



David Freedberg, D.Phil. (Oxon)

Pierre Matisse Professor of the History of Art

Columbia University

Columbia University

Born in 1948 in Cape Town, South Africa

Studied Greek and Latin Philology at Yale University and History of Art at Oxford University

Motion and Emotion in the History of Art

My 1989 *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* was dedicated to an analysis of the symptoms of visceral and emotional responses to art across history and continents. It was not overtly concerned with the relations between how images look and how people respond to them. This is the task I hope to complete while at the Wissenschaftskolleg.

For a long time the emotions were excluded from the history of art. Bodily responses were separated from the largely cognitive domain of art. Narrow interpretations of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* reinforced such positions. Already from the late 1960s on, however, bodily and emotional responses began to be recuperated for the history of art, mainly as a result of pressures from gender studies. From the 1980s on, the cognitive neurosciences opened different paths to the understanding of embodied and emotional responses.

The question of the relationship between movement and emotion in art is central to the work of Aby Warburg, who followed both consciously and unconsciously on Nietzsche's rejection of Kant, and on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers on empathy like Vischer and Lipps. These subjects dropped out of significant art historical concern for many years, but the new neuroscientific understanding of empathy and of felt imitative responses (as in the work of the mirror group from Parma) has made it possible to reinstate them, as central areas of concern for the history of images and of art.

The aim of the book which I hope to complete will be to outline a theory in which the relationship between motor and cognitive responses to images becomes central to esthetic understanding. Such a theory grows out of my longstanding commitment to the role of emotion and embodiment in responses to images. What is new will be the effort to suggest ways in which the interplay between felt imitative responses and prefrontal evaluation can offer a fruitful path to distinguishing between everyday responses and esthetic ones.

It will be clear that my book is predicated on a number of controversial positions - and not only on the centrality of motor and emotional responses to images in general and to art (or whatever it is that we call art) in particular. I hold the following views: that the humanities can no longer afford to neglect to come to terms with the biology of the brain; that the specter of reductionism has been exaggerated; that the mirror-neuron researches offer the possibility of a fruitful reevaluation of the standard approaches to intention, imitation, and empathy; that motor responses, like perception, are not inevitably cognitive; that vision evolved for movement; that it is both possible and necessary to maintain a distinction between automatic responses and the ways in which they are cognitively processed; that there are correlations between movement and emotion that are capable of being articulated; and that neither gesture nor emotion - like the capacities of the body itself - are fully exhausted by their cultural definition and limitations.

Recommended Reading

Freedberg, David. *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1989.

___. *The Eye of the Lynx: Art, Science and Nature in the Age of Galileo*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

___. "Empathy, Motion, and Emotion." In *Wie sich Gefühle Ausdruck verschaffen: Emotionen in Nahtsicht*, edited by K. Herding and A. Krause Wahl, 17-51. Berlin: Driesen, 2007.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Freedberg, David (2012)

Questionnaire

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=738197467>

Freedberg, David (Chicago, 2002)

The eye of the Lynx : Galileo, his friends, and the beginnings of modern natural history

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1603256113>

Freedberg, David (Chicago, Ill. [u.a.], 1989)

The power of images : studies in the history and theory of response

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=275671097>