



‘A CERTAIN DESCENT’; ON PICTORIAL PLANES AND THE SCREEN OF ALTERITY

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PRÉCIS

On October 22, 2016, as part of the Lacanian Compass New York series “Culture and Psychoanalysis”, A. R. Price presented a two-part lecture inspired by Michael Simpson’s exhibition of “Bench and Squint Paintings” at Spike Island, Bristol, and his subsequent win of the John Moores Painting Prize for *Squint (19)*. The French Program and The Urban Education Program at The Graduate Center, CUNY, hosted the event. The first lecture drew on Frank Stella’s Aluminum series and Bernd and Hilla Becher’s photographic project to suggest that the shaped frame and the blank ground constitute different ways of problematizing the edge in such a way as to subvert visual cognition. Price re-examines these artistic developments according to the dialectic between pictorial space and the screen of the Other that facilitates the return movement of the gaze-object as conceptualized by Jacques Lacan in the early 1960s, contemporaneous with the artists’ work, in the four sessions from *Seminar XI* collectively titled “Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a.*” A revised version of that lecture is published here. The second lecture, dealing specifically with Simpson’s work, was printed in *Journal for Contemporary Painting* 4(2):249-265

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Everything is perishable, except His face.
Qur'an, Surah XXVIII, 88.

Kleide die Worthöhlen aus
mit Pantherhäuten
Paul Celan, *Fadensonnen*

The present lecture will revisit the considerations on painting from *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* in the light of coeval inflections to the discipline that in all likelihood could not have been familiar to Lacan at the time of delivering his eleventh seminar; considerations that have tended to be overlooked in psychoanalytic circles, turned more eagerly toward the extraction of doctrinal elements bearing on the scopic drive. The contention here shall be that the topologically sensitive broaching of the painter's practice no less yields for the analyst an essential articulation that outstrips what had hitherto been conceptualised, not to mention all therein underscored over the half-century since.

These inflections are here instanced doubly. First, in the 1960 series that Frank Stella exhibited in September of that same year, in Leo Castelli's New York gallery, under the title *Aluminium Paintings*. Second, in the photographic arrays produced by the German couple Hilla and Bernd Becher from the early 1960s onwards.

Stella and the Bechers were working in very different environments, in different traditions, with quite different media. The reception of their work was likewise very different in nature, with Stella achieving an almost instant notoriety in his early twenties, generating serious responses from some of the most influential critics and art historians of the day, while the

Bechers worked in comparative obscurity during the 1960s, until Carl André's brief note in a 1972 issue of *Artforum* and the public emergence of certain of their students from the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie.

The discussion will move through the first inflection as here credited to the Aluminium paintings, then on to Lacan's 1964 remarks, which in turn prepare the focus on the second inflection operated by the Bechers' photography.

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The aluminium-painting compositions are eight in number. Three of them, *Kingsbury Run*, *Luis Miguel Dominguin* and *Marquis de Portago* were initially executed using a darker hue of aluminium paint, later to be remade from scratch at the time of fashioning the five subsequent pieces. *Luis Miguel Dominguin* would have to be remade a third time, having sustained damage subsequent to the Castelli show. For this reason the Aluminium series is occasionally inventoried as comprising twelve paintings: the eight compositions plus their four remakes. Returning to the compositions in 1969 to produce a set of lithographs, Stella included a ninth compositional variation under the name of *Casa Cornu*, thereby introducing the possibility of its existence as a ninth variant at the time of the 1960 executions.

Carrying over the distinguishing technical strategy first deployed in the preceding series of Black Paintings, 2¾-inch bands of paint are laid down in width equal to the spread of the 2-inch sash tool Stella then favoured, an angled house-painter's brush. This time the paint is a commercial alkyd blend, designed as an undercoat for radiators and akin to that used

