Moser gegen Ende seiner Einleitung (S. 17) verspricht, für „non-China specialists" eignen dürfte. Aufgelockert wird der kompakte Eindruck, den der Band hinterlässt, durch eine Anzahl qualitätvoll reproduzierter Abbildungen und einen leserfreundlichen Satz.

Mosers neues Buch sei allen unbedingt empfohlen, die sich mit Genese und Geschichte eines Nachdenkens über die Dinge und ihre „nominale" Natur sowie das Zusammenwirken von Ding und Wort im China des „Mittelalters" beschäftigen und diesem so bedeutenden Impuls für die weitere Kultur-, Geistes- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte der späten Kaiserzeit nachgehen möchten.

NANCY SHATZMAN STEINHARDT, *YUAN. CHINESE ARCHITECTURE IN A MONGOL EMPIRE*

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2024, 336 pages with 264 color ill., ISBN: 978-06-91-24016-9 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
Denise Patry Leidy

Yuan. Chinese Architecture in a Mongol Empire by Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt is an important and useful addition to the sparse Western-language literature on Chinese architecture, which includes an introductory survey of this topic by the same author. Founded by Chinggis Khan (1162–1227), who amalgamated smaller confederations, and initially based in Mongolia, the Mongol Empire of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries remains the largest contiguous empire in world history, extending, at its height, throughout southern Russia, Central and West Asia, and China, as well as, briefly, parts of eastern Europe. Its astonishing geographic range contributed to a vibrant exchange of technologies, ideas, luxuries, and commodities throughout this vast transcontinental empire, as well as the movement of peoples, including papal envoys, Iranian historians, and the famed Venetian explorer Marco Polo.

This volume focuses on the period from the rule of Ögedei (1186–1241), the second son of Chinggis Khan, to that of Khubilai Khan (1216–1294), the fifth khaghan, and the founder of the

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Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) in China. Khubilai was one of the grandsons of Chinggis Khan whose rivalries over issues of succession contributed to the dissolution of the Mongol empire. Arguments regarding whether the Mongols should continue their primarily nomadic way of life or adopt a sedentary lifestyle were another factor that led to the division of the empire into four factions ruled by competing members of the ruling family. The volume, which discusses a remarkable range of wood and stone buildings, including palaces, observatories, monasteries, mosques, mausolea, tombs, and stages constructed throughout China, Inner Mongolia, and elsewhere incorporates historical studies and older and more recent excavations. When pertinent, Steinhardt also illustrates and discusses decorative elements and the free-standing stone sculptures that are integral to the sites addressed in the volume.

Steinhardt begins with an exploration of the walled enclosures built by the Mongols, including the capital cities of the Yuan dynasty – Kharakorum, Shangdu, Zhongdu, and Dadu – as well as the sites that developed through the appanage system in which members of the ruling family were awarded lands whose income contributed to their maintenance. Kharakorum, currently known as Kharkhorin, is in present-day Mongolia; Shangdu, the fabled Xanadu of Samuel Coleridge, which was called Ciandu by Polo, is in Inner Mongolia; Zhongdu is in Hebei Province in China and Beijing is an independent municipality within its borders. In the book's first chapter, Steinhardt describes each of these cities, their spatial organizations, and their primary structures such as palaces as well as administrative and religious buildings, while also providing useful information regarding prior studies and excavations of these important centers. She incorporates current archaeological findings into her reconstructions of the sites, focuses on Chinese building techniques that were in use during the Mongol Yuan dynasty and bases her discussion on extensive, careful personal observations at the sites discussed.

Time and again Steinhardt refers to the *Yingzao fashi* (Treatise on Architectural Methods), written by the official Li Jie (1065–1110), which is an influential work incorporating earlier texts as well as oral accounts. This work carefully describes the construction of wooden buildings and explains and illustrates components such as foundation platforms, pillars, and beams supporting brackets and roofs that were usually embellished with ceramic tiles. Steinhardt also explains that in addition to the size and scale of buildings, subtle variations in these features have helped in distinguishing the types and functions of public and private buildings. Repeated reference to the *Yingzao fashi* clearly places the planning and construction of the Yuan imperial cities firmly within the history of Chinese architecture. How the Mongols, or any of the other non-Han Chinese rulers that preceded them in the north, contributed to the physical construction of these cities, the buildings that they housed, or any of the other works produced in China during their respective periods of rule remains an interesting area of inquiry.

The rulers of the Yuan dynasty organized the many peoples in their realm into hierarchical categories. Mongols were placed at the top, followed by the Semu, a term used to define non-Han Chinese specialists such as Iranians, Uyghurs, and others working at the court. The third rank comprised people from northern China, including those from conquered dynasties such as the Qidan Liao (916–1125) and the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234), while the fourth group consisted largely, but not exclusively, of Han Chinese of southern China. It seems likely that whatever combination of Mongol, Semu, and Han Chinese individuals such as former Jin bureaucrat Liu Bingzhong (1216–1294) – a court advisor and architect commissioned by Khubilai Khan to oversee the planning and construction of Shangdu and Dadu, both of which follow earlier models for the structure and organization of imperial or capital cities – were involved in the supervision, development, and construction of the cities and buildings of Yuan-era China, it was local, possibly at times conscripted, individuals, largely of Han Chinese ethnicity and trained in the construction techniques, who built these structures.

