An interview with Ernst H. Gombrich

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This bibliography covers Gombrich's publications to the year 1979.

A - Major publications


   "This book is intended to serve a dual purpose; it should introduce the reader to the ideas and personality of a scholar who exerted a considerable influence on the course of art-historical studies through his few publications, through the Institute which bears his name, and through his disciples who include some of the most eminent men in the field. At the same time this book aims at making available for the first time a conspectus of the many unpublished writings, the projects and drafts which accumulated during Warburg's lifetime and which help to round off and explain the guiding ideas which informed his research and his library." The secret of Warburg's pedagogic success was that in rejecting, or rather ignoring the stylistic approach to the history of art, he had bypassed the main preoccupation of theoretical art history which stemmed ultimately from Winkelmann and Hegel, the problem of a uniform style being seen as an expression of an ‘age'. Warburg's approach to art was the fact that he was not only old-fashioned but resolutely opposed to fashion. "He had set out early on to oppose the morality of the fin de siècle that expressed itself in the aesthetic movement and the worship of the artist as superman. His interest in social psychology and his belief in the strength of environmental forces made him impatient of any attempt to see the work of art in isolation from its milieu. But what he valued was not the work that appeared to be the product of its environment but the one that implied an ethical choice".


   *Art and Illusion*, "a study in the psychology of pictorial representation" is based on the A.W. Mellon lectures in Fine Arts given at the National Gallery of Art in Washington in 1956 and on lectures given at Oxford, the University of London and Harvard University. *The Story of Art* "applied a traditional hypothesis about the nature of vision to the history of representational styles; this book has the more ambitious aim of using the history of art, in its turn, to probe and test the hypothetical, framework itself." This book centres on an analysis of image making and the secrets of the vision of artists; each chapter in the four sections, 'The Limits of Likeness', 'Function and Form', 'The Beholder's Share' and 'Invention and Discovery' focuses on these different aspects of vision in art.


The basic skill of the art historian is "the ability to assign a date, place and, if possible, a name on the evidence of style." The art historian is interested in individual events which will exemplify any number of general theories whereas the social scientist is interested in the regularities or laws of the subject that determine these theories. Science is supposed to describe truth but even scientific truth has been described as relative to the society that practices it and as an account of the changing behaviour of those members of society who call themselves scientists. In the same way, art history can be described as an account of people who play the role of artists in society. Both the scientist and art historian are thus compelled to consider their own attitudes in terms of the limits of social determinism and the standards and value judgements that they constantly apply.

"Criticism is not a science. It cannot be, as we have seen, because 'Individuum est ineffable.' There can never be enough well-defined terms in which to discuss individual works of art, and even less can there be an exhaustive formulation of the precise problem a given work of art was created to solve. It is here that the notion of style has proved inadequate to stem the tide of relativism." Art requires a social atmosphere and tradition that promotes discussion and debates about standards and 'stylistic relativism' to reach a high level of cultivation and mastery. Civilization may be interpreted as a web of value judgements that are cultivated and transmitted with the intention of promoting achievement in good technology, good societies, good science, good mores, good languages and good art.


German translation of *The Story of Art*.


This volume is the third in the series of Studies in the Art of the Renaissance after *Norm and Form* (1966) and *Symbolic Images* (1972). "Here I am concerned with another aspect of the Warburg Institute's programme of research, the role of the classical tradition in Western art...What is central to this volume is the problem of the objectivity of standards in the rendering of the visible world. The standards in question are not, of course, based on artistic but on scientific criteria."

Except for the title essay which describes the spread of Apelles' visual explorations of the phenomena of light and lustre, all the studies assembled derive from papers previously printed elsewhere, revised to a greater or lesser extent. For abstracts of the articles see 24, 33, 40, 76, 77, 89, 90, 128.


Spanish translation of *The Story of Art*.


Italian translation of *The Story of Art*.

Cultural history is the belief in man’s progress from a near animal state to polite society, to the cultivation of the arts, the adoption of civilized values and the free exercise of reason. We are today in search of cultural history because Kulturgeschichte has been built knowingly and unknowingly on Hegelian foundations that have crumbled. For Hegel the history of the universe was the history of God creating Himself and the history of mankind was the same continuous Incarnation of the Spirit. Carl Schnasse adopted the Hegelian creed in art by suggesting that changing styles of art were the index of the changing spirit, and Burkhardt like Hegel saw the progression of spirit in art as an inevitable process embodied in successive national spirits. Wölfflin accepted Hegelianism without metaphysics and the subsequent history of the historiography of culture can be interpreted as similar attempts to salvage the Hegelian assumptions without accepting Hegelian metaphysics. Hegel’s belief in an independent supra-individual collective spirit blocked the true emergence of a cultural history. Cultural history can make progress if it fixes its attention firmly on the individual human being and explains how movements, as distinct from periods, are started by people. The cultural historian must impart to his students an understanding of a humanistic education that aims first and foremost at knowledge, that encourages access to the creations of other minds and that searches for continuities not only within the confines of a special field but in all the manifestations of culture that surround them. In Search of Cultural History is an enlarged version of the Philip Maurice Deneke Lecture delivered in 1967.


Swedish translation of The Story of Art.

12. Korot ha-omanut. Tel-Aviv, 1955/56

Hebrew translation of The Story of Art.


German translation of Art and Illusion.


"I shall present some second thoughts about an idea I put forward sixteen years ago in my book Art and Illusion: I mean the idea, which is more familiar in the theory of architecture than in the criticism of painting that form follows function or that the end determines the means.” This is a survey of the dominant forms of mural decoration from ancient Egypt to the 20th century. Starting from Leonardo da Vinci’s criticism of the traditional arrangement of “figures one on top of the other”, the lecture first discusses the development of artistic means (such as perspective) to serve specific ends (such as the vivid evocation of a religious event) and goes on to suggest that, once developed, such means also influence the ends which an art is made to serve. The complexities of mural decoration in antiquity with its pictures within pictures, and the resumption of these devices in Mannerism as well as the vogue of the illusionistic ceiling painting in the Baroque are discussed in the light of this interpretation, as is the demise of illusionism since the 18th century.


Spanish translation by Jose Maria Valverde of Meditations on a Hobby Horse.

"Written at different times and for a variety of purposes, the papers, lectures and articles assembled in this volume still, I hope, have more in common than their authorship. They all represent an historian's reactions to problems raised by the art of his time. Twentieth-century criticism centres on two main issues - abstraction and expression. The former is usually discussed in its relation to representation, the latter in its twin aspects of self-expression and of the expression of the age. These are the themes which will be found recurring in the pages of this volume. For all its old-fashioned look, the hobby horse was sired out of history by contemporary art." For abstracts of the articles see 21, 39, 46, 56, 57, 62, 64, 68, 74, 80, 96, 99, 120, 127.


This collection of essays on the Italian Renaissance deals with problems of style, patronage and taste. They all deal with what may be called the Renaissance climate of opinion about art and with the influence this climate has exerted on both the practice and the criticism of art. This approach runs rather counter to a current assumption that art is always far ahead of systematic thought, with the critic distantly following the artist and trying as best he can to record and explain what has emerged by unconscious creation. This book attempts to test the opposite hypothesis from various angles. Not that it seeks to minimize, let alone deny, the artist's creativity, but it does try to show that creativity can only unfold in a certain climate and that this has as much influence on the resulting works of art as a geographical climate has on the shape and character of vegetation." For abstracts of the articles see 43, 47, 48, 50, 70, 71, 94, 105, 106, 125.