previously by Pollock, at least a decade before, as early as *Phosphorescence* and *Cathedral* of 1947. The paint is thick and opaque; layered by some reports to approximately five coats. Between each band, the unprimed cotton duck shows through, as do guidelines in graphite pencil pre-positioning the long strokes. The high oil content of the aluminium paint has resulted in a slight bleed into the bare zip lines, and there is no evidence of such ridge as would be produced along the perimeter of the applied medium had masking tape been employed. The lateral support edges (where the cotton duck wraps around the outer edge of the stretcher frame) are unpainted, and no framing device has been appended to conceal them. The conspicuous square and rectangular notches in the perimeters and, for two of the eight pieces, in the centre, are equal in width to the painted bands. Stella himself has qualified this width as the *module* of his work at the time.¹ The patterned surface is generated by the movement of parallel bands that turn in ninety-degree staggers to accommodate each notch, the overall tendency being vertical: throughout the compositions, the two vertical edges are each flanked with vertical bands, all bands coming to a halt lengthways at the upper and lower edges. The stretcher frames are fairly bulky, especially by the norms of the time, projecting out from the wall by somewhere in the region of three inches, that is, approximately equal to the bar module plus a zip or two.

The Castelli exhibition was Stella's first solo show, four from the previous Black Paintings series having been included in the *Sixteen Americans* group exhibition at the MoMA in 1959. The paintings were conceived specifically for the Castelli gallery space, and contemporaneous installation photographs show the taller paintings sitting just above the skirting boards and leaving a similar space of a mere five inches or so between their top edge and the picture-hook rails.

The show promptly drew a response from critics who were, or soon were to be, influential figures in the definition and promotion of North-American post-war painting and sculpture. Stella's output on the whole is characterised by a careful and engaged dialogue with the history of painting, seconded in turn by his regular interviews and occasional lectures, and so some brief survey of this circumstance will not be misplaced.

The uneasy alliance between Clement Greenberg and at least two generations of painters has been abundantly documented, and by many accounts was so dominant by the late 1950s that any serious practitioner was compelled to embrace it or react to it in some measure at least, often in simultaneous unison. Rereading today the stream of claims and counter-claims set out in the writings of the time, the debates can come off as a trifle long-winded and pedantic. Nevertheless, one theme emerges with particular insistence, not only for its considerable pertinence, but above all for a singular failing to be articulated conclusively: the matter of the flat support surface of the painting and its dialectical relationship with so-called pictorial space. This was a failing that would prove to be double edged, in that on the one hand critics like Greenberg, so active in promoting a practice at once resolutely noble and unremitting in its estrangement from bourgeois mores, were reluctant to embrace Stella's new work in the lineage they were labouring to assert², while on the other, Stella's champions and close colleagues tended to align his work with non-painterly practice, whether under the banner of wall sculpture, bas-relief, or even 'specific objects' as instigated with some success by Donald Judd.³ Neither of these moves did any harm to Stella's career, of course, but the nonfulfillment of the tacit promise to account for the express and witting radicalness of the painting of the 1950s and '60s stands as something of a missed opportunity in the discursive response otherwise so keen and forthcoming.

The two critics who came closest to nudging Greenberg's dogma on the flat surface in a direction that matches more fully with the practice that ensued, but each very differently in their intent, are Michael Fried and Leo Steinberg.

Fried's short 1963 piece on Stella's then recent work describes the painter as extending the 'domain of self-awareness, and hence of decision and control, from the flat picture surface to the boundary of the canvas'.⁴ In the later and longer piece from 1967, entitled 'Shape as Form',⁵ Fried can be read putting distance between himself and the stance of his mentor Greenberg, striving to account for the shift in emphasis from the flat surface to a notion of shape and perimeter; a shift being performed by painters like Stella, but coextensive also with a fresh preoccupation in the theorisation of painterly practice.⁶ What Fried calls

'shape as such' is distinct at once from the *literal* outer silhouette of the support and from internal *depicted* outlines of forms. The article diagnoses the immediate failing in 1967 to 'comprehend [Stella's] painting in formal terms', and ventures a remedy by conceptualising the interdependence of inner and outer shape under the heading 'deductive structure'. The concept would ultimately be jettisoned for failing adequately to account for distinctions between this body of work and pre-war European practices, yet Fried does sanction in this article a decisive feature that sets Stella's work from the early 1960s apart from the European painting of a half century before, namely 'the tendency for pictorial elements in both Analytic and Synthetic Cubist paintings to pull away from the edges of the canvas, especially from the corners, and to gravitate toward its centre'; in the aluminium series, much is determined by, and in a certain sense 'happens', at the edges, at those sites where the literal shape of the support comes to dominate over any notion of depicted shape.

