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Thematic introduction

Stakes in knowing visual art

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF this book concern understanding visual art and the scholarly challenges connected to exploring artworks. Strong epistemic claims in analyses of art's various modes of being do not diminish notions of art's expressivity; on the contrary, inquiry is a prerequisite to explore an artwork's unique power.

We connect to a scholarly scenery, in the aftermath of the intense self-reflective work during the decades around the year 2000—a date signalling both retrospection and new initiatives.[1] In most recent time, however, research on artworks expressing multi-layered and deep meaning through their appearance seems to give pride of place to studies of culture in a wider sense, to political and historiographical perspectives. That change has affected the scholarly notions about the importance of visual art and loosened or simplified the structures of analyses. And that is a mistake of strategy, in our opinion, since art's impact is strong—in cases, bordering on such life experiences that are described as sacred or mysterious. With a precise and deep analysis of visual art, such effects can be better known and connect further, through comparisons, with other fields of the humanities.

Searching for truth about visual art

The notions about truth conditions in relation to visual art are present along a wide borderline between what is clearly knowable and reasonable in scholarly language, and even in any descriptive language, about art—and what is purely iconic, maybe beyond the reach of language.

Around 1900, art history was a more hard-edged scholarly discipline than aesthetics, a result of the influence and legacy of the Vienna School.

1. Examples of texts from the years around the new millennium that explore the scholarly positions of art history include: Cheetham *et al.* 1999; Halsall *et al.* 2009; Wood 2019.

There was an emphasis on objective formal analysis, and beyond that, a search, through the discipline, for an idealist content in the *Kunstwollen* of artists and cultures.

Leading scholars in the British tradition a century later—Ernst H. Gombrich, Richard Wollheim and Michael Baxandall—explored visual art with epistemic ambitions, with a touch of learned conversation. The analyses were in the format of scientific research. But the analytical structure of arguments was combined with the search for the mental aspect, the historical intent, the source, the creative idea. Keeping the formal aspect of the investigations, they opted for knowing the artwork as a structure witnessing mental and lived experience. Art, for these historically dominant scholars in the decades before 2000, was a scene rendering creative ideas and structures of viewpoints, displaying their exploratory minds.

The research was based on observations of perspective, focal points and viewpoints, like a visual philosophical grid of thoughts on famous paintings as mental constructs. The paintings seemed approachable for a mind prepared to be receptive, through the learned scholar's mind and vision that served as a bridge for readers.

From the time of these leading British scholars, there have been substantial differences in attitudes and methods. The global scene is opening up, and there are tendencies to reach beyond the Eurocentric area and the Renaissance legacy for subject choice. Art is no longer only a construct of idealized mental resources. The viewer and the artist are not the only "subjects" to lead the way; the work itself also performs this role, in the museum, at the exhibition, as it is as a resource of life force.

Original works of art that are currently shown in great museums of the world have an impact far beyond their historical identities. A work of visual art is "acting" in the present, showing its historical dimension as well as its ongoing appeal to emotions and thoughts.[2] This strong "agency" of great art is the line of thought in Horst Bredekamp's *Image Acts. A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency* (2018), focusing on the visual force.[3] There has been a new "turn" in the explorations of visual art, ways of showing its expressivity, in combination with notions of art's impact, as carrier of intellects and feelings, in its encounter with a viewer. In the

2. Wolfgang Kemp introduced the "implicit viewer" in Kemp 1992; W.J.T. Mitchell stated the problem of images as having a kind of "mind" in their physical substance, intention and power of persuasion in Mitchell 2005. See also Morgan 2014 and, more importantly, Morgan 2018; Bennett 2001.

3. Bredekamp 2018.

first decade of the 21st century, there were attempts to widen the perspectives of art history, globally and in terms of the effects and functions of visual art. There was a "visual turn", referring back to W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Interpretation* (1994).[4] The idea was to acknowledge a "life" of images.[5] Contemporary art is now a broad scene where artworks appear as "acting", as performing their own identities, in the contexts of the thoughts and experiences of the artists who created the works. Many of the initiatives about the "agency" of images concern a broad spectrum of visual impressions, and the affects and responses triggered in the viewer. Here, we focus on visual art and its impact on viewing and thinking.

Along with experiencing the impact of visual art, we focus on premises in art-writing, stating claims of knowledge about what and on which conditions art performs.