The Sense of Order investigates the psychology of decorative design and the creation and function of formal order. The introduction deals with order and purpose in nature, the first chapters treat the criticism of ornament, the cult of simplicity and the debate about design in Victorian England. Gombrich explores the craftsman's practice of patternmaking as a response to the challenges of material, of geometrical laws, and of psychological restraints, and discusses the relation between patternmaking and pattern perception. The theme of the last four chapters is the relationship between psychology and history, the tenacity of ornamental traditions, their modification by changing styles and fashions, the role of symbolism in the origin and use of motifs and the psychological roots of the grotesque. An epilogue reviews the analogies between the spatial orders of decorative design and the temporal patterns of poetry, dance, music, and kinetic art.


The Story of Art sketches the developments of representation from the conceptual methods of the primitives and the Egyptians to the achievements of the impressionists; in the last chapter the self-contradictory nature of the impressionist program is shown to have contributed to the collapse of representation in the twentieth century. Intended "to show the newcomer the lay of the land without confusing him with details", it is an introduction to painting, sculpture, and architecture, highlighting the periods, the artists and their works of art.

These studies deal with "symbolic images" created by masters such as Botticelli, Mantegna, Giulio Romano and Nicolas Poussin. These papers, previously published in journals and revised, offer interpretations of mythological, astrological, allegorical and theological themes in Renaissance art. Also included is a new methodological Introduction on "Aims and Limits of Iconology," an unpublished lecture on "Raphael's Stanze della Segnatura and the Nature of its Symbolism" and an amplified version of the essay "Icones Symbolicae." For abstracts of the articles see 25, 37, 38, 45, 51, 54, 55.

B - Journal articles


"There is no more concise way of describing what Malraux's book [Voices of Silence] is about, than to say that it is about the 'romantic saga' suggested by art." The company to which Malraux would aspire is that of Winkelmann, Ruskin, or some of those other backward-looking prophets who drew from the interpretation of the art of the past an inspiration and a message for their contemporaries. Whereas these expressionist critics believed passionately in their visions of the past, Malraux recognizes such visions for what they are - projections of our own preoccupations and desires. Malraux says we are ready to admire what we do not understand but what we really need to do is "try to relearn the difference between stimulation through self-projection, which when applied to art so often passes for 'appreciation', and that enrichment that comes from understanding, however dim and imperfect of what a great work of art is intended to convey."


The humanist Ugolino Verino's (1438-1516) laudatory epigram on 'The outstanding painter Apollonius' identifies the painter of the marriage chests of a Florentine workshop as Apollonio di Giovanni. Verino was out of step with his fellow humanists so far as his taste for art was concerned and found nothing irreconcilable between a love of Virgil and an admiration of late Gothic illustration. The cassone tradition represented by Apollonio's workshop was relatively independent of monumental art but these Gothic sympathies observed in Botticelli's art and exalted by Verino may in fact be due to the survival of the International Style in this art form.


Berlinghieri's S.Francis panel (S. Francesco, Pescia) shows buildings decorated with palmette friezes. Their position and arrangement derives from the Byzantine tradition, but the form of the palmettes suggests the possibility of a direct influence of Greek vases, the transition from survival of classical motifs to their revival which marks the Renaissance.

Siguenca who described The Garden of Earthly Delights in 1605 as a symbolic interpretation of the vanity of worldly pleasures was basically right in his interpretation. The theme of the triptych is the Flood, signified by the rainbow in the outer panel which represents the covenant made by God with Noah after the Flood. The love-making, greed, unchastity, and unconcern illustrated in the central panel, are the scenes on earth that prompted God to destroy the world. The triptych should be called not 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' but 'The Lesson of the Flood' described in the Gospel of St. Matthew: 'But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.'


The essay on Botticelli's Mythologies "proposes to show that a coherent reading of Botticelli's mythological paintings can be obtained in the light of Neo-Platonic interpretations. In order to make this case, which had not previously been made in the literature about the artist, I assembled a large number of texts mainly from the writings of Marsilio Ficino, the leader of the Neo-Platonic revival in Florence." The interpretation presents a hypothesis rather than a proof which is in keeping with a more recent reading of the Renaissance. "It takes its starting-point from the texts which show that Marsilio Ficino was the spiritual mentor of Botticelli's patron at the time the 'Primavera' was painted and that the Neo-Platonic conception of the classical gods was discussed in their correspondence. While it does not aspire to give 'proofs' in matters of interpretation where proofs cannot be given it suggests that a coherent reading of Botticelli's mythologies can be obtained in the light of Neo-Platonic imagery".


Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress' may be based on classical literature where there are numerous examples of this genre, the most famous of which is *Tabula Cebetis*, a dialogue describing a vast panoramic painting of human life in allegorical terms.


In the autobiographical dedication of the Italian version of *Della Pittura* to Brunelleschi, Alberti draws attention to the influence Florentine culture had on him. "There are few passages in the whole literature of art where we seem to feel the very pulse of history as vividly as in this dedication, in which Alberti tells us how his whole outlook on the world and on history has changed when he first came to Florence from his exile and realized, through the work of the great innovators, that Nature was still creative and man could still make progress."
The issue of whether to clean a painting or not should take into consideration the optical, psychological and aesthetic effects on which the magic of painting rests. The removal of varnishes in the cleaning process may make a picture look flat and may in other ways affect the whole appearance of a painting.

In Mozart's *Cosi Fan Tutte* the motif of the suspicious lover who returns in disguise to test the fidelity of his beloved with presents and blandishments is prefigured in the myth of Cephalus and Procris.

Plato, Cicero, Tacitus and Quintilian formulated concepts of art relating to progress. Primitivism is a physiognomic reaction to early styles, a guilty feeling that arises from moral nostalgia. "This physiognomic reaction can be reinforced by that image of progress which was the one known to the classical tradition - the image of growth and decay in the life-cycle of arts and skills. If the arts had their childhood before they reached maturity and declined toward an inevitable death their early phase could gather upon itself all the emotions we usually project on to childhood and youth. Those were the days of innocence, spontaneity and naive enjoyment, of uncorrupted chastity and guileless honesty."

The earliest description of Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights occurs in the travel diary of Antonio de Beatis when he saw the triptych in the Palace of Henry III on 30 July 1517. The tone of his description suggests entertainment rather than horror or anxiety, a frequent reaction to Bosch among the international aristocracy of the 16th century and prevalent even in the early 19th century. Recent interpretations have perhaps concentrated too much on the sexual element of the triptych and too little on the other theme of instability and impermanence inherent in the enjoyment of 'earthly delights'.

"In the wonderful selection of letters that was published in 1960, Freud's attitude to the visual art of the past and the present can be seen in the context of his rich and consistent culture that is so deeply rooted in the traditions of German classical Bildung. Indeed, to the end of his life, Freud looked at art and at literature through the eyes of Goethe and Schopenhauer."


Bramante's concept of architecture was influenced by Francesco Colonna's mystery-laden fantasies which reconciled religious and classical imagery. Bramante envisaged the Belvedere not only as a Renaissance palace but also as an evocation of ancient Rome and he conceived of the Belvedere Garden as a grove of Venus. He wanted to turn the axis of St. Peter's so that the obelisk of the Vatican would stand in front of the Church, because to Bramante it was a religious symbol that could transform the capital of Christendom into a classical city. Artists were also influenced by Colonna's *Romance*; for example, the woodcut illustrating the memorial in the Aldine edition of *Colonna's Romance* was the probable source of one of the reliefs in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love* in Giulio Romano's *Venus and Mars*, in the Sala di Psiche of the Palazzo del Te and in Sebastian del Piombo's *The Death of Adonis*.