This was an accurate assessment. Yet the literal shape of the support is subject to certain constraints in its ability to sustain pictoriality, a point underlined on several occasions by Stella himself and which has remained a pressing concern throughout his subsequent wall-mounted compositional engagements. In Stella's terms, modern painting's 'burden' is the perpetual necessity to create 'pictorial space that is capable of dissolving its own perimeter and surface plane.'⁷ This is a remark that is indubitably applicable more to the later work than to the earlier, let alone that of any other modern painter. It does, however, evince a peculiarly refined tension in Stella's thinking between material support and the capacity to generate pictorial space. Paramount here is the preservation of pictorial spatiality; perimeter and plane may be allowed to dissolve. An indication of the effect Stella seeks to inhibit can be read in his critical remark on Barnett Newman's 1950 piece *The Wild*, described by Stella as *not very pictorial*. An extreme disparity between narrow width (1½ inches) and extended length (8 feet) effectively annuls pictorial space in favour of an exorbitant assertion of plane and perimeter. This remark on *The Wild* coordinates usefully, indicating how for all their radicalness the notched canvases were still operating within the confines of a condition.

In 1968, Leo Steinberg delivered a lecture at the

MoMA on an ambitiously diagnosed 'characteristic picture plane of the 1960s'.⁸ In rupture with the classical vertical plane consistently implicit from pre-Renaissance frescos through to the painterly abstraction of the 1950s, Steinberg posits the emerging dominance of a new status of pictorial surface dispensing with the convention of upper and lower orientation in reflection of the viewer's upright bearing. Thus, Pollock's drip paintings, despite being a product of the process that involves laying out the canvas horizontally on the ground, are purported still to conform to the vertical planar condition since the successive layers of paint were applied subsequent to a contemplative scrutiny that entailed tacking the support to a wall. The *Unfurls* of Morris Louis are attributed with a similar 'gravitational force', even though their manufacture involved the folding and tilting of unstretched canvas that would be cropped and prepared for wall-hanging only at a later stage. But with Rauschenberg's works of the 1950s, themselves positioned by Steinberg in indebtedness to Duchamp's *Tu m'* of 1918, 'one detects a sense of the significance of a ninety-degree shift', a horizontality, or at least a non-verticality, whereby 'up and down are as subtly confounded as positive-negative space or figure-ground differential.'⁹ Steinberg is careful to iterate how the bearing in which the work is encountered is not the pivotal factor: a mosaic floor, or a painted ceiling¹⁰, is not in and of itself apt to trigger the statal shift to non-vertical planarity. What counts is the 'psychic[al] address of the image, its special mode of imaginative confrontation.'

Commentators of the time show alertness to something of a new orientation in painterly practice, but tend to interpret the surfaces in disparaging terms of decoration and ornament. There is, admittedly, something disconcerting in the painterly passages of Rauschenberg's combines, where the faintest suggestion of pictorial recession is so abruptly contradicted by the three-dimensionality of the support surface or of juxtaposed planes and objects. Steinberg's reading is decidedly a generous one in lending the surfaces a new reference plane: 'a symbolic continuum of litter, workbench, and data-ingesting mind'.¹¹

Steinberg admits Stella's paintings into this new orientation of the flatbed picture plane on those occasions when they 'suggest a reproducible image', yet this is an exacting judgement to sustain. Stein-

berg's argumentation does find unexpected and unacknowledged alliance, however, in the writing of Fried himself. Fried's effort at formalising the singular mechanics of Stella's painting in 1966, chiefly in response to the irregular polygon series, generated the observation that

there is, one might say, no more 'outside' or 'inside' to the best of Stella's new paintings than to the individual shapes they comprise; and to the extent that a given shape can be said to have an 'outside' and 'inside' the relation between the two is closer to that, say, between the edge of a tabletop and the rest of that tabletop than to the relation between the edge of a No-land or an Olitski [...].¹²

The observation is restated in the closing remark that, 'Stella's new paintings begin off the ground'. Thus, despite Fried's sustained commitment not to engage with Steinberg's concept of flatbed orientation¹³, in 1966 he can be read thinking through the recent works in terms that essentially anticipate those more fully conceptualised by Steinberg in his MoMA lecture two years later.

Not yet drawing any conclusive formulation from these two contemporaneous responses to Stella's early paintings, their contribution to a felicitous apprehension of the Aluminium series may now be entertained in proceeding through the compositions one by one, with special consideration of the almost unanimously neglected component of their titles.