Knowing Visual Art, as the title of this book reads, is a collection of essays written by Swedish scholars. The focus is on the scholarly claims, truth aspects and methods that concern understanding and writing about visual art, applying both an epistemological approach and—acknowledging the visual power and material appeal of visual art—a notion of presence. How do we know what we know about art, the logic of object and subject, the expressive force? "Visual art" in our era is a designation relevant for a wide repertoire of expressions: architectural spaces, digital and moving images, along with the traditional categories of painting, drawing and sculpture.

There is no one "school" of interpretation, but a shared intent to reach far into the domain of visual art, to sharpen impressions and meaning, and to let claims of knowledge become clear, analysed and acknowledged.

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4. Mitchell 1994.

5. The ideas went as far as thinking about the artwork, by the example of photography, as having a soul and a mind of itself, see Martin Jay: "of attributing to images their own desires, their own vitality, instead of seeing them as the mere projection of human wants and interests" in Jay 2013, p. 39. To my mind, this is beyond what can be considered knowledge. I think that when an artist projects feelings and thoughts in a work, the traces visible in the work are not all from controlled or even conscious thinking or experiencing; the artist and other watchers may think of those expressions as coming from another mind, the artwork's mind as it were. A less extreme variant is to be found in Heywood & Sandywell 2012, pp. 10–11; the authors opt for a visual thinking across media, sciences and cultures; their idea is to pursue research "to restore human activities and practices to their sustaining experiential contexts and forms of life (a project that involves integration of research agendas concerned with the senses in historical and comparative perspective)." The object of the research agenda is the live, visible acts connected to various expressions, not specifically visual art.

This is, however, far from reducing the expressive powers of visual art; on the contrary, we try to explore more of the nature and conditions of the visual expressive enigmas of the artworks, the dimension on the other side of a cognitive border zone, or maybe blurring the border zone, making it vague or morphing. The aim is to understand where and how science and explanations ultimately reach insights about modes of visual art, but also where those cognitive ways of thinking do not find answers; when there is a kind of resistance, or an escape into another kind of mental processing, something different that is felt but not understood, and how such parameters in art can be explained, or rather explored. Art history needs to be precise—to find out about art's abilities to form visions of ideas and how art shapes, or triggers, emotions. And art history needs to be precise about its own epistemic tools in the encounter.

Art. The ancient, the present and the silent

In a preliminary seminar on some recent scholarly writings about visual art, we noticed that there was a kind of void around the art object as such.[6] The texts were fluent regarding economics, traffic connecting cities and continents, claims about understanding large patterns of a certain culture, or the psychological effects the artwork could cause. However, the visual "face" of the specific images, with all the nuances, enigmas and startling revelations, was as if avoided, as if not within reach of a systematic scholarly language, or as if not within the expected interests of a wider scholarly community.

So, let us start as far back as we can find relevant statements in Western culture that embrace the present, or, rather, presence: with the ancient Greeks. Simonides, born in the 6th century BC on Keos, is the source. Plutarch, writing about the "Glory of Athens", tells us that "Simonides calls painting silent poetry and poetry painting that speaks; for actions which painters represent as happening, words set out and describe after they have happened."[7] Usually this famous phrase appears truncated, just stating the comparative idea, but not the aspect of different format and targets in time.

6. The preliminary scholarly seminar had the title 'Gestaltning, beskrivning och logik i konstanalys (Representation, Description, and Logic in Analyses of Visual Art)' and was held at the Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquity), Stockholm, on 20 October 2021, with focus on scholarly aspects of analyses of visual art.

7. Campbell 1991, p. 363. Iribarren 2012 does not, however, stress the fact that Simonides made a difference between the arts, in terms of immediacy and succession.

To start exploring knowledge related to visual art—with the earliest possible, and obviously fundamental statement—is to be in tune with the phenomena of visual art. To be in relation to visual art of sublime qualities means connecting to the origins of human thinking, to what was first and yet remains as being present, active in the sense that we, as viewers, can "enter" those image-worlds, projecting our minds into the artworks' sceneries.