The theme of this essay is that "an image intended to reveal a higher reality of religion or philosophy will assume a different form from one that aims at the imitation of appearances. What iconology has taught us is the degree to which this purpose of art to reflect the invisible world of spiritual entities was taken for granted not only in religious but also in many branches of art." The essay explores the Neo-Platonic notion of images as instruments of mystical revelation and examines the equally influential teachings of Aristotelian philosophy which link the visual image with the didactic devices of the medieval schools and the Rhetorical theory of metaphor. The philosophical implications of visual symbolism in the Renaissance, the survival of these ideas in Romanticism and in the theories developed by Freud and Jung are studied in detail.


Mary Dorothy George's *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, VII, 1801-10 (London, 1947) makes it possible to study the Romantic period of English graphic journalism and to see its creative phase in a wider perspective. There were many social and political reasons for the rise of graphic satire towards the end of the eighteenth century; there were also stylistic elements like Hogarth's heritage and the influence of Italian caricatura but most important the climate of the Romantic era was "an important contributory factor in the transformation of the hieroglyphic print into the triumphant
idiom of Gillray and Rowlandson... The new spirit of the Romantic era made it possible for them to stray beyond the narrow limits of traditional emblems and allegories into the open field of free imagination. The artist was now entitled to create his own images of spiritual forces and psychological states." Tradition provided the artist with the raw material of satirical imagery, with a pre-existing stock of acquired images, but he was now able to re-fashion this imagery, assimilate it to his needs, and change it beyond recognition.


Florentine fifteenth-century art developed central perspective and the mathematical method of revealing form in ambient light whereas North Renaissance art first explored the other aspect of optical theory, the reaction of light to various surfaces. Cennini, heir to Giotto's achievements and procedures, saw the function of illumination as a revelation of form and recommended that the artist concentrate on modelling from light to shade to establish a sense of structure and solidity. Alberti in his treatment of light and colour was also concerned with the effect of relief, but his references to brilliant surfaces by juxtaposing white and black may be based on his acquaintance with Flemish paintings. The full potentiality of "lustro" to reveal not only sparkle but sheen is a discovery connected with the art of the Van Eycks. Leonardo, the greatest explorer of natural appearances, must have studied Van Eyck's techniques of lighting as is evident in his early paintings and from this frame of reference he then turned to nature as he states in his Treatise of Painting "in order to confirm for himself the reasons of what he has learnt." Art historians should "follow Leonardo's advice and turn to nature in order to confirm for ourselves the reasons of what the artist had learned. We have concentrated so long on the morphology of different styles and visual idioms that we neglected to probe their descriptive potentialities for matching the visible world. It is true that the variety of styles which we encounter in the history of art confirms the idea that nature can be described in many different languages, but it happens to be wrong to infer from this premise that these descriptions cannot be either good or bad, true or false."


No systematic treatment has even been attempted analysing the representation of time and movement in painting because the way in which the problem of the passage of time was traditionally posed doomed the answers to relative sterility. "The impression of movement, like the illusion of space, is the result of a complex process which is best described by the familiar term of reading an image...one principle that applies to the reading of spatial relationships on a flat canvas can easily be shown to apply no less to the reconstruction of temporal relationships. It may be called the principle of the primacy of meaning. We cannot judge the distance of an object in space before we have identified it and estimated its size. We cannot estimate the passage of time in a picture without interpreting the event represented. It is for this reason perhaps that representational art always begins with the indication of meanings rather than with the rendering of nature and that it can never move far from that anchorage without abandoning both space and time."

"In the discussion of works of art description can never be completely divorced from criticism. The perplexities which art historians have encountered in their debates about styles and periods are due to this lack of distinction between norm and form.” Art historians like all users of language must admit that classification is a necessary tool but the problem inherent in formulating such systems is that they create the illusion that one is dealing with 'natural' rather than man-made classes. The origin and development of classes of art or 'stylistic terminology' are found in the writings of Vitruvius, Vasari, Bellori, Winkelmann, Warburton, and Gunn, among others. And although the norms of these styles are still questioned, the categories have remained. Wölfflin by reducing the concept of style to the classical versus the non-classical introduced polarities that are not true polarities but only differences of degrees, and threatened the whole idea of the morphology of styles. "Neither normative criticisms nor morphological description alone will ever give us a theory of style. I do not know if such a theory is necessary, but if we want one we might do worse than approach artistic solutions in terms of those specifications which are taken for granted within a given period, and to list systematically, and even, if need be, pedantically, the priorities in the reconciliation of conflicting demands. Such a procedure will give us a new respect for the classical but will also open our minds to an appreciation of non-classical solutions representing entirely fresh discoveries."


Gombrich comments on Professor Gibson's paper "The Information Available in Pictures," (*Leonardo* 4 (Winter 1971): 27-35), and suggests that he may be a victim of modern industrial civilization because of his statement that we perceive the three-dimensional features of environment and its aspects from a painting. "I still feel unable to accept the radical separation between the perception of reality and the perception of pictures that Professor Gibson proposes in opposition to the views I put forward in *Art and Illusion*."


The significance in the comedy of Mars, and Venus trapped by Vulcan for the amusement of the gods may have its origins in the allegorization of Homer attributed in the Renaissance to the philosopher Heroclides Ponticus but now recognized as Heraclitus, an unknown rhetorician of the first century A.D. This text easily accessible to Isabella d'Este's advisors could have furnished the subject matter for Mantegna's Parnassus.


The relationship between the artist and the world at large is a constant extension and modification of a common stock of symbols, a complex interaction of private and public meaning, that constitute a history and style. The development of style, of modes of representation are not the result of
organic growth or a general process of maturation and are not due to some mysterious fluid or collective spirit that governs the modes of perception or the images of dreams. Taste may be accessible to psychological analysis but art is not because the work of art becomes articulate through the symbols of the age and achieves more than the satisfaction of a few analysable cravings. Psycho-analytic terminology allows us only to discuss some of the psychological forces that make up a work of art but the type of organization is so complex, the pulls and counterpulls on a hierarchy of levels are so countless that neither psycho-analysis nor the history of art may be really competent to analyse the resulting miraculous and reassuring balance that is the work of art.


The Medici myth; which makes the Medicis in general and Lorenzo in particular responsible for the efflorescence of the human spirit in the Renaissance, derives from Virgil's equation of a Golden Age with the age of a particular ruler. The Medicis had neither the fame of their ancestors nor their heroism in battle to boast about and required metaphysical props for power and propaganda. The humanists and writers who surrounded Lorenzo Medici held him up as the Messianic Ruler who brought back the Golden Age and propounded that myth so successfully that Lorenzo accepted it as true as did subsequent generations who saw the teeming life of the real Quattrocento fall into this deceptively simple configuration.