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Kingsbury Run, *Luis Miguel Dominguín*, and *Marquis de Portago* were the first three compositions to be executed. While there is no record as to whether this trio of titles had been decided upon prior to the execution of subsequent works in the series, Stella's revelation that one of the other five was named at the suggestion of Carl André could be interpreted as tentative confirmation of a chronological discontinuity in their conception.

Kingsbury Run refers to the Depression-era informal town on the outskirts of Cleveland, notorious as the site of the 1930s 'Torso Murders'. The bodies of the killer's victims were found beheaded and dismem-

bered; the torso occasionally sectioned in two. Most of the male bodies had been castrated. The town was later razed by the city's safety director. The killer was never identified.

The eponymous Luis Miguel Dominguín is the Spanish matador who at the time of the Aluminium series had recently featured prominently in Hemingway's chronicle published in three instalments in *LIFE* magazine through September 1960 (later reworked and posthumously published as *The Dangerous Summer*). It relates how Dominguín is twice severely gored by a bull, and details the trophy ears, tails, and hooves that his wins secure.

Marquis de Portago is named after Alfonso de Portago, an aristocrat and racing driver. He died during a race in 1957, in an accident that also claimed the lives of nine spectators. His body was found, beneath his upturned Ferrari, in two sections.

There emerges, then, from the titles of these first three paintings in the series a preoccupation with the sectioning or mauling of the body in such fashions as severely to compromise its imaginary unity; a preoccupation attended by a theme of ostentatious masculine daring, defiance of danger, and extreme physical duress. The association between the sectioning of the body and the segmenting of the flat surface of the painting is an especially powerful one, and sets in some measure the interrelation between the subsequent works and their titles.

Six Mile Bottom is the title suggested to Stella by André. It refers to the Cambridgeshire hamlet where Byron's half-sister Augusta Leigh resided. In the same way that the title *Kingsland Run* acknowledges the diagonal of right-angle staggers that run from upper left to lower right, 'bottom' clearly comes in echo of the central aperture on the surface. 'Six mile', meanwhile, reads as an ironic allusion to depth in the context of these resolutely flat surfaces. Once again, there is a threefold collapsing of the bodily, the geographical, and the painterly.

Newstead Abbey is named after another location associated with the Byron family: their ancestral home this time, a former priory rather than an abbey, which in Lord Byron's time already bore the very distinctive façade still visible today, of large windowless openings in the western face of the priory church.

Avicenna, like *Six Mile Bottom*, is centre-holed. Conceivably an allusion to the practice of trepanation

that has been speculatively attributed to the physician-philosopher, the composition nevertheless stands to gain more when read in the context of the pair it forms with *Averroes*. The two paintings are of almost equal dimensions, *Avicenna* measuring 74½ x 72 inches, *Averroes* 73 x 71½, but whereas in the former the frame is notched in its centre and its four corners, the *Averroes* frame is notched at the mid-point of each of its four lengths. Averroës was an attentive commentator of Avicenna, glossing his Canon of Medicine, but taking an opposite stance on his ontological theory. Avicenna held that essence is ontologically prior to existence, the latter occurring ‘accidentally’ to the former (*Quod esse sit accidens eveniens quidditati*). Averroës meanwhile, a committed Aristotelian, finds no place for existence, observing that it is not itemised in Aristotle’s inventory of ten categories of possible accident. Is one perhaps being invited by Stella to suppose that the aluminium bands of the *Avicenna* composition are brought into existence around a central essence that functions as an enduring emptiness dictating their essential form, while the bands of the *Averroes* composition work in the opposite direction, self-repeating from the centre to the outside edge? While in the former there is a distinction between the essential module of the composition, namely the zip-band, and an initial inexistence (the centre hole) that actualises a coming into existence of the composition, no such distinction operates in the latter. The reading is admittedly strained when set out thus in pseudo-logical binaries, but a thematic allusion to Avicenna’s ‘enmattering’ and Averroës’ ‘matter desirous of form’ remains persuasive.¹⁴ Associating still further, could the pairing of Averroës/*Avicenna* even be taken as a wryly critical allusion to Greenberg’s famous remark on the ‘essence’ of Modernist painting as *flatness and the delimitation of flatness*, where in *Avicenna* the delimitation works from within to puncture a hole in the flat surface?