Visual art is always in the present tense, as Simonides said. Literature is recording things in the manner of stories, about events that appear as told, at some moment set down in abstract signs. When talking about visual art, some passages of a discourse will entail talking about presence and the material. The ageing of artworks is relevant, as well as previous or expected viewers. (Looking at Russian icons in an art museum is like witnessing how the images have lost their viewers and their function, as if deprived of their meaning in a state of mourning; the scars of time do not matter, just the loss of people.) In a museum, it is not self-evident which artworks are more suited for display, or even originally allowed to be on display (depending on their history). In visual art, works seem animated and vulnerable—even if they are treated as statements or as symbolizations of ideas—because they resemble visions of reality (in one way or other) and show the qualities of worked substances, carrying individual qualities.

Other disciplines

We acknowledge the fact that visual art operates with other processes of meaning-production as well as with art history (or *konstvetenskap*, aligning with the German *Kunstwissenschaft*). There is a border zone of strangeness or unfamiliarity in the very crossing area of the interpretation and the work. The work is visual or brings visuality along with its expressions; its border systems are fluent and changeable; its impact emotional as well as discursive; its sources in time are as old as the human species. But such differences are current in subjects of many historical academic fields. So, why bother in art history?

This is probably due to the notion of an analogy between the interpretation of a work and the expression or ontological character of the work itself. This is a tradition connected to the arts. Literature, however, has the paradigmatic role. There is a lingering idea of a necessary likeness, deep down, if not on the surface, between the interpretation and the expression to be known. In literature, both are texts. This idea

of "sameness" is typical of the strategies of *hermeneutics*, especially in literature.[8] The interpretation of a text, along with hermeneutics, is like a second text, an explored mode of the original text.[9] In visual art, the scholar needs to transform the artwork into a mental screen, to opt for an idea of likeness, in terms of shape and substance, or in terms of being of the mind.

Apart from the impact of the legacy of hermeneutics, visual art studies share a heritage with *aesthetics*. Applying aesthetic reasoning to a work of visual art makes the idea of ageing differences vanish. Aesthetics can grasp the core meaning of a visual expression, immediately, as in an apparition, since the kind of mind status studied in aesthetics can be thought of as the cause of the expression or in analogy with it, as a property preserved in the work. But, in aesthetics, the reasoning is scant around the conditions of knowledge related to specific artworks and around historical circumstances.[10]

Siding with aesthetics, art history gains the prestige of philosophy, but is deprived of the claims concerning historical truth, in relation to specific cultures. And aesthetics holds a lower prestige position within the "family" of philosophy, when it comes to explanations of truth based on arguments, since its traditions are connected to form and perception, more than to logic. Truth can inevitably be stated in a logical paradigm; as a quality of sense experience, it rests within the conditions of the human body and mind—and can be disputed.[11]

Voices

However, for Friedrich Schiller, a pioneer in the domain of art reflection, "beauty", as a quality in visual art, is linked to vision, but also to "freedom", which Schiller thought was the goal for human life. And freedom as a quality in the visible sets a political or ethical agenda for visual art, as well as for the interpretation of art. Through showing and making visible, visual art has claims beyond the already recognized conceptual structure of knowledge that is linked to power.[12]

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8. Rossholm Lagerlöf 2018, p. 175.

9. Especially relevant about Paul Ricœur: Valdés 1991, pp. 48–63, and *passim*.

10. Woodfield 2009, pp. 19–33.

11. In England, aesthetics was not admitted as a university discipline until in the mid-1930s, see Woodfield 2009.

12. A very powerful case manifesting this idea of identities being acknowledged and thematized, from events of daily life, and made visible in visual art is in English 2019—a chapter of which was the example chosen by Mårten Snickare for the discussion at the

If Schiller was right, his ideas may be seen alongside those of Jacques Rancière, bringing power of influence to recent reflections on art, where politics is at the core of the arguments.[13] Artworks and any manifestations of culture bring evidence to the "aesthetic", according to Rancière, since they state what is recognized as reality—anything that is object for sense perceiving—and thus knowable. What is seen and felt, and thus known, identified and potentially brought to notice, is a political question, according to Rancière. And he is certainly right.