Landscape painting became an acknowledged subject matter for a work of art and an institution to be recognized and respected because of the artistic theories of the Italian Renaissance. The aesthetic attitude towards paintings and prints which prizes works of art for their function and subject and probes into the creative process of the human mind is manifested in the writings of Alberti, Leonardo, and Giovio. Paolo Pino considered the landscape of the Northerners pleasing representations of their homeland but it was Vitruvius' description of the ideal landscape that compelled the Italian artist to abandon the conceptual accumulation of picturesque details developed by the Northern specialists and to study the effects through which the illusion of atmosphere and distance could be obtained in a landscape painting.

49. "Research in the Humanities. Ideals and Idols." *Daedalus* 102 (Spring 1973); 1-10.

"What is needed in the humanities is not yet another lobby for more grants and research projects, but rather a forum for the exchange of views on what constitutes worthwhile research, and what dangers threaten to distort its progress. The four classes of idols which divert the humanities from their course are as follows: the claim that truth emerges in the form of generalizations based on the accumulation of data, the lure of newly developed intellectual and mechanical tools which seem to promise prestige when applied to the humanities, the worship of new ideas and new interpretations of a term; the concentration on the syllabus leading to examinations in the teaching of the humanities. "What we need are mixed communities of scholars where younger and older people can freely mix and exchange ideas without being over-impressed or under-impressed. Communities, the members of which are not so totally exempted from ordinary chores and routines
that they must ask themselves day and night whether they have lived up to their position, but where they are not ground down by the demands of teaching and administration either.


Reynold's theory and practice of imitation is exemplified in 'Three Ladies Adorning a Term of Hymen'; this work exalts the standards of history painting rather than the formulae of portraiture by deliberately borrowing from Poussin's paintings. Reynold's doctrine and his art were formulated to conserve the artistic conceptions of the past but instead he ended up by demonstrating that the past cannot be retrieved by 'imitation'. "Whoever converses more intimately with the picture will feel that the dualism already inherent in the commission pervades the work as a whole. The two worlds of portraiture and of history, of realism and imagination are held in a perfect, if precarious balance."


Giulio Romano selected fresco cycle themes in the Palazzo del Te that related to the dynastic symbolism of the Gonzaga. The sources of the sixteen medallions arranged under the twelve signs of the zodiac in the Sala dei Venti are Manilius' *Astronomica* which ascribes influence not only to the zodiac signs but also to the various constellations which rise together with these signs and Firmicus' *Matheseos Libri VIII* which contains a codified catalogue of the constellations and their influence on human destiny. The inventor of this fresco cycle theme may have been Lucas Gauricus, a famous astrologer who had close relations with the Gonzaga family.


A museum should be active in the conservation of materials. "The pressures of our time are all for change, for activity, for public relations. If this were not so I would not have wanted to put the case for the opposite point of view even at the risk of being misunderstood or misrepresented. That case, I repeat, is not for inactivity. If a display can be improved and a collection made more accessible, who would want to prevent this? But I do believe that those in charge of our heritage should never be oblivious of the title they still carry in some countries, that of "conservator", and that they should possess that rarest of abilities, the ability to leave well alone."


"Knowledge is stored in books and periodicals where it can be activated any time by those who know how to use them. It is this we must persuade our students to learn, it implies learning languages and, if necessary, different terminologies. Once we have done this it should be easy to convince them of the intellectual impoverishment that facile application of ready-made paradigms bring about. We can encourage them instead to look for questions that have not yet been asked and that may need new paradigms for their answer. Obviously there will be failures as well as successes, but if reasoned criticism of fundamentals will again be encouraged the process of trial and error should result in a real advance. Instead of cultivating 'normal science' we shall enter into that interesting state of ferment Thomas Kohn describes as revolutionary science, and keep it on the boil. True if that happens it will no longer make sense to ask about 'the present state of art history.' There will be not one art history, but many different lines of inquiry freely crossing the
boundaries at any number of so-called 'disciplines' that owe their existence merely to administrative convenience, not to say inertia. Only in this way can our studies recapture what Erwin Panofsky so beautifully described as the 'joyful and instructive experience that comes from a common venture into the unexplored'.


Poussin, possibly the first if not the only artist to paint the story of Orion, conceived the subject matter of the painting from Lucian's description of the frescoes in the Noble Hall and from Natalis Comes' fables of natural and moral philosophy based on the Ancients. "It constitutes the true achievement of Poussin's genius that he succeeded in turning a literary curiosity into a living vision, that his picture expresses in pictorial terms what it signifies in terms of allegory...Thus the landscape became more to him than the scene in which a strange and picturesque story was enacted. Its deeper significance lifted it beyond the the sphere of realistic scenery or Arcadian dreams - it became fraught with the meaning of the myth; a vision and an allegory of nature herself."


Tobias and the Angel is the story of the Archangel Raphael. The painting, the outcome of a compromise between the symbolic and the representational, forms a network of references that to the religious mind embraces the universe and aids in the communion with those forces of which it is the visible token. The theme of Tobias and the Angel may have been popular in fifteenth century Florence because of the powerful fraternity Campagnia della Misericordia whose patron saint was S. Tobia.


Charles Sterling in his book *Still Life Painting* (English edition, Paris, 1959) is uneasy in his treatment of the aesthetic issue of still life painting and almost apologizes for writing the history of a category that is merely held together by subject matter. He tries to link the psychological attitude of the artist whose imagination is aroused by simple things with a concern with commonplace things. This explanation of art in the psychology of the individual is insufficient because art is a social activity which yields to social pressures. "It is among these simple social and historical forces that we must look for the origin of a humble genre in which the sensuous appeal of food and glitter enjoyed a licence of its own. Maybe the early academic critics who rated this appeal rather low were not so benighted after all. How could they have predicted that the very frequency of repetition would gradually give this genre cohesion and articulation; that it would become all the more perfect a vehicle of expression, because it has never cut itself loose from an immediate appeal in the five senses?"

In art it is not one's badge of allegiance to a particular movement but the quality of the individual that ought to matter. The art historians who spread the convictions that artists enter into periods, the art critics who think the main trouble with modern art is that painting has become too easy and who watch, discuss, and register the artist's seemingly free creations of art and the educators who have introduced negative rules in the fashions of art have all contributed to the vogue of abstract art. "To discuss the theory and value of abstract art we have to submit it to the test of experience and such rational discussion as is possible to establish whether it works. Abstract art to me are like works of colour music but my reactions to the best abstract canvases fade into the sphere of the merely decorative when compared to great music because they lack the dimension of time. This dimension of time may develop in the medium of film. There may be films in which shapes undergo destinies comparable to the themes of a symphony; rearing up here into unexpected brightness, shrinking there into gloom. Such an art might even gradually build up a framework of conventions like the one which made Western music possible; that system of expectations within which the musician creates, even when he defies it. How shall we know when these experiments are successful? Only when we enjoy them for their own sake, quite regardless of our historical interest; as we enjoy Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. The notorious tag 'I don't know anything about art but I know what I like' is habitually held up to ridicule in books on art appreciation. It may yet become the cornerstone on which a new art can be built.


Vasari's view of the history of ancient art is based on Cicero's Brutus; his view of progress as the unity of purpose throughout the vicissitudes of stylistic change is also linked to Cicero, and his inclusion of only one living master, Michelangelo, in his Lives is similar in intention to Cicero's inclusion of Caesar in his Brutus.


Visual discovery is an "experience in which the normal relationship of recognition and recall is reversed, so that we genuinely recognize pictorial effects in the world around us, rather than the familiar sights of the world in pictures. The road to this experience led from interest to isolation and from isolation to increased ambiguity. In discovering through this experience an alternative reading of an isolated set of impressions, we receive a kind of minor revelation through recognition." This article, based on a lecture given at the University of Texas in 1965 in the series "Programs of Criticisms", continues to explore the relation between visual perception and pictorial representation set out in his book Art and Illusion and introduces a number of distinctions on the nature of discovery not made in the original study.