Interesting similarities are evident in the making of other types of art or luxury goods during the Yuan dynasty. For example, the flourishing of blue-and-white (porcelain painted with cobalt blue under a clear glaze) in the great kiln complex at Jingdezhen during the Yuan dynasty, while spurred in part by easier access to imported cobalt ore from the greater Iranian world, relied on the longstanding Chinese mastery of clay and glazes. Once again, production at the site was presumably in the hands of local craftsman and workers, trained in the pertinent skills for generations. A similar continuity of artistic practices and imagery can be found in earlier dynasties such as the Liao and Jin as well as during the later Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911). This reality reinforces the understanding that the knowledge and skills of trained artists, or artisans, in addition to China's agricultural productivity and other riches, contributed to the country's appeal, during different historical periods, to groups living beyond its borders. (The Mongols and the Manchus were the only two non-Han Chinese dynasties to control both north and south China.)

As Steinhardt points out in her introduction, the choice to live in sedentary communities, the related development of an administrative system, and the trained and knowledgeable individuals needed to staff such a bureaucracy, were critical to the creation of the Mongol empire. In both the first and second chapters of *Yuan*, she explores Mongol interactions with just such settlements, including the razing of cities, and encounters with earlier enclosed spaces such as Avraga (or Avarga), Olon Süme, and other sites in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and southern Russia. She also discusses Mongol awareness of mounded tombs in Inner Mongolia, and the precedent of military enclosures such at that built near Harbin in Heilongjiang Province in the northeast by the Jin dynasty. The second chapter features the five capitals established by the previous Jurchen Jin dynasty, another nomadic or nomadic pastoralist group that had

earlier established control of northern China. The book presents the organization of these capitals, which also follow established Han Chinese traditions, and the major monuments within these cities and nearby. While Steinhardt presents the Jin as an exemplar for the Mongols and their capitals, the prototypes for Yuan architecture can be traced to architectural techniques and types that have a much longer history in Chinese architecture and significantly predate the arrival of the Jurchen or the Mongols.

The third chapter discusses famous Yuan-dynasty buildings, such as the Dening or Virtuous Tranquility Hall, built for imperial sacrifices in Quyang, Hebei Province, the stone platform for observing celestial bodies in Dengfeng, Henan Province, and the Juyong or Cloud passage to the Great Wall to the northwest of Yuan Daidu. Steinhardt stresses the long history and study of these imperially sponsored monuments and their ties to early architectural traditions. This approach continues in the fourth chapter, which highlights complexes and buildings, such as the Daoist Yonglegong, and the Buddhist Guangsheng Monastery, in Shanxi Province, built during the Yuan dynasty, though possibly not under imperial patronage. In addition to her thorough discussions of these sites, their histories, and earlier studies, Steinhardt also explores the rendering of buildings in the murals painted at these sites, linking them to contemporaneous building styles, and to other artistic practices such as the *jiehua* or ruled-line painting, used for the depiction of buildings, and popular during the Yuan dynasty.

Tombs, theaters, and other private – as opposed to court-sponsored – buildings, constructed during the Yuan dynasty are the focus of the fifth chapter. Steinhardt's discussion of tombs in China and Inner Mongolia, which continues the analysis of Jin-period tombs found in the same regions in the second chapter, provides another linchpin in the discussion of the Mongol adaptation of existing Han Chinese traditions including long-established funerary practices. It is worth noting that the bodies of the rulers of the Yuan dynasty, and those of high-ranking officials, were returned to their homeland rather than interred in China. While this remains controversial, both Chinggis and Khubilai are thought to have been interred in or near Burkhan Khaldun near Ulanbaatar in Mongolia. Recently excavated tombs have provided evidence that such structures were built for non-literati officials, who were often buried with their wives. They are not large or complex, but consist of a corridor and a single chamber with a rounded roof. They are decorated with murals, as were earlier Chinese tombs. Most contain portraits of the deceased: some wear Mongol-style clothing and others Han Chinese dress.

Jin- and Yuan-period tombs have also been found to incorporate theaters or stages into their structures. Such venues, particularly for the *zaju* style of drama, were initially associated with monasteries, although performances were open to the public. During the Yuan dynasty, they were constructed both as free-standing buildings, and as structures incorporated into tombs. They were

also represented on murals in these tombs. Their prevalence at burials sites and above ground reflects the importance of the performing arts in the culture of the Jin and Yuan dynasties. It should be noted, however, that acrobats, musicians, and dancers are also represented in the murals and clay figures (*mingqi*) found in tombs dating from the Han (206 BCE – 220 CE) to the Tang (618–906) dynasties, suggesting that such entertainments were long valued in daily life as well as the afterlife. Stages, on the other hand, became important during the Jin and Yuan dynasties. It remains unclear whether, beyond enjoying such performances, any of the staging, costuming, or thematic elements of Yuan theaters and performances can be traced to specifically Mongol practices.