A major difference in the "landscape" of art history today, in comparison to even the rather recent period of Gombrich, Wollheim and Baxandall, is the presence of female scholars. Are there differences, beyond the aspects of the individual? I would say, yes—in the sense that there is more of exploring, with women authors, and less focus on development and heritage, in giving credit to strategically important models. In scholarly practice, *traditio legis* (transferred to the realm of science, from the biblical context and Christ's giving the message of faith to the apostles) is a very powerful means of ascending the ladders of prestige and fame for recognized male art historians. Research among female art historians is more focused on discovery, new evidence and the presentation of different perspectives. When Michael Ann Holly writes about the great development of cultural achievements in Vienna, a century back in time from her own writing, she develops a large scenery of places (including the urban quarters and streets where Sigmund Freud moved), persons, meetings, achievements—as the scenery for presenting and analysing Gustav Klimt's enigmatic large paintings about human knowledge, made for the university (and destroyed during World War II).[14]

Now. The great moment

Since artworks appear, the physicality or materiality of their appearance claims the present tense. They are not only in their historical identities, but they become what they are when they are emerging for an informed viewer's eyes and mind. A viewer who is also a scholar explores the artwork, and the intent looking comprises core moments within long

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seminar (see note 6). His contribution to the seminar marked the beginning of a common project concerning the examination and development of art history as a discipline, resulting in this volume. English's chapter is about a painting by Kerry James Marshall, *Untitled (Policeman)*, 2015.

13. Rancière 2004.

14. Holly 1999.

periods of time spent on information and cultural analyses. With large and time-consuming studies, the scholar is equipped with the keys of understanding, allowing him or her to unlock the artwork; this showing, which can be sudden or slowly emerging, can only be made possible by the long period of preparation.

Sometimes, the interpreter may also meet the hazards of the "great moment" that passes, comes to an end, and renders back the remains or memories like an apparition. A scholar who has experienced that is T.J. Clark, in *The Sight of Death. An Experiment in Art Writing* (2008). After a period of "living" within or through some paintings by Nicolas Poussin, especially *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, Clark is left with his notes and his writing, trying to capture and express what he had experienced, claiming a new way of writing art history that amounts to both an original text and a period of involvement that has passed.[15] So, art history is marked by intense moments of witnessing and viewing; it is a scholarly practice that brings the past in contact with the present, in very specific ways that cannot be generalized.

Scholarly studies of cultures, avoiding aesthetics

Scholarly work, as theory of reasoning, differs fundamentally according to the objects. The same philosophy of interpretation cannot be used for visual art and literature, for example, except with very sharp distinctions. Literature, which is already verbal, aligns easily with philosophies of interpretation, such as semiotics and, nowadays probably more frequently, with phenomenology or hermeneutics, and even psychoanalysis. Art history has employed iconography and nameless interpretive methods based on viewing psychology and pictorial perspective.[16] But, employing terminologies from other academic fields, the scholar of visual art uses indirect vocabularies, projecting meaning on images.

Art history, as a discipline with narrow terminologies, sometimes seems to be a discourse where the scholars avoid the deep analyses of the

15. Clark 2008; Rossholm Lagerlöf 2008.

16. Baxandall 1985, p. 1 and *passim*. Baxandall does not frame his method of explanation in terms of a philosophy, but it emerges as self-evident that his interpretations are based on observations and documentations from the period in question. His method is empirical and historical; the descriptions are non-analytical (they do not have truth claims) but serve as the basis of the interpretation. A few terms are introduced: "brief" to frame the kind of agenda an artist experienced, in terms of inventing an artistic solution; and "troc" to refer to economic networks and other material and commercial premises in the studied culture.

pictorial and deal with more solid evidence about cultural and historical patterns around the artworks.[17] John Rewald's famous research about the Impressionists, *The History of Impressionism*, published in 1946, became a lasting framing of this period of art history, exploring the paintings in the context of urban environment and ways of connecting among the artists. Towards the close of the 20th century some art historians opted for explicit, deep realism, examining economic, political and cultural levels of meaning-production in a culture. Craig Harbison explored realities in his work *Jan van Eyck. The Play of Realism* (1991) based on the evidence of religion, money and bonds of securities, both in this world and the next. He acknowledged himself as a distant, inquisitive witness, coping with contrary impressions: comic effects and hyper-reality.[18]

Strengthening scholarly thoughts in the interpretation of visual art

Leading British scholars writing in the late 20th century opted for an essentialist psychological solution, within a historical dimension. Richard Wollheim invented a scheme where painting and mental structure became a match.[19] To be able to reach the essence of the historical mind, the scholar passes through a layer of mind in the work itself.