Garger in his article "Uber Wertungsschwierigkeiten bei mittelalterlicher" (Kritische Berichte, 1932-33) oversimplifies the concept of artistic achievement when he evaluates a work of art on the basis of what was intended and what was achieved. This supposed division between intention and result is appropriate for an art form which emerges from an idea of inspiration but for the medieval artist whose visual motifs and subject matter were given the whole procedure was of a different kind. The medieval artist’s aim was to master the characters of a pictographic system derived from classical antiquity. The manner in which that text was presented and charged with meaning constituted the aesthetic achievement. Medieval art because it had to represent abstract relations outside the scope of systematically representational art developed a primitive mode of image making, a primitive conceptual imagery which enlarged those features of a subject which were more important. Garger oversimplifies the concept of expression but he is correct in emphasizing that what we experience as expression in late antique art is mostly its primitiveness with all the associations which this has for us in the context of that period.

C - Essays, joint publications, introduction letters to the editor and reviews


The scholar is the guardian of memories and the arts of the past are an important strand in these memories of mankind. The study of art history was launched by Giorgio Vasari, an artist who was concerned with the memories of a great past and was convinced that only tradition and memory could keep the art alive. Aby Warburg was one of the first students to break away from Vasari’s notion of preconceived causes and roots of style and mutually reinforcing historical clichés when he questioned the basic assumption that naturalism in Renaissance art betrayed a lack of interest in religion. The vicious cycle of art historical premises was broken at last and new types of evidence like the study of iconology, the search of texts and contexts to restore the original meaning of works of art, became admissible to the scholar. What counts in the world of art is the search, the constant probing, the taking of risks in experimentation and in this respect scholarship can profit from this spirit of venturing into the unknown. "The art historian who sees the styles of the past merely as an expression of the age, the race or the class-situation, will torment the living artist with the empty demand that he should go and do likewise and express the essence and spirit of his time, race, class, or worst of all, of the self. The more we exorcize those spirits which still haunt the history of art, the more we learn to look at the individual and particular works of art as the work of skilled hands and great minds in response to concrete demands, the more we shall teach authority that what the artist needs is not more myth or propaganda, but simply more opportunities, opportunities for experiment, for trial and error, which alone can lead to the emergence of those skills which can meet the ever changing challenge of the here and now."


Filippo Beraldo’s compliment to Francia in his commentary on the Metamorphoses of Apuleius takes the form of an extended gloss on the phrase ‘ars aemula naturae’, a phrase which occurs in the description of the grotto.

This informal correspondence between Gombrich and Bell arose from the defence made by Gombrich of the notion of a canon of excellence in the arts in his Romanes Lectures on 'Art History and the Social Sciences', Oxford, 1975. Bell expresses doubts about the 'absolute' nature of such values but declares himself 'sitting on the fence' in this matter.


Cartoons reveal the role and power of the mythological imagination in our political thought and decisions. The novelty of the cartoon is its freedom to translate concepts and symbols of political speech into metaphorical situations and to condense and fuse a complex idea into one striking memorable image. Portrait caricature, mock portraits based on comparisons of human and animal type and cartoons of animals fused 'to produce' the political bestiary, a perfect marriage of symbol and likeness into a dreamlike fantasy. "The cartoonist can mythologize the world of politics by physiognomizing it. By linking the mythical with the real he creates that fusion, that amalgam, that seems so convincing to the emotional mind."


A comparison of the iconography of pageants to paintings demonstrates how certain themes were shared by painting and pageantry and how painting resisted the representation of some subjects. While certain motifs and symbols were easily absorbed into the mainstream of art, others, like the homely personifications of popular feast days in the carnival procession, were felt to be outside the range of serious Italian artists trained in the classical tradition.


Leonardo's drawing style never accepts any form as final but goes on creating, even at the risk of obscuring the original intentions. This procedure, unparalleled in the work of earlier artists who believed in the perfectly controlled line that needs no correction, stems from Leonardo's insistence on the status of painting as one of the Liberal Arts. "Painting, like poetry, is an activity of the mind, and to lay stress on tidiness of execution in a drawing is just as philistine and unworthy as to judge a poet's draft by the beauty of his handwriting...What concerns the artist first and foremost is the capacity to invent, not to execute; and to become a vehicle and aid to invention the drawing has to assume an entirely different character - reminiscent not only of the craftsman's pattern but of the poet's inspired and untidy draft. Only then is the artist free to follow his imagination where it leads him and 'to attend to the movements appropriate to the mental states of the figures which make up his story.'"

This study examines the documents that describe the works of art supported by the Medicis' generous patronage. They include the Badia de Fiesole, the tabernacles of San Miniato al Mante and SS. Annunciate in Florence, the paintings of Vasari, Gozzoli, and others.

72. “Erasmus Prize Acceptance Speech.” *Simiolus* 7 No. 2 (1975/1976); 47-78.

This address, given in 1975 in the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam, after his award of the Erasmus prize, gives his views on the study of art, its aims and the lines of demarcation which should be respected.

73. "Erwin Panofsky (Obituary)." *Burlington Magazine* 110 (June 1968): 356-60.


The expressionist theory of art, as exemplified in the writings of Roger Fry and Susanne Langer, assumes that expression is somehow rooted in the nature of our minds and regards the conventional aspects of communication as less essential, less artistic than expression. The expression of emotions works through symptoms such as blushing or laughter which are natural and unlearned whereas the communication of information functions through signs or codes such as language or writing which rest on communication. Art lies somewhere between these two extremes of expression and communication because no emotion, however strong or however complex, can be transposed into an unstructured medium, no expression can function in a void without the sharing of knowledge and past experiences and the exploration and modification of existing conventional signs and configurations.


This lecture was presented together with lectures by Karl-Heinz Schäfer and Carl George Heise on June 13, 1966 at the University in commemoration of Aby Warburg.


Leonardo's concern with the subject of movement in water and air is apparent from the sheer bulk of his writings on that subject. Leonardo believes that the correct representation of nature rests on intellectual understanding as much as it does on good eyesight and in order to know what is perceived language, a verbal analysis of the subject is required. "There is much talk in contemporary art criticism and art teaching about the alleged difference between 'verbal types' and
'image types'. The artist is said to be an 'image type' and concern is frequently expressed lest his mind be corrupted by too much contact with the discipline of language. Nobody, of course, who has read through Leonardo's notes can doubt the importance linguistic articulation held for him. His notes on water in particular show his striving for mastery of this medium, he quite systematically builds up a vocabulary of words and concepts with which to catch and evoke the fleeting variety of phenomena and fix them in his mind.” Leonardo, influenced by the Aristotelian concept of science as a systematic inventory of the world, wanted to classify phenomena and unify concepts. The impulse and recoil that together created the variegated shapes of water has echoes in Leonardo's compositions, the Last Supper, for example, where the impact of a word makes the group recoil and return, compelled by dynamic laws similar to those governing the course of water and air.