The book's sixth chapter encapsulates the diversity of the Mongol realm. It presents Muslim mausolea, particularly the dome-and-square type that is found from northwest Iran to China and Inner Mongolia. This chapter also explores the Tibetan Buddhist presence in Mongol China, illustrated in the *chorten* (Tibetan-style pagodas) constructed throughout the realm. Steinhardt also analyzes newly identified Manichean paintings as sources for now-lost Manichean complexes in China. She also identifies crosses as indicators of certain types of Christianity in Mongol-period China. Her discussion of rock-cut architecture in the seventh chapter, particularly the site of Feilaifeng near Hangzhou in the south, noted for its use of Indo-Tibetan imagery, provides yet another example of the Mongol adaptation of pre-existing architectural traditions. Man-made rock-cut cave temples, usually Buddhist centers, can be traced from South and Central Asia into north China as early as the fourth century. Although such sites continued in north China, as well as slightly later in Sichuan Province, none have been found south of the Yangzi River from prior to the Mongol period. The construction of Feilaifeng, and other sites such as Arzhai in Inner Mongolia, provides another example of the Mongol continuation of earlier architectural types. It is unclear, however, why Steinhardt chose not to include the rock-cut caves constructed during the Mongol period in the spectacular cave-temple complex at Mogao near Dunhuang in Gansu Province, or the nearby Yulin cave temples.

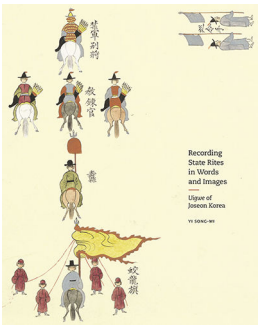
The innovative, if speculative, eighth chapter looks east. While the Mongols failed in their attempts to reach Japan and were only marginally successful in Burma and other parts of Southeast Asia, the Korean peninsula was under Mongol influence from 1270 to 1356. Steinhardt suggests that the Tibetan-style pagoda or chorten built there at the time reflects an awareness of practices in China and not those in Tibet. However, Korean monks traveled in the Himalayan region as early as the eighth century, and there is no reason to assume that Koreans were unaware of the chorten-style pagoda. Moreover, the wood and stone edifices built in Korea and Japan at the time belong to the continental architectural tradition, introduced to both nations centuries before the Mongols conquered China. The construction and appearance of the Korean and Japanese

buildings discussed in this chapter do not seem to have any direct connection to the Mongols.

Yuan. Chinese Architecture in a Mongol Empire is enhanced by a deep bibliography and by an appendix giving the Chinese characters for the multilingual names of the places and peoples discussed in the book. While Steinhardt carefully explains the Chinese-language architectural terms when they are initially presented in the volume, this book would have benefited from an easily accessible and independent glossary providing a quick reference for those who do not specialize in architecture. Despite this and other minor quibbles, Steinhardt deserves congratulations for skillfully incorporating the breathtakingly complex geography of the Mongol period, and its equally demanding history, into a narrative that highlights long-known monuments from the period, newly discovered sites, and a host of archaeological findings, to mount an engaging presentation of buildings, their patrons, their meanings, and their uses during an important period in both Chinese and world history.

YI SONG-MI, *RECORDING STATE RITES IN WORDS AND IMAGES. UIGWE OF JOSEON KOREA*

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2024, 556 pages with 415 color ill., ISBN: 978-06-91-97390-6 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
Burglind Jungmann

The importance of records of court ceremonies (*uigwe*) for the research of visual culture of Joseon Korea (1392–1910) cannot be overestimated. About a quarter of the surviving *uigwe* (Yi Song-mi discusses various English translations of the term on p. 25) are illustrated and, together with their texts, provide detailed insights into life at court and the status of the court's members, its hierarchies, etiquettes, and finances. More importantly, they also allow glimpses at the skills and obligations of Joseon artists and craftspeople. Yi Song-mi has done research on *uigwe* for decades and published books and articles on the topic in Korean and English; *Recording State Rites in Words and Images* is therefore a most valuable addition to the growing literature on Korean visual and material culture.

Although many early records have been lost, close to one thousand *uigwe* are still extant. From this abundant material Yi has chosen the most significant ones for each of her chapters, from the earliest surviving from the early seventeenth century to records of the early twentieth. Within this historical range, the material is extremely diverse, as the author explains in her introduction: some *uigwe* consist of only one volume, while a most detailed one on the construction of the Hwaseong Fortress (1801, discussed in

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL
3-2024, pp. 773–777

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chapter 8) contains nine volumes and may be considered a jewel of architectural history. The majority of *uigwe* is hand-written and hand-painted, and six copies were usually produced: one of highest quality for "royal viewing", the others for government institutions. Yet, of the most famous *uigwe*, commemorating King Jeongjo's trip to his father's tomb in 1795 (discussed in chapter 7), 102 copies were published in 1797, printed with movable type and containing woodblock-printed illustrations.

The book comprises three parts, each of which has several chapters. In Part I, Yi Song-mi follows the strictly hierarchical Confucian order of court ritual, dedicating one chapter each to the Five Rites of State that were proscribed in the *National Code* (*Gyeongguk daejeon*) of 1474: Auspicious Rites (*Gillye*), Celebratory Rites (*Garye*), Rites for Receiving Envoys (*Billye*), Military Rites (*Gullye*), and State Funeral and Related Rites (*Hyungnye*). In Part II, she moves on to *uigwe* for other important state events, such as the production of royal portraits, and in Part III to a discussion of the relationship between *uigwe* and art history. Tables inserted into every chapter give the reader a clear orientation of dates, contents, and additional information, for instance, the iconography and function of paintings within the ceremonial context. In addition to her analyses, Yi also describes places where rituals were conducted, how and when they changed, and provides photographs if the location has been restored. What makes these records even more interesting for the art historian is the fact that they give the names of crafts people involved, their compensation, and the commissions of various paintings, paraphernalia, and ornaments for the ceremonies. Most *uigwe* illustrations in Part I show parades (*banchado*) whereas those for Part II, especially if dating from the late eighteenth century onward, may include landscape and architectural scenes, but also detailed depictions of paraphernalia, dances, musical instruments, silken flower ornaments, or construction machinery.