Another British scholar of the late 20th century, Michael Podro, introduced a more complicated mental construct, in a contribution to a book dedicated by many colleagues to Wollheim. It is the act of imagination that is essential—recalling both the artwork's expression and the viewer's involvement and understanding.[20] What you see as represented in the artwork is exactly what you imagined.

Hubert Damisch, on the other hand, explores centuries of pictorial illusions in Western painting, witnessing the images and their effects as if he was among the first viewers; the foundation is a deep historical understanding of pictorial methods, such as perspective and apparition of painted visual reality.[21] Where all the illusions of Western painting come

17. Rewald 1946 became both a source and a template to produce art history, dealing with events, contacts, politics and the artworks in a context of culture.

18. Harbison 1991.

19. Wollheim 1987. Wollheim's scheme of analysis develops three levels of understanding: the "repertoire" (assumptions, beliefs, understanding of subject/object relation, in the relevant period of time, seen in a painting); the internal viewer (an assumed viewing role in the painting, sometimes also depicted, as in a work by Caspar David Friedrich, *The Large Enclosure*, p. 136); and the external viewer, the interpreter, a scholar. His approach is historical.

20. Podro 2000, p. 113.

21. Damisch 2002.

to an end, where art becomes different, as if liberated from experiments through illusion, is with Cézanne. Damisch represents a continental tradition of art reflection, outside the realm of British empiricism and historicism; but he does not name his learned method, he just uses it, as if it all had to do with presence.

Artworks may also belong to a specific origin, their place. Important artworks that are in their original place, as parts of sites, can express their own effects according to the conditions of the surrounding space and the use of a building. Peter Gillgren has vastly expanded the meaning structure of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* for the Sistine Chapel, in relating the unframed and differently illuminated pictorial space of the painting to liturgy and illumination.[22]

Research in art history may come near other scholarly areas such as social history, reception theory, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism ... but few terms or concepts are uniquely used in art history. The term "iconography", denoting subject matter, remains from the explicatory method of Erwin Panofsky, but not the term's relevance as a part of Panofsky's philosophy as "iconology".[23]

Interpretive terms, used in art history, may originate in other discourses, such as philosophy, semantics, literature or psychology. And the transfer of terms is not always explored, with the consequence that visual art itself becomes imbued with a verbal character. But, in visual art, the expressive thing to be understood is non-verbal; unlike interpretation of literature, the interpretation of visual art is dialectic, balancing on a difference of nature between image and words. The art historian talks about something that will not respond, but "react" or become known somehow, mentally, and emotionally, with the help of words in connection with very long sessions of looking.

Among recent scholarly initiatives, the theme of "performativity", and the method of inquiry it denotes, connects more directly to situations of artworks and how they show their meaning in relation to an environment—as shown in Gillgren's art-historical work on Michelangelo.

Searching for a language and claiming an inquiry

The British scholars opted for examining perspectives, perceptions and angles of visions as the origin of an explanation or interpretation, using

22. Gillgren 2017.

23. Panofsky 1955. Panofsky's theory was at the basis of art history teaching at Stockholm University in the 1960s and 1970s.

their observations as mirrors or signs reflecting the intent of the works.

With art interpretations of recent time, inspired by continental hermeneutics and phenomenology, language, mind and object are fundamentally interrelated. The visual artworks merge into the language. So, the texts may appear as literary depictions of aspects of the artworks, and the visual is tuned into the language, as it were.

With the art of the contemporary period, art writing becomes more literary than scholarly, as if resembling somehow the aesthetics of the work. And recent visual art certainly invites inventive language. Just think of Tony Oursler's *The Influence Machine* (2000–2002), as it was performed on 20 October 2016 at the Stockholm University campus, in a collaboration with the art site Accelerator and Magasin III Museum of Contemporary Art.[24] Huge phantasmagorical faces, speaking like breathing spirits among the large trees, were projected in the park under the dark and windy evening sky. What interpretational scheme would analyse such a work? The first move would be to interpret the relation to early projection techniques, from the age of industrial discoveries, and measure the impact of the impressions.