Hegel was wrong in projecting a unifying vision of the Renaissance, a forward surge of the spirit that expressed itself in the revival of learning, the flourishing of the arts, and geographical discoveries. Wittkower, by concentrating on the social psychology of fashions and movements and by drawing attention to living people in concrete situations, explained the interaction of changes in the Renaissance in varying fields of endeavours. A comparison of the author Niccolò Niccoli and the architect Filippo Brunelleschi supports this view. There is a parallelism between the littera antiqua twelfth century visual style of writing supported by Niccoli and the change in the style of architecture attributed to Brunelleschi. "Brunelleschi too rejected the Gothic mode of building that was current in Europe in his day in favour of a new style that became known as all'antica. His reforms, as that of the humanist scribes, spread from Florence throughout the world and remained valid for at least five hundred years wherever the Renaissance style was adopted or modified." This essay is based on a lecture originally given at the New York Institute of Fine Art in December 1962.


Hans Tietze, primarily an authority on Venetian painting, saw history as living personalities of the past, products of emotional and intellectual forces, and artists were such personalities impinged upon by forces around them. He saw connoisseurship as a moral duty to free the creative artist from the confusion brought about by collectors and the credulity of experts.


Escher's prints are meditations on image reading. They reveal that "reading a picture is a piecemeal affair that starts with random shots and these are followed by the search for a coherent whole… The eye, like the groping hand, scans the page, and the cues or messages it elicits are used by the questioning mind to narrow down our uncertainties. Every piece of information that reaches us through the senses can be thus used to answer a further question and remove a further doubt." Escher shows us the success of the artist's rebellion against illusion that began with the Cubists by
presenting us with scrambled codes and new modes of organization that shock us into realizing how much more there is in pictures than meets the eye.


Kruckenhauser’s pictorial anthology of Austria is not a tourist’s guide to the principal beauties of Austria’s landscape and art but a subjective selection of the more or less hidden treasures that struck the artist’s eye. This picture of Austria’s artistic physiognomy catches the real Austria which an Austrian can accept as authentic.


Kokoschka is one of the great outsiders of contemporary art because his development refused to conform to any revolutionary period of European art from the 1920’s onwards. His emphasis on intuition and creativity and his refusal to accept the myth of progress which had inspired the nineteenth century recalls the philosophy of Henri Bergson, an influential thinker of the early twentieth century. Kokoschka believed that the artist had a mission to use his imagination to interpret life and as a teacher formulated this artistic creed, — "as a true teacher I even want to encourage anyone who is ready to stake his life, so that the imagination of the divine should not remain without a priest and life not without the greatness of classical antiquity." Kokoschka’s art is intensely religious and in his depiction of portraits, animals, or landscapes, he communicates a visual and visionary unique experience and a sense of the inexplicable mystery of creation.


The Greeks travestied the old and familiar myths of the gods and kings in trivial escapades of vulgar comic types; the medieval church used comic distortion to enforce moral lessons; the Reformation used the art of laughing castigation for propaganda; but it was Annibale Caracci who first invented portrait caricature. Caracci portrayed his friends and fellow creatures as animals and in doing so demonstrated that the "real aim of the true caricaturist is to transform the whole man into a completely new and ridiculous figure which nevertheless resembles the original in a striking and surprising way." In the eighteenth century William Hogarth made caricature a genuine expression of the age and James Gillray, master of the broadside, developed the art of cartooning as it is felt in our day. With caricature “for a short time we cast off the bridles which restrain our aggressive impulses and prescribe the strict path of logic to our thought. With the caricaturist we may lapse into the stratum of the mind where words and pictures, rules and values lose their well-established
meaning, where the king may be changed into a pear and a face into a simple ball. And thus we are
led back on a lightning excursion to the sphere of childhood, where our freedom was unhampered.
In the eternal child in all of us lie the true roots of caricature.”

88. “Kunstwissenschaft.” In Das Atlantisbuch der Kunst, pp. 653-64. Edited by Martin Hürlimann.
Zurich, 1952.

89. “The Leaven of Criticism in Renaissance Art.” In Art, Science and History in the Renaissance,
pp. 3-42. Edited by Charles S. Singleton. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967. Reprinted in The Heritage of

“If by the criticism of art we mean the detailed assessment of both the merits and the shortcomings
of an individual work of art, the large bulk of writings on art bequeathed by the Renaissance will be
found to be disappointingly poor in this respect.” There was however an awareness of criticism as a
“purposeful direction to be observed in the development of certain methods and problem solutions
which clearly suggest the existence of rational standards by which works of painting and sculpture
were judged. Only the existence of such standards and awareness of failures as well as of successes
can explain that spirit of rivalry and of experimentation that marks the ‘rebirth of the arts’. Without
a tendency to faultfinding there can be no sure desire for the improvement of certain qualities.” A
few texts serve to illustrate and test this interpretation; Dürer’s testimony that the new conception
of art differed from the one artists had formally learned, Vasari’s ruling that art is a solution to
certain problems and Leonardo’s reference to the idea of ‘dimostrazione’, the display of ingenuity
characteristic of Renaissance art. Vasari was aware that the ‘leaven of criticism’, a cultural milieu
where artists congregate and where rivalry is kindled, favoured progress, but in concentrating so
much on the ideal of ease of execution and the mastery of perspective and the nude, the crucial
experience that for every problem solved a new one could be created and the ideal of simplicity
were lost to his generation.


Leonardo’s manifesto on the new conception of art dwells on his “wish not only to see beauties to
fall in love with (like Pygmalion), but ‘monstrosities’ to frighten, to entertain or arouse pity. Can we
wonder that we find it hard to decide whether the grotesque are meant as jokes or as monsters?
Leonardo himself left the question open. His mind was so wide that he even foresaw the possibility
of feeling pity for the creations of his own cruel whim. Here, perhaps, we approach from afar the
answer to why Leonardo found it a relaxation to ‘doodle’ these faces. For his new conception of art
as creation rather than illustration the doodle could become the instrument and token of the freely
creative imagination. As he watched these profiles taking shape under his hand, he felt his ‘arm
being guided’ by that creative ‘judgement before judgement’ that had given shape to his very body.
Then, taking the reins as dio e signore he could try out distortions and variations and watch the
outcome - see the oddest creatures emerge into existence through a mere pressure and twist of the
pen. Moreover these weird monsters were less exacting than the ‘little worlds’ his pictures should
embody. They acquired a presence, an individuality of their own without that endless toil for
knowledge and perfection that threatened the fulfillment of his wishes in painting. And yet, these
children of fancy somehow partook of the essence of art, of its power. They were capable of
arousing fear, laughter or pity." It is possible that Leonardo's drawings of the Deluge are not just private meditations but were conceived as a project to rival Michelangelo's Deluge and that Giulio Romano's Sala dei Giganti are linked to Leonardo's conception.


Lessing was a persistent non-conformist, a free thinker whose writings form a challenge, a dramatic dialogue with a real or imagined opponent. Lessing played with pieces rich in association and thought nothing of borrowing ideas as in his *Laocoon* which is not so much a book about as against the visual artists. "In the Laocoon, Lessing erects a high fence along the frontiers between art and literature to confine the fashion of neo-classicism within the taste for the visual art, where indeed it remained unchallenged till Fuseli discovered the pictorial equivalent to Shakespeare in the rude sublimities of Rembrandt."


Malraux writes in *Les Voix du Silence* that "the artist builds up his forms from other forms, the raw material of art that is emerging is never life, but an art preceding it. He idealizes the art of the past, considers it a triumph over death, and believes that like the sublimities of nature it offers a screen for the projection of our deepest fears and longings and a form of self communion. His basic assumption that we must seek in nature or art some kind of message fails to take into account the way nature or art can challenge our quest for knowledge. He leads us into a paradoxical glorification of past art and a cynical enunciation of present and future cultural manifestations.