Part III – for art historians probably the most important part of the book – is divided into "Polychrome Screen Paintings for Joseon Palaces" (chapter 9) and "Joseon Court Painters, Artisans, Entertainers, and Other Workers" (chapter 10). Adhering to the occasion, court painters produced large decorative eight-, ten-, or twelve-fold screens of symbolic contents ("polychrome screens") that were used as backdrops and room dividers. In addition, special "documentary" folding screens were produced as mementos of the event, illustrating important stages of the ceremonies, and showing in miniature detail the decorative screens in their applicable position and function, such as the *Five Peaks* screens placed behind the king's throne. In general, these screens bear neither dates nor signatures or seals. Despite their high technical and artistic quality, and their obvious function at court, they have often been subsumed under "folk painting" (*Minhwa*). More recently, they are referred to as "decorative painting". Yi explains that in Korean, rather than *jangsik* (장식 裝飾, "ornament") the term *jangeom* (장엄 裝嚴, "solemn, magnificent"), which is also used in Buddhist art, would be

more fitting, and suggests "polychrome screens" as the appropriate English term.

In chapter 9, Yi follows the court hierarchy in discussing first screens made for the king, palace ladies, and crown princes, then those representing banquets, and under each of these subchapters lists the genres used for the respective court members and their ceremonies. She then discusses the iconography, symbolism, and stylistic development of each genre. The lists of data she collected from *uigwe* – dates, the person for whom the ceremony was performed, the type of ceremony, the painting genres used, the format and placement of screens – are not only the basis for her discussions but provide convenient overviews and a wealth of additional information. For instance, for eight royal weddings of kings and crown princes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, large screens of the *Ten Symbols of Longevity* and of *Flowers and Grasses* were produced to be placed in the wedding ceremony hall and screens of *Peonies* and *Lotus Flowers* to be placed in the bridal dressing room. Starting with the wedding of King Sunjo in 1802, new genres were introduced, such as the *Happy Life of (Tang General) Guo Ziyi*, the *Banquet of Xiwangmu (the Daoist Queen of the West)* and *One Hundred Children (Boys)*. Such information is particularly enlightening because it provides contextual evidence for European collections, such as the Grassi Museum in Leipzig which owns high-quality paintings of the *Happy Life of Guo Ziyi*, *Flowers and Grasses*, and *One Hundred Boys*. The considerable number of similar screens in North American collections confirms that those anonymous colourful paintings were particularly favoured by early visitors to Korea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We also learn that many genres appeared in relation to different events and were placed in different contexts, such as *Five Peaks* screens, which adorned not only the throne, but were also employed at kings' funerals and placed behind portraits of kings in ancestor halls. More astonishingly, *Peonies*, which signify wealth and nobility, not only adorned the living quarters of palace ladies but also played a role in funerals. Symbols of different religious and legendary origin were combined to fulfil wishes for good fortune, happy marriages, and abundant offspring, such as in the case of *Lotos* screens. The lotus, which grows out of a muddy pond to produce beautiful untainted blossoms, symbolizing the Buddhist idea of purity, was combined with pairs of birds and shoals of fish to symbolize conjugal felicity and fertility. In addition, an overlap between the genres in terms of pictorial elements, such as architectural or landscape elements or groups of figures, is also in evidence.

While *uigwe* provide solid information on favoured iconographies and the function of these paintings, Yi depends on extant screens for her assessment of the stylistic development of each genre. These, however, can be neither accurately dated, nor directly linked to a specific *uigwe*. Exceptions are those of the last category, namely banquet screens, which were made primarily for the birthdays of queens. In contrast to the decorative paintings discussed

earlier, they visualize the event itself, and on one panel present a list of the names and official positions of the most highly ranked participants, a list that also appears in the corresponding dated *uigwe*. Eschewing symbolism, these panels may rather be read as social diagrams that confirm the prominent place of the participants within the court hierarchy. However, a very special feature of these screens is that the king, queen, and other high members of the court, although present at the ceremonies, are not depicted. Empty thrones or place mats in front of screens signify their places: an aniconic representation, otherwise only found in religious art.[1]

Yi Song-mi, whose early education and research was in Chinese and Korean literati painting, is used, like many of her generation, to tracing the symbolism, iconographies, and compositions to Chinese sources. While the symbolic contents of polychrome screens produced and employed at the Joseon court can almost exclusively be traced to Chinese origins, their iconography and compositions, as Yi writes, are unique creations not to be found in China. For instance, while each symbol of the *Ten Symbols of Longevity* can be found in Chinese lore, no such combination can be found in Chinese art. In fact, Lee Ufan, the famous artist and collector of *Minhwa* whose collection includes decorative court painting and is now housed at the Musée Guimet in Paris, has suggested that these polychrome paintings were more representative of Joseon art than ink paintings.

For chapter 10, Yi again compiled data from *uigwe* with astonishing results and insights into the duties and social standing of artists and craftspeople at court, details which cannot be found elsewhere. The records mention the numbers and the professions of those involved in the processes of production of works for each given event, including painters, scribes, mounters, craftspeople who worked with wood, metal, jade, oxhorn, and textiles, as well as seamstresses and female entertainers. For instance, the *uigwe* for the construction of Hwaseong Fortress and its palace records that 1,807 people in twenty-two different trades were employed. Of the painters mentioned by name, only about a third were already known from other historical and literary sources. As for other professions, names were scarcely recorded. Reflecting Confucian thinking on gender, male participants were recorded with surname and given name, while female workers and entertainers, such as those performing dances, were mentioned only by their given name. Ladies of high social standing, on the other hand, were recorded by their maiden family name and the rank of their husband, hence without given names. Almost all items produced are recorded as having been the result of collaborations by several people. Yi gives the example of wooden containers for ritual items, which involved wood- and metal-work specialists for the fittings, lacquerers, and painters. From detailed descriptions of such boxes and their con-

[1] For a discussion of one such example, see Burglind Jungmann, Documentary Record versus Decorative Representation. A Queen's Birthday Celebration at the Korean Court, in: *Arts Asiatiques* 62, 2007, 95–111.

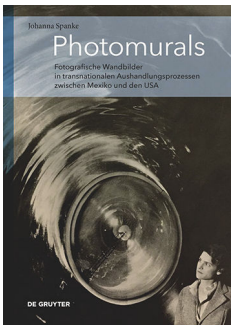
tents, extant receptacles can sometimes be identified and dated, for instance the container for a jade book marking the elevation of a queen in 1661 (p. 421, fig. 196). This beautiful red lacquer box decorated with gold-dust painting of the "Four Gentlemen" plants is just one of the book's well-chosen photographs of extant objects, palanquins, flags, seals, and more that provide an impression of the items required to better understand the *uigwe* illustrations. Another especially noticeable investigation made by Yi is that into the salaries of the different people involved in the work. As is known from other sources, most court painters did not receive a regular salary, but compensations for specific commissions. *Uigwe* record the awards for different professions, mostly paid in rice and cotton; information again conveniently compiled by Yi in a table (p. 442). Interestingly, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries awards could also include an elevation in social standing for those of the lowborn class, a class that included slaves, but also dancers, singers, or musicians (p. 443).

We may, in fact, call banquet screens and the illustrations found in *uigwe* a kind of "bureaucratic art". A strict Neo-Confucian ideology had been implemented at the beginning of the Joseon dynasty and during the dynasty's first two centuries permeated every practice at the court so that ritual became of prime importance. Stern Confucianists had little regard for the arts. We therefore have only scarce records of private and even palace collections. The status of court painters was that of craftsmen, on a level with other technical professionals. Hence their main occupation was to produce portraits for ancestor rituals, paraphernalia for court ceremonies, and sketches for woodblock-printed illustrations for didactic books and other court publications. Even though some court artists, such as Kim Hongdo, are better known for their "literati style" ink paintings, Yi's research provides an idea of their official real duties.

Yi Song-mi's book is a most significant contribution to the field because it discusses material that reflects important aspects of how the Joseon court functioned. It also gives evidence of how the interpretation and practice of Confucianism in Joseon Korea distinguishes itself from contemporaneous China and Japan. Although certain aspects of *uigwe* and related material have been discussed in exhibition catalogues and research articles, there are no book-length studies on the topic. Almost encyclopaedic in its detailed discussions and with a glossary rich with further information, *Recording State Rites in Words and Images* is well-structured and provides a kaleidoscopic view of Joseon elite culture. The many illustrations are well-chosen and of high quality, and Princeton University Press has to be congratulated for the book's design.

JOHANNA SPANKE, *PHOTOMURALS. FOTOGRAFISCHE WANDBILDER IN TRANSNATIONALEN AUSHANDLUNGS-PROZESSEN ZWISCHEN MEXIKO UND DEN USA*

Verflechtung – Aushandlung – Opazität. Kunsthistorische Studien 1. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2023, 560 Seiten mit 193 Farb- und s/w-Abb., ISBN 978-3-11-078924-9 (Hardback und Open Access-PDF).



Rezensiert von
Angela Lammert

Johanna Spankes Publikation zu den *Photomurals* in den USA und in Mexiko stellt ein heute weitgehend vergessenes Kapitel aus der Fotogeschichte der 1930er- und 1940er-Jahre vor, das visuell nur noch in dokumentarischen Aufnahmen, vorbereitenden Studien und Collagen nachvollziehbar ist. Es bietet großartiges Material für einen übergreifenden Forschungsansatz, das auf der Grundlage eines ausführlichen Archiv- und Quellenstudiums durch Ausstellungsaufnahmen, temporärer Ausstellungsarchitektur, mexikanische Wandmalereien und rezeptionskritische Überlegungen erweitert wird. Die dafür von der Autorin unternommenen Archivrecherchen sind nicht nur vorbildlich, sondern haben eine Vielzahl schwer zugänglicher und bislang gänzlich unerforschter Aspekte zu Tage gefördert. Das ist umso beachtenswerter, weil die fotografischen Wandarbeiten selbst nicht erhalten sind. Methodisch handelt es sich um eine transmediale und transnationale Herange-

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL
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hensweise, die ermöglicht, die Indienstnahme und politische Rhetorik fotografischer Wandbilder in beiden Ländern mit ihren sich unterscheidenden politischen Systemen zu analysieren.

In Amerika suchten Künstler*innen nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, als Europas Einfluss zu schwinden begann, nach einem eigenen künstlerischen Beitrag: zum einen mit der Malerei des Präzionismus und zum anderen mit einer mit dem Prädikat „American" versehenen Ikonografie. Dieser eigene Beitrag gelang jedoch nicht zuerst in den USA, sondern zu Beginn der 1920er Jahre mit den mexikanischen Muralisten. Während des New Deals der 1930er-Jahre arbeiteten die Hauptvertreter dieser Malerei in New York, Detroit oder Chicago. In dieser Zeit entstanden die ersten *Photomurals* in den USA. Die Vorherrschaft der mexikanischen Kunst auf diesem Gebiet schien dadurch gebrochen. Dass Spanke sich in der vorliegenden Publikation auf Wandarbeiten in den USA und Mexiko konzentriert, „da sie in ähnlicher Weise eine Rolle für eine nationale Identitätskonstruktion spielen und das in unterschiedlichen Medien und in direktem Bezug zueinander" (S. 26), wie sie betont, ist darum absolut überzeugend. Sie ermöglicht es, an einem Fallbeispiel darüberhinausgehend ein bislang kaum erforschtes Thema zu analysieren. Der globale Siegeszug der US-amerikanischen Kunst beginnt, so ihre These, damit nicht wie üblich mit dem Abstrakten Expressionismus.[1] Auch die Entscheidung, das von Shalini Randeria und Sebastian Conrad eingeführte Konzept einer „Verflechtungsgeschichte"[2] für diese Fragestellung fruchtbar zu machen, ist hervorragend gelungen. Das vorliegende Buch – das sei vorausgeschickt – ist für den Fachdiskurs zum Thema sehr zu empfehlen.

Bekannt ist der Skandal um Diego Riveras Wandbild im Rockefeller Center während des New Deals in den USA, das 1934 wegen einem integrierten Leninporträt und kommunistischer Überzeugung wieder entfernt werden musste. Weniger bekannt ist, dass dafür im selben Jahr von der später durch ihre Kriegsfotografien und Aufnahmen aus dem KZ Buchenwald berühmt gewordenen Fotografin Margareth Bourke-White im Inneren des Gebäudes eine alternative Wandgestaltung angebracht wurde: *Photomurals*, die sie selbst als „an american art form"[3] im Sinne der Errungenschaften des US-amerikanischen Industriezeitalters feierte [Abb. 1]. Ebenso wenig wurde bisher in der Forschung der Fokus auf die zwei Jahre zuvor im MoMA gezeigte Ausstellung *Murals by American Painters and Photographers* (1932) gerichtet, an der unter anderen Georgia

1
Barbara Haskell, América. Mexican Muralism and Art in the United States, 1925–1945, in: *Vida Americana. Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945*, (Ausst.-Kat. New York, Whitney Museum of American Art), hg. von ders., New York 2020, 14–47.

2
Sebastian Conrad, Shalini Randerie und Regina Römhild (Hg.), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a. M. 2013.

3
Zitiert in: Spanke, Photomurals, 11.



[Abb. 1]
Margaret Bourke-White vor ihren *Photomurals* in der Empfangsrotunde der NBC-Studios, RCA-Gebäude, Rockefeller Center, New York, 1934, in: Spanke, Photomurals, 13.

O'Keeffe, Charles Sheeler oder Edward Steichen mit *Photomurals* beteiligt waren. Überraschend sind auch Steichens *Photomurals* in der Raucherlounge des RKO Roxy Theatre, Radio City, in New York, ebenfalls 1932 entstanden.

Für das mexikanische Pendant werden die mexikanischen *Fotomurales* von der mit dem Werk von Frida Kahlo verbundenen Fotografin Lola Álvarez Bravo herangezogen,[4] darunter ihre Wandarbeit im Foyer des Auditoriums des Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) in Mexico-Stadt, die 1950 angebracht wurde [Abb. 2]. Allerdings werden im Vergleich mit den US-amerikanischen *Photomurals* nur wenige und nicht gleichermaßen ausdrucksstarke Fotografien in der Publikation genannt und abgebildet – obwohl zu würdigen ist, dass zwei neu aufgefundene Installationsansichten in die Interpretation einbezogen werden konnten. Geschickt ist, dass die Autorin zwei Fotografinnen und nicht ihre männlichen Kollegen ins Zentrum ihrer Analyse stellt. Auffallend ist jedoch, dass für Mexiko anders als für die USA keine Fotografen aufgeführt werden, die sich mit diesem neuen technischen Medium beschäftigten. Dem männlichen Dreiergestirn der mexikanischen Wandmalerei – Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siquieiros, José Clemente Orozco – entsprechen mit Ausnahme der inzwischen heroisierten Malerin Frida Kahlo keine weiblichen Künstlerinnen beziehungsweise Fotografinnen in Mexiko. So interessant die *Vegetales* („Pflanzliches") von Bravo sind, so wenig wird dieses zweifelsfrei exemplarische Sujet dieser Jahre als nationales Identifikationsthema an anderen dieser Zeit weiterverfolgt. Das angestrebte Gleichgewicht eines transnationalen Austausches wird damit ungewollt doch antipodisch und aus der Balance geraten dargestellt – ähnlich wie es schon die zeitliche Nachfolge der mexikanischen *Fotomurales* in den 1940er Jahren auf die US-amerikanischen *Photomurals* in den 1930er Jahren vorgibt. Auch das Verhältnis von und die Unterschiede zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Funktion von Wanddekorationen in beiden Ländern hätte stärker herausgearbeitet werden können – bis hin zur den dahinterstehenden Finanzierungsmodellen.

Vor dem Hintergrund einer Marginalisierung der Format-Frage in der Fotografieforschung ist schon allein die Entscheidung der Autorin, den *Photomurals* eine Studie zu widmen, positiv hervorzuheben. Darüber hinaus ist für die Fotogeschichte im engeren Sinne das Kapitel zur technischen Neuerung des fotografischen Großformats beziehungsweise zur Einführung und zum Einsatz großformatiger Fotopapiere durch die Eastman Kodak Company nicht nur ausnehmend lesenswert, sondern wartet auch mit bisher nicht ausgewerteten Bezügen zwischen Paravents für Büros (Martin und Osa Johnson, Büro von George Eastman), Aufnahmen des Wintergartens im Wohnhaus von Georg Eastman in Rochester von 1928

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Bravo war mit dem Fotografen Manuel Álvarez Bravo verheiratet und Kahlo nicht nur die Frau von Rivera, sondern auch die Tochter des Fotografen Carl Wilhelm Kahlo. Vgl. *In a Cloud, in a Wall, in a Chair. Six Modernists in Mexico at Midcentury* (Ausst.-Kat. Chicago, Art Institute Chicago), hg. von Zoe Ryan, Chicago 2020.



[Abb. 2]
Lola Álvarez Bravo, *Vegetales* (Pflanzen), 1949, linker Teil von Fotomontagetriptychon, in: Spanke, Photomurals, 383.

(mit einer Elefanten-Trophäe und einem Elfenbein-Stoßzahn) und Fototapeten im Cloud-Club des Chrysler Building in New York 1931 auf. Auch die Aufnahme früher Beispiele wie El Lissitzkys *Fotofresco* oder das bislang von der Forschung unentdeckte *Photomural* des Taj Mahal in der Wohnung von Goodspeed in Chicago (1927) belegen Spankes ausgezeichnete Kenntnis des Themas. Sicherlich ist es auch hier nicht nur der Quellenlage geschuldet, dass ähnliche Vorläufer für Mexiko nicht auszumachen sind. Das hätte man als Argument stark machen können für einen transnationalen und transmedialen Austausch, gerade weil dieser letztendlich mit dem „Import" der mexikanischen Muralisten während des New Deals in die USA seinen Anfang nimmt. Man denke nur an die Übernahme des Arbeitens mit der Spritzpistole bei Jackson Pollock, die er während eines Workshops von Alfaro Siqueiros 1936 in New York kennengelernt und später auf seine bekannten All-Over-Gemälde als *Dripping*-Technik übertragen hat.

Zu widersprechen ist Spankes Annahme, das mit der Ausstellung in der Kunsthalle Düsseldorf 1995 zu Siqueiros und Pollock, die Jürgen Harten kuratierte, die ideologische Polarität in der Zeit nach dem Fall der Mauer festgeschrieben worden sei (S. 17). Im Gegenteil: Die Ausstellung stellt eine frühe Würdigung des bis dahin kaum untersuchten Austauschs zwischen den mexikanischen Muralisten und den amerikanischen Expressionist*innen dar. Künstlerischer Austausch kann eben gerade auch dann stattfinden, wenn es Unterschiede im politischen Denken gibt. Der gesellschaftskritische Impuls in den USA war erst die Voraussetzung für die breite Wirkung der mexikanischen Wandmalerei in Nordamerika. Es lässt sich auch erahnen, wie sehr Wanddekorationen als „Kunst am Bau" in jenen Jahren nicht nur als nationale Identifikationen verstanden wurden, sondern in beiden Ländern mit der Kriegs- und Nachkriegssituation zu tun haben. In diesem Zusammenhang stellt sich die Frage, an welche Öffentlichkeit sich die fotografischen Wanddekoration in Amerika und Mexiko richteten und wie sich jeweils deren Intention änderten.

Der Feststellung der Autorin, dass die *Photomurals* nicht allein für die Identitätskonstruktionen und Modernitätsdiskurse aufschlussreich sind, sondern auch von der Medienkonkurrenz jener Jahre erzählen, ist fraglos zuzustimmen. Ihre im Anschluss an die neuere Forschung vorgebrachten Überlegungen zum *portable fresco* – als Rückwirkung des Wirkens der Muralisten in Mexiko – ist ausgezeichnet. Für eine weiterführende Diskussion wäre es jedoch lohnend gewesen, dies in die Geschichte der Anerkennung der Fotografie als Kunst und in das Thema der neu aufkommenden Funktion von Kunst in der Moderne im Allgemeinen einzuordnen: Zu nennen wäre dafür unter anderem Einsatz und Transformation der politischen Fotomontagetechnik John Heartfields in die Messe- und Ausstellungsinstallation in Ost und West. Gerade bei Bravo ist für Nordamerika interessanterweise keine Weiterführung der politischen Themen ihrer Landsleute, den mexikanischen Muralisten, zu erkennen, sondern mit ihrem Bruch einer technizistischen

Ästhetik ein auffallendes Gegenprogramm zur Motivik auch in den USA. Ist das angesichts des *Postcolonial*-Diskurses ein Vorgriff auf Aktuelles? Und wie ist der Anachronismus zwischen der Theorie der modernen Architektur – „das Ornament ist ein Verbrechen" – und einer „Sehnsucht nach der Wand", der nicht nur bei den Fotograf*innen eine Rolle spielt, zu beschreiben? Wie verhält sich diese Fragestellung zur Medienkonkurrenz, die ja nicht nur zwischen Malerei und Fotografie ausgehandelt wurde? Insofern wäre ein stärkerer Fokus auf das *Wie* gegenüber dem *Was* – gemeint ist die formale Ausformulierung gegenüber ikonografischen Aspekten – jenseits von Malerei und Fotografie von Interesse. Einen ersten Schritt hat Spankes mit Blick auf die architektonischen Zwischenräume – das Treppenhaus als Bildort und die Auflösung der Raumgrenzen im Bild – unternommen. Dieser ließe sich durch eine stärkere formale Analyse der ausgewählten Beispiele erweitern, wie sie von der Autorin am Beispiel der Ornamentalisierung der Wand bei Le Corbusiers Schweizer Pavillons 1933, die in Paris fast zeitgleich zu Bourke-Whites *Photomurals* in New York entstand, eingeführt wird.

Die These des Buches, dass bereits vor der Ost-West-Polarität des Kalten Krieges das *Photomural* in den 1930er Jahren als US-amerikanischer Gegenentwurf zum mexikanischen Muralismus zur bildlichen Manifestation einer Systemkonkurrenz gemacht wurde, ist verführerisch. Ihr ist im Kern zuzustimmen. Allerdings geht diese These von der Festschreibung einer Ost-West-Polarität zwischen Figuration und Abstraktion aus. Sind Figuration und Abstraktion aber vielleicht ideologische Begriffe dieses Diskurses? Gab es nicht gerade in der Wanddekoration im Osten – etwas beim Haus des Lehrers am Alexanderplatz durch Walter Womacka – den Bezug zur mexikanischen Wandmalerei? Siqueiros sollte, auch das ist kaum bekannt, dieses Wandbild realisieren. Historische Referenzen für diese Diskussion liegen nicht allein in der politischen Ikonografie, sondern jenseits des herrschenden Narrativs – Bauhaus/moderne Architektur/Kunst am Bau der Nachkriegszeit – auch im New Deal in den USA.[5] Auch das in der Publikation angeführte Beispiel des fotografischen Wandbildes von Josep Renau an der Fassade des Spanischen Pavillons 1937 auf der Weltausstellung in Paris wäre in seinem Einfluss auch auf die Medienkonkurrenz komplexer zu beschreiben. Gerade Renau ist es, der mit Wandmalereien in der DDR die Dekorationen der Muralisten weiterführte und eben nicht mit der Fotografie im Zusammenhang mit der Architektur arbeitete. Insofern wäre es wünschenswert, das Denkmodell „vor dem Hintergrund von Dichotomien ergeben sich folgende Dichotomien" noch stärker zu verlassen, als das in der Publikation getan wird und das Thema des transnationalen Austau-

[5] Vgl. Angela Lammert, Kunst am Bau. Kunst im Stadtraum. Knotenpunkte internationaler Kunstdiskurse, in: Landesdenkmalamt Berlin (Hg.), *Berlin. Ost West Ost. Karl-Marx-Allee und Interbau 1957. Architektur und Städtebau der Nachkriegsmoderne*, Weißenhorn 2024, 167–180.

sches komplexer zu fassen. Was jedoch hervorragend im Rahmen des selbst gesetzten Forschungsgegenstandes gelungen ist, ist es, die Widersprüche der verhandelten Verflechtungsgeschichte sichtbar zu machen.

Die Struktur des Buches, eine überarbeitete Fassung von Spankes Dissertation, ist klar und folgerichtig aufgebaut. Nach einer Einführung, in der der Forschungsstand und das methodische Vorgehen erläutert wird, unternimmt sie zunächst eine Begriffsbestimmung der *Photomurals*. Anhand neuer Archivfunde weist die Autorin nach, dass der Begriff tatsächlich schon 1930 in der US-amerikanischen Lokalpresse auftaucht (S. 32). Ausgehend von der Wand als Ort politischer Aushandlungsprozesse wird das Vorbild der mexikanischen Wandmalerei und die Entwicklung des *portable fresco* behandelt. Einen Schwerpunkt bildet das dann anschließende Kapitel zu den Anfängen der *Photomurals*, deren technischen Voraussetzungen und dekorativen Kontexte, unter anderem am Beispiel des fotografischen Wandbildes Taj Mahal in Chicago und der Einführung des großformatigen Fotopapiers durch die Eastman Kodak Company. Diesem Kapitel folgt die Auseinandersetzung mit der Ausstellung *Murals by American Painters and Photographers* im MoMA 1932 und mit dem Verhältnis von *Photomurals* und Bildträger. Erst dann kommt ein Kapitel zum mexikanischen Gegenentwurf der *Fotomurals* bei Álvarez Bravo. Man hätte sich im Resümee den Vergleich zwischen Vorbild (*Muralismo*, Kapitel III), US-amerikanischen *Photomurals* (Kapitel IV–VI) und den mexikanischen (Kapitel VII) ausgewogener gewünscht. Ausführungen dazu sind durchaus an allen Stellen des Buches eingefügt, hätten aber mehr Gewicht gewinnen können, wenn sie in ihrer Komplexität stärker in den Schlussbemerkungen zum Tragen gekommen wären. Das umfangreiche und kenntnisreiche Literaturverzeichnis und zahlreiche bis dahin unveröffentlichte Abbildungen stellen eine Fundgrube für Forschende auf diesem Gebiet dar. Insgesamt kann ich mich als begeisterte Leserin outen und hoffe über weiterführende Fragen demnächst noch mehr zu erfahren.

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