Contemporary art is more reviewed than interpreted in a scholarly manner. However, it also invites deep analyses. Mona Hatoum's video work about the relation between her mother and herself, *Measures of Distance* (1988), was analysed by Gabrielle A. Hezekiah in 2020.[25] The theme of the artwork is the distant nearness through the vision of the mother's body.[26] Hezekiah builds an elaborate interpretation, based on a theory of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion, who has coined the expression "saturated phenomenon", meaning a phenomenon that has an overflow so strong that it does not convey all that it empowers; the recipient is left, at loss, with parts of a whole that is unknown. This idea comes forth as a kind of light directed on the artwork, but it is not

24. Accelerator at Stockholm University is an art site and an institute for research; it was established through the initiative of David Newman, director of Magasin III, in collaboration with representatives of the university.

25. Hezekiah 2020. Hezekiah also refers to an interpretation of the work done by Katherine Young. Young has pointed out that there are two channels of hearing and two channels of viewing, and that all these levels of communication are unconnected to each other. The large number of communication channels that do not connect demonstrates a strong need for communication means, and inabilities in realizing real communication.

26. The meaning is very subtle and has many layers. Mother and daughter have lived separate lives because of war; memories, language and habits separate them, but the intimacy of bodily memories from childhood are relevant and trigger both a sense of loss and of comfort.

obvious how, and if, it meets the visual performance of the artwork in such a way that it belongs to its meaning.

And again, what are the criteria for connecting the theory to the imagery of the artwork?

Hélène Cixous, on the other hand, comes into image interpretation from language philosophy, in the vicinity of Jacques Derrida's thinking. Her texts about visual art appear as completely free from the academic pursuit of art history. She deals with words and the sound of words as sense experiences, as it seems, taking meaning of words from their sound. And, writing about visual art, she takes a step in a different direction from art historians; she "becomes" the motif of certain paintings. She sees herself in the flayed ox painted by Rembrandt.[27] She is the seen, the object. This is beyond a statement about that painting. But it is true about traditions, on the evidence of many hundred years of traditions in art.

But Cixous' standpoint is not so far from the hesitant art historians'—in a kind of refusal to continue with the discourse. There is some reluctance to talk about visual art, as if all visual expressive resources were already spent or beyond reach. Either the painted image "pretends" (as Damisch says, quoting Karl Marx),[28] showing represented space and forms; either substances morph into things and bodies, maybe figures appearing as ghost-like replicas of real bodies (sometimes they are real bodies); or all material of art turns into matter that escapes representation and becomes a self-referential expression or a statement without a readable message.

Visual art is thus a serious challenge for scholars—on the edge, as it is. And for both scholars and non-scholarly viewers, coping with understanding, art is not like a holiday for restful escape into dreamland, since art contains so much passion (even in the sense of suffering) and so many challenges. And yet, it is extremely powerful, in ways that remain different from the magic of the screen, the films, the serials and the talk shows. Its power has to do with the material quality, mixing with something imagined, within a context of presence.

What next? This book

Our agenda with this book is to let the two sides of the inquiry—the artwork and the interpretation—face and mirror each other and be

27. Cixous 2012, p. 9.
28. Damisch 2002, p. 231.

equipped for the occasion. The interpretive tools of the scholars allow the artwork to become reflected, in the sense of the viewer's experienced understanding. It will be clear what the conceptual tools are and what they are not. There can be a change of method if the artwork somehow remains unattainable. The intention is not to bring the work to a final and lasting understanding, but on the contrary, to allow it to show its potentials, how it can become important to know, as an expression and a configuration, and why. The interpretive work, collected in this book, will be more like an exploration than a confirmation.

At the start, the scholar is there with the artwork on one side and the interpretive tools (observations, philosophy, cultural studies, terminology, specific comparisons or properties of a context) on the other.

The concepts and terms, the ways of thinking expressed in methods, will be exposed to the questions of the writers: what kind of understanding does a concept carry in the terms and thoughts it proposes in relation to the artwork; can a scholarly method be used just partly, adjusted as it were to the claims of the pictorial work; what messages about understanding are captured in the terminology of a method of interpretation; what are the effects of different, relevant times for the understanding of the artwork (the time of production, other important times in the history of the artwork and the time of the scholar's viewing)?

The scholar directs the "searchlight" of some tools towards the expressive work. In that moment, what is revealed about the artwork? What are the effects? What parts or properties of the work are affected and how? Is the interpreting philosophy lighting the work, and in what ways, what qualities and what parts of it—is it excluding too much? There are many questions to answer.

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