Lastly, *Union Pacific* name-checks the Union Pacific Railroad, nodding both to the aluminium paint occasionally used on the locomotive exteriors and to the company crest which appropriates the stars and stripes emblem, twisting the red and white bands to run vertically. The painting could thus be read as extending the allusion to Jasper Johns’s flag series that was most explicit in *Die Fahne Hoch!* from the previous Black Paintings sequence.

Of the Aluminium sequence, only this last, *Union Pacific*, could feasibly be apprehended in accordance with Steinberg’s own criterion for inclusion within the flatbed orientation, in virtue of its faint suggestion of a reproducible image, but singling out this one painting from the series seems arbitrary given the relative homogeneity in their method of execution. Yet the regular pattern generated by the bands does conceivably function in a similar way to the reproducible image on the flatbed plane and could thus be enlisted to widen the criteria. Stella himself entertains something of the sort when he speaks of forcing ‘illusionistic space out of the painting at a constant rate by using a regulated pattern’, an effect that is fortified by the aluminium paint and what he calls its ‘quality of repelling the eye’.

In an endnote to his 1966 essay, Fried notes how the supports of the Aluminium paintings ‘depart from the rectangular only by a few shallow notches’, and so ‘the paintings are seen as restrained or held back by those notches from completing the rectangles they all but occupy.’ This effectively pitches the mechanics of the aluminium sequence at a Gestalt level, where the *prägnanz* of the complete rectangle would assert itself over the compromised form of the incomplete rectangle, and in so doing would exert a ‘pressure from within each painting toward the rectangle it almost is’. This is an apposite coordinate, but still works within the Greenbergian conflation of pictoriality with opticality that Fried was later to drop.¹⁵

A slightly different line of argumentation may, however, be mooted. Instead of the tension lying between the actual literal form of the notched rectangle and the hypothetical good form of a complete rectangle, is it not rather to be located between the irregularly shaped support and the classical pictorial plane? The pictorial plane is, if not a transcendent entity, at least an immaterial one, most properly qualified as a virtual plane that allows of a projection into a virtual space. The plane is thus not reducible to the dimensions of its support, and yet to function must entail a limited dimensionality that would be edge-circumscribed. When that edge is compromised in some way, so too is the plane that it sustains. The singular position of Stella’s work from the early 1960s, and the Aluminium sequence in particular, thus seems to lie in its straddling of the two orientations, the vertical and the flatbed, to perform a knife-edge oscillation

between minimal illusionism and literality. Stella's fine calibration is exercised above all in this tension.

To press this point a little further, consider the examples of painting that sit on this same knife-edge but in far less deliberate and controlled manner. The painted panoramas that became fashionable in the nineteenth century drew immediate and damning critiques, from the likes of Wordsworth and Hester Thrale among so many others – certainly the paint-work itself was often second-rate, when indeed it could be inspected from close-up (for frequently the viewing platforms afforded only a very limited range for contemplation), while occasional associated lighting and sound effects, or even wax figures and stuffed animals, lurched fully to the side of vulgar phantasmagorical spectacle – but Monet's *Nymphéas* cycle in the Paris Orangerie dabbles in none of this frivolity, and the painting is every bit equal in its execution to his majestic canvasses of the 1910s and '20s. Why is it, then, that a viewer's immersion in this 360° environment, which had drawn so considerably on the physical energies of the aging painter, proves such an underwhelming experience in comparison with the flat surface works of the same period? Who can escape the sense that the literality of the curved panels which line the elliptical architectural space asserts itself just a little too strongly over the vertical pictorial plane that would countenance an appreciation of the space in terms of virtual depth? Steinberg mentions the cycle alongside Duchamp's *Tu m'* as a foreshadowing of flatbed picturing, but the pairing works unkindly for Monet as one detects nothing therein of the irreverent or iconoclastic stance of a Duchamp or a Rauschenberg. In this case, for all the fore-planning of the installation, the slip from one pictoriality to another feels uncalculated, an unfortunate after-effect that might potentially be offset, for example by reinstalling the panels, in contravention of the original intention, on flat surfaces. Jeff Wall's 1993 photograph of the Bourbaki rotunda in Lucerne stages a restoration of Édouard Castres's panoramic painting, but note how Wall effectively re-inscribes the painting into a more conventional pictorial space, encompassing only 180° of the mural, despite the photograph being in fact a composite of numerous separate shots.