The origins and credentials of the concept Mannerism are present in the writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Agucchi, Bellori, and Dvorak. They show how Mannerism, like any intellectual category, was created a priori to meet a historiographic need. "The concept of Mannerism as a separate style and period arose originally from the need to set off certain works from an ideal of classical perfection. It therefore became by itself the label for something considered unclassical. But while the idea of progress towards more accurate imitation of nature has an objective element that can be tested against the facts, the ideal of classical perfection is much more elusive or, if you like, subjective.


The point of departure for this essay is the issue raised in the chapter 'The Experiment of Caricature' in Art and Illusion that images of art can be convincing without being objectively realistic. The creation of portrait likeness is explored in terms of perceptual psychology and the
question as to how there can be an underlying identity in the many changing facial expressions of an individual is analysed with a variety of highly diverse examples and a broad sampling of literature which deals with this topic. Empathy is understood to resolve many of the phenomena involved in the discernment of physiognomic resemblances. "We are not aware of ambiguities, of undefined elements leading to incompatible interpretations, we have the illusion of a face assuming different expressions all consistent with what might be called the dominant expression, the air of the face. Our projection, if one may use this chilling term, is guided by the artist's understanding of the deep structure of the face, which allows us to generate and test the various oscillations of the living physiognomy. At the same time we have the feeling that we really perceive what is constant behind the changing appearance, the unseen solution of the equation, the true colour of the man." An earlier version of this paper was read at a meeting on the psychology of art organized by Professor Max Black at Cornell University in September 1967.


The language of art criticism is still haunted by traditional theories of art. Representation is not an abstraction of form from the object seen, because the mind works by differentiation rather than by generalization. The concept of universals as applied to art assumes that every image refers to something outside itself, be it individual or class, but the question of reference in fact is totally independent of the degree of differentiation. The idea that art is creation rather than imitation means that all images should be read as referring to some actual or imaginary reality but images can represent in the sense of being substitutes. Any image can be symptomatic of its maker but to think of it as a photograph is to misunderstand the whole process of image making. The investigation of the representational function of forms has made progress in the sphere of animal psychology which has interpreted the image not as an imitation of the object's external form but an imitation of certain privileged or relevant aspects. Representation in the modern sense of the word must be a two-way affair rooted in psychological dispositions that defines the image as a record of visual experience, referring to something outside itself beyond what is really there in reality.


“When I was honoured by the invitation to give this lecture which commemorates a great historian (the Creighton lecture in history, 1969), I naturally looked for a historical subject in which I had really specialized. I am afraid I found only one. From the age of thirty to the age of thirty-six I was concerned with the body of documents I propose to bring to your attention today. Working at the Listening Post of the B.B.C. first as a so-called monitor and then as a monitoring supervisor I must have heard, recorded, translated, or read a considerable proportion of all German broadcasts for the German people from December 1939, when I joined the service, to December 1945, when I left it. As a historian I witnessed the war not only through the British news media and the realities of life 'somewhere in the country', as the formula was, but also through the distorting mirror in which Goebbels wanted the German people to see it." Myth and reality refers to lies and truth, to the Nazi propagandist transformation of the political universe into a conflict of persons and personifications. "Seen from Germany the war was a mythical drama of young Siegfried fighting manfully against the
evil schemers who had tried to keep him down. Luckily the very wickedness of these cartoon figures contained the seeds of their ultimate undoing. For after all it sprang from the laws of their being that they would ultimately do each other in."


There is no theory of art that ignores the 'expressive' character of sounds, colours or shapes and their capacity to evoke 'physiognomic' reactions. With the rise of Expressionism however the artist's and critic's attention has focused almost exclusively on this elementary effect and nowadays the first thing that art educators try to teach their students is to look out for the expressive character of shapes, textures and colours. There is a good deal to be said for exploring and developing these sensitivities which may be in fact a necessary reaction to the increased demands of a technological society, as long as we do not confuse response with understanding, expression with communication. Physiognomic intuitions must be subsequently modified and adjusted as other clues provided by life or by history become available. There is also a 'physiognomic fallacy' in the history of art first exemplified by Winkelmann who professed to divine the 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' of the Greek soul behind the marble front of classical statues and supported by Dewey who in his Art as Experience identifies the work of art with pure expression. Art does articulate and communicate but only when the expressive character of its elements are rooted within a framework of contextual aids and ordered forms.


Kokoschka taught students at his 'School of Visions' to "open your eyes, look and remember that this particular light, these exact colours and this unique gesture will never, never combine again. Nothing can hold this moment of life unless you seize it with your brush." He was convinced that "our technical civilization had blunted our visual response to the inexhaustible richness of reality" and was turning us into sightless and heartless robots. His portraits sweep aside conventional decorum and reveal his intense involvement with and compassion for the lonely tormented human being."


Kokoschka believed that "it is the mission of art to restore the balance and no art, perhaps, is more necessary to perform this service than painting. For in painting mankind has slowly evolved an alternative to conceptual language which can wrestle with the precious singularity of the here and now. 'Open your eyes, look and remember that this particular light, these exact colours and this unique gesture will never, never combine again'. Thus runs the burden of Kokoschka's teaching at the School of Visions he established at Salzburg and at Sion after the second world war."

Otto Kurz was a man who preferred reading to writing, who was "suspicious of unsupported theories and impatient with pretentious talk", and whose interests entwined literary sources and Italian seicento art.


The images of Gods both in the East and West are nearly always marked by distinctive features that permit easy identification. In the history of Greek thought these attributes of the gods were given a more rational or moral interpretation and it was this technique of attribution that survived in the Christian era and became an integral part of contemporary thought. "The natural dwelling place of personifications, if I may personify them in this way, is in the house of art. Art in our period is certainly conventional rather than spontaneous. It relies on precedence and this precedence points back to antiquity. If we ask what it was that led to the marriage between poetry and personification the true answer lies hardly on the purely intellectual plane. It lies less in the invention of suitable defining attributes than in the attractions of psychological and physiognomic characterisation."


Portrait painting has been almost superseded by photography but portrait painting has special characteristics that cannot be captured by a photograph. They include the act of selection to reveal the hidden qualities of the human countenance beyond the attainment of photographic likeness, the social aspect of portraiture, to determine the patterns of aristocratic decorum of the sitter, and the ability to bring out the complexity and depth of a personality by relying to a greater degree on the spectator's mind to imagine the complex picture of the sitter. The photographic lens can perpetuate only one single transient moment that makes up the pattern of living expression but in the act of concentration that assists the birth of all true works of art the painter can condense into one single aspect a variety of potential moments in the sitter's life."


The Madonna della Sedia is a self-contained classic masterpiece but "no work of art, even though we may now describe it with a little less diffidence as an 'harmonious whole', can ever be self-sufficient in an absolute sense. It derives its meaning from a hierarchy of contexts which range from the personal and universal to the institutional and particular. Nor is the intimate, psychological meaning more 'essential' than the import and function of the work as a religious symbol." The description and interpretation of the Madonna della Sedia is based on the anecdotes and associations which through the centuries have clustered around it, the formal analysis which sees the secret of its unity and harmony in the interplay of curves and an understanding of Raphael's straining after original forms of complexity and his dependence on earlier achievements in this genre.

The conviction that the state of the arts is a reflection of the greatness of an age probably first occurs in the introduction to Alberti's Della Pittura where he tells us that he had shared the melancholy belief that nature was in decline and no longer produced giants or great minds until, on his return from exile to Florence, the existence of Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masaccio, Ghiberti and Luca della Robbia restored his faith in life. Alberti sees these artists in isolation but Rinuccini, influenced by the writings of Pliny, Cicero, and Quintilian views them as part of a progressive movement and thus prefigures Vasari's conception of history and artistic progress. This new definition of art is evident in the change from Ghiberti's first Baptistry door to the second. When he worked on the first door Ghiberti saw himself as a craftsman who had received an important commission, but for the second door, he had learned that 'nature was to be followed and not any other artist and that the artist engendered by the idea of progress works like a scientist to demonstrate certain problem-solutions for the admiration of all but principally for his fellow artists and connoisseurs who can appreciate the ingenuity of his solutions.


The interpretation of what the Renaissance stood for or stands for today has shifted, particularly during the last one hundred years. To understand the Renaissance it is important to ask what the Renaissance thought of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was not so much an "Age" but a movement that proclaimed the recovery of an elegant and supple Latin style and championed the rebirth of art. What made the Renaissance such a successful movement was economics, the social position of the laity, the new role of the cities, and the spread of useful technical innovations, to support and validate the proclaimers of the new movement. This essay is a transcript of a lecture for first-year students in the English Department of University College London.


The bystanders in Piero's Flagellation of Christ may represent the scene of Judas' Repentance as it does in the drawing recently attributed to the circle of Tura.


Hauser’s history is not so much the history of art or artists as the social history of the Western World as he sees it reflected in visual, literary or cinematic trends and modes of artistic expression. Caught in the “mousetrap of ‘dialectical materialism’ which not only tolerates but even postulates the presence of ‘inner contradictions’ in history” and the theoretical paralysis of Hegelian logic he has built into the groundwork of his system a psychology of expression too simple and primitive to stand the test of historical observation. “Those of us who are neither collectivists believing in nations, races, classes or periods as unified psychological entities, nor dialectical materialists untroubled by the discovery of ‘contradictions’, prefer to ask in each individual case how far a stylistic change may be used as an index to changed psychological attitudes, and what exactly such correlation would have to imply. For we know that ‘style’ in art is really a rather problematic indication of social or intellectual change; we know this simply because what we bundle together under the name of art has a constantly changing function in the social organism of different periods and because here, as always, ‘form follows function’.”


Art mirrors life in that the use of gestures have their meaning in human intercourse. "I should like to propose as my principal hypothesis that as far as gesture is concerned the schema used by artists is generally pre-formed in ritual and that here as elsewhere art and ritual, using the word in its narrow cultural sense, cannot easily be separated.”


The term style is defined, its intention and description, its etymology, the relationship of technology and fashion, the evolution and disintegration of styles, style and period, stylistic physiognomies, the diagnosis of artistic choice, its morphology and connoisseurship. A bibliography with relevant articles on style follows the essay.


Giulio Romano is a typical representative of the style 'all'antica' because he was master enough of anatomy and movement to imitate ancient motifs and to improve on and assimilate them with the aid of his own studies from nature. This ability to assimilate required a degree of generalization, in learning how to create figures that embodied the idea of the classical style. Romano, like other Renaissance artists, tried to distil from the study of classical monuments the illusion of movement and life that came not only from their fidelity to nature but also from their ability to create movement and tension.


The tradition of general knowledge is fading away and is being replaced by the evils of specialization. The humanities draw their strength, their nourishment and their raison d'être from the traditions and general concerns of culture and to cut them off from these traditions is to kill them. Their death however may be hastened if the tradition of general knowledge is placed in the university curriculum and is made examinable in the examination system. "It is bad enough that the importance attached to examination marks leaves the conscientious student no choice but to swat and memorize examinable knowledge. It is perhaps worse that our own dissatisfaction with the system of speculation so easily tempts us to overload the syllabus more and more till the undergraduates have to rush from course to course without a moment's time for reflection. I am sure that our first duty to the student is to resist this obvious temptation. We must protect him from all the clamoring bidders for his attention who want to save the idea of general knowledge by making the art students attend courses on catalysts and the science students courses on the Judgment of Paris. What can be saved of this old tradition can only be saved by leaving the student more time to educate himself, more time to read than skim and skip, to assimilate rather than acquire knowledge, to roam the country round his allotted field, to make his own discoveries and to enjoy looking down on it from a neighbouring peak without expecting a diploma in mountaineering to satisfy the bureaucrats that their grant has been well spent." The tradition of general knowledge need not be idealized but at least it cohered as much as our language and culture cohered and thus counteracted the fragmentation of knowledge into unrelated specialties. This oration was delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science, December 8, 1961.
Artistic experiences can stand for, embody or express some of the highest values and produce a visual quality that is experienced as the equivalent of moral values. These “visual metaphors of value” are the ways colours and contours were handled in the historical past to evoke moral values. “The catchwords of value which the critic discerns in the drift of social trends and to which he, in turn, gives currency, ring in the ear of the creative artist and often guide his preferences or impose taboos. It is all the more important for him to be aware that his metaphors are metaphors, but that they spring from that living center where the 'good', the 'clear', the 'noble', the 'true', the 'healthy', the 'natural', the 'sincere', the 'decent', are but the facets of one untranslatable experience of a plentitude of values that speaks to the whole man - as great art has always done."

There is a dialogue by the Spanish humanist Ludovicus Vives in the Exercitatio Linguae Latinae of 1538 in which Dürer is shown to be a great master not only the equal of the humanists but by rights their superior. This dialogue documents a changing attitude towards art and artists because it reveals the critic as foolish and the artist as great and self-assertive. A similar sentiment is expressed in a drawing less than thirty years later by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and may suggest a change in the artist’s perception of himself as the modern Apelles.

This essay clarifies a point of disagreement with Nelson Goodman about the behavior of light and the fidelity of perspective and introduces fresh arguments into the debate on perspective. "I have attempted to separate three ways in which the perspective picture is stretched or transformed: the first corresponds to the Thouless effect of the constancies and demands that objects in paintings that are drawn as tilted will appear slightly more turned to the beholder than they are really represented. The second, which should be based on the same tendency, would demand that the picture itself, frame and all, would appear less foreshortened than it is; and yet the third, which is the most important and the most interesting, is precisely based on the objective and unnoticed transformations in the place which are due to this foreshortened view. Introspection suggests that the three actually co-exist peacefully. As our attention shifts in its search for meaning, all the pulls and counterpulls that shape our phenomenal world come into play in the processing of pictures."
Maybe it is precisely this paradoxical type of transformation that points to the connection between fidelity and the behavior of light, and therefore to the limits of relativism in representation.”

D - Interviews with Gombrich


Gombrich views the museum's primary role as custodial. Entertainment and instruction are secondary functions. He dislikes the tendency of modern museums to keep so much out of sight, in storage. He discusses the use of psycho-analysis in art history, art history as a part of general history and the possible future of art.


These conversations are informal interviews with Gombrich and Rosenberg around the central themes - the breach with the past, ceremonial survival and the body of knowledge, tradition and society. The spontaneous conversation syntax is kept to indicate that none of the statements by the participants had been planned or rehearsed.