



BILDER, BÜCHER, BILDUNG
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During the fellowship year, I dedicated myself to two large projects: 1) a critical history of the influential US art critic Clement Greenberg and 2) a monograph on nationalism, internationalism, and globalism in modern art. Inevitably, I found my attention captivated by other projects and ideas through the rich stew of interdisciplinary interactions at the Kolleg; the feverish debate over *Bildwissenschaft* and museum studies, together with my own continuing *Deutscherunterricht*, filled the interstices of the fellowship year.

My primary goal was to finish the Greenberg project I brought with me, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism*. Toward this end, I drafted or revised 5 of 9 chapters, and shipped the bulk of the manuscript to press by the summer's end. The book's central

philosophical premises and historical arguments benefited from the close reading of Fellows Sara Danius, Martin Kusch, and Alan Young; Fritz Ringer was instrumental to my education in Weberian theories of bureaucracy, and Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus served as an important sounding-board, educator, and modulator of my enthusiasms. The general discourse circulated by the neuroscientists and biological researchers at the Kolleg was also useful in defining the parameters of my claim that Greenberg occupied a particular moment in the modernist sensorium. Greenberg, who folded his own subjectivity from the visual and literary culture around him, became the mid-century's most powerful exponent of a positivist criticism of art – a criticism that aspired to be “scientific”, dispassionate, empirical, and to use purely formal criteria to define the success or failure of a particular work of art. I argue that Greenberg's narrow construction of what should be available to aesthetic contemplation (condensed in his recurring phrase, “eyesight alone”) became popular in part because it resonated with a widespread *bureaucratization of the senses*. Like so many modernists before him (Carlyle, Kafka, the poet Wallace Stevens), Greenberg was himself a bureaucrat (he had worked in the Customs Office, no less). His own *Bildungsroman* participated in the quiet social-industrial revolution that replaced class with status, patrons with professional elites, fealty to lord or religion with civil service. His concept of the avant-garde was developed in conjunction with (and in ambivalent relation to) this industrial order emerging in everyday life. But bureaucratic professionalism also had its price. Surely unwittingly, Greenberg's purification and constraining of aesthetics contributed to the ever-more bifurcated sense regimes defined by mid-century science, administered by commodities, and brokered by the culture industry as a whole.

The Greenberg work provided the core elements of several papers on “The Modernist Visibility”, the first delivered to the research group on “The Common Languages of Art and Science” at the Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, of which I was also a Fellow. Stimulated by the responses of the MPI scholars, the “Modernist Visibility” paper was reconfigured for presentation at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, and recast once again for the “Frames of Viewing” conference held here in Berlin, co-organized by the Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles) together with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. The first publication of this research will be a proposed volume titled *Things That Talk*, the fruits of the MPI research group, which will comprise contributions from historians of science, historians of art and architecture, cultural anthropologists, and artists. The revision of my essay for the MPI focused on a thematics of “talking pictures”, interpreted in various ways. The critic and his object formed one “talking picture”, but in the particular case study at

the heart of the paper (Greenberg and the art of Jackson Pollock), other kinds of historical talking pictures come into play. I argue that filmed and painted inscriptions of movement (in time-exposed photography, in cinema, and in Abstract Expressionist paintings) reference a modernist segmentation of the body that Greenberg intuitively recognized as industrialized. Explored through close readings of a single canvas by Jackson Pollock, the “talking” picture in this work is one whose fragmented body movements must be sutured and given seamless meaning by verbal discourse. Greenberg’s interpretations of Pollock’s paintings as modernist, industrially ordered, and *cultured* ultimately produced Pollock’s current high reputation, replacing the initial public readings of these paintings as chaotic, primitive, and anarchic.

The second major research initiative that occupied my fellowship year was work on local and global discourses in art after the Second World War. This formed the core of my fall presentation at the Wissenschaftskolleg, called “Coca Cola Plan: Icons of the Global in Contemporary Art”. Originally scheduled for an internal *Dienstagskolloquium* at the Kolleg, the talk was rescheduled by request of the Rector for delivery as a public lecture in the Wednesday *Abendkolloquium* series. The paper reviewed the shifting strategies pursued by artists producing commodity-based art – from the production of an “international cultural imaginary” by American artist Robert Rauschenberg and his Italian patron Giuseppe Panza to the postmodern critiques of commodity systems offered by “marginal” artists operating at peripheries of the first world (such as Brazilians Hélio Oiticica and Cildo Meireles). The response of the Berlin public to this talk was instrumental in broadening my understanding of the possible iconographic references made by these artworks and most helpful in enriching my knowledge of the classical associations that a European patron might have brought to them. Learning more about the historical context in which Europeans encountered American commodities in the postwar period was also illuminating (from references to Billy Wilder’s *One Two Three* to the GDR word for globalization, *Cocacolasierung*).

I was given further opportunity to present this material in a conference on the future of art history organized by the Swiss Institute for Art Research (“Zukunftsvisionen: Kunst und Kunstgeschichte in einer Zeit des Umbruchs”, Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft). I broadened the theoretical framework of the paper to include a historical analysis of the discipline of *Kunstgeschichte*, which emerged in German-speaking Europe at a moment not unlike our own. Places and cultures across the globe seemed newly accessible, the need to understand them was urgent, and sciences of information were extensive. The art historical discipline born from this moment continues to be marked by its philological,

philosophical, political, national, and historical genealogies. Yet the imperial, cartographic *kunstgeschichtliche* mentality has always been shadowed by its critique, via some *Bildwissenschaft*, however that “science of images” is to be understood. Taking up the unfinished project of a lost generation of German, Swiss, and Austrian scholarship truncated by war, the *Bildwissenschaftler* of Germany have looked to “visual studies” or visual anthropology for reinforcement. But these discourses are no less contentious. My analysis offered specific instances in which a global icon has been radically destabilized by local readings, in order to insist that visual culture creates the conditions for its global distribution, but can only ever be received in local, situated circumstances.

The final component of my fellowship year comprised a dedicated personal pursuit of *Hochkultur*, from pilgrimages with the children to the Sächsische Schweiz, Burg Eltz, and Zugspitze to visits to the Venice Biennale and the Documenta in Kassel. A museum or gallery each week was the pleasant assignment I set myself, improving my stamina as a viewer, and contributing to my role as an essayist in the frenetic world of contemporary art and exhibition culture. Between longer-term writing projects, it was a relief to make a very brief contribution to the collaborative international exhibition “Urgent Painting”, held at the Musée moderne de la ville de Paris and to participate in a small way in the massive multi-year project curated by Bruno Latour, Peter Galison, Peter Weibel, and others, “Iconoclasm: Image Wars in Science, Theology, and Art”, held at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien in Karlsruhe.

We shall miss fiercely the colleagues and friends, the dinners and lunches, the changing views over the Koenigssee, and the secret boat rides at dusk. Luckily the life of the mind and its attendant memory are enduring, and in this partial way we will have access to an idyllic life at the Kolleg for a long time.