Sustaining the vertical picture plane thus seems to be dependent upon something akin to respecting the 'fourth wall' in theatre, or the 180° rule in cinema. One

might even hazard an analogy in this respect between Stella's shaped canvases and theatre-in-the-round or 'flexible staging'. The rule is there for the breaking, but the transgression is a perilous one that calls upon the practitioner's art to maintain a controlled effect.

These considerations have their worth, but still they fail to secure a release from formalist straight-jacketing. They offer no account of what it might be that determines the inhibiting framework of the plane, and what might justify a vocabulary of rule-breaking or transgression when it is circumvented.

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Coeval with the mounting concern of the plane and its orientation in North American painting, Jacques Lacan in Paris set to pursuing a remarkably similar line of enquiry, prompted by recent publications from Roger Caillois and Maurice Merleau-Ponty but reaching quite different points of synthesis.¹⁶

It is often omitted in discussions of the four sessions on the gaze-object from *Seminar XI*, which culminate in Lacan's response to the query *Qu'est-ce qu'un tableau ?*, how they reiterate a great deal of material from the previous Seminar, *L'angoisse*. As an introduction to the antinomy between vision and the gaze, *Seminar X* functions just as adequately as its successor, with the further advantage that in it one can witness the vocabulary of the scopic field – the *regard* itself, but also *la tache*, the stain, and the point of light – as it emerges in Lacan's thinking in tandem with the other guises of the object *a*. The overlap, then, between the two Seminars concerns everything that has to do with the scopic drive, while what is unique to *Seminar XI* is the elaboration on the painter's practice.

In the same vein, when Lacan does start to pull in examples from painting in *Seminar XI*, his guiding concern is to pursue an articulation related to the drive, to the scopic object, and not, at least initially, to painting as such.¹⁷ Lacan's reading of Holbein's highly singular employment of anamorphosis in *The Ambassadors* is not designed to isolate *this one gaze object in this one painting*, but rather to exploit the convoluted graphical device as affording a sharply defined analogical manifestation of the gaze such as it instantiates in any painting, and indeed commonly *in the world at large*. The flurry of examples inspired by Lacan's reading which came in the wake of the publication of

Seminar XI in the mid-1970s are likewise most successful when they seize upon similarly sophisticated apparatuses and scenarios that appear in works of different media: Hubert Damisch's study on Correggio's *dal di sotto in su* 'machines' that pierce through their architectural support surfaces¹⁸; Parveen Adams's considerations on the concave reflector fitted onto the cine-camera in Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* or on Orlan's spectacularly gruesome surgical procedures¹⁹; Norman Bryson's attention to the open axis through the temple in Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin*²⁰; Slavoj Žižek's isolating of the darkroom scene in Antonioni's *Blow-Up*²¹; and so on. Each of these instances, and many lesser examples since essayed in emulation, tends to focus on the apparition of an opaque stain upon the image-screen; a stain that uncannily looks back at the subject, transforming him into a component within a larger picture. More precisely, at the same time as the depth of the world collapses in a point that resists the mirage effect, the subject is pulled onto the screen to the site of his alienated Being. This model will necessarily form the base of Lacan's specific approach to painting, but his ensuing remarks are quite different in scope.

Citing a conversation with his brother-in-law, the painter André Masson, Lacan proclaims that the most pressing matter is not to dally in the art criticism of historical periods and styles, but to go to the principle behind the function of painting.²² Hence the question, 'what is a *tableau*?'

A *tableau* is not quite a picture, though Alan Sheridan could really not have translated otherwise in the context. At one level, the *tableau* is the taut canvas on the stretcher, or the solid panel. Like the English 'table' and 'tablet', it is derived from the Old French *table*, via the thirteenth-century *tabliau*, a target for javelins. The pictorial signification is attested from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. Thus, the French *tableau*, like the Italian *quadro*, denotes the support surface of the object more than its painted topcoat, but the pictorial aspect is far from absent in its modern signification. In keeping with conventional French usage, Lacan oscillates between the connotations of painting and picture.²³ His use of the word *écran* in these same sessions betrays a similar fluctuating status, by and large indicating the subject's internalised visual plane that may be contingently incarnated in an exterior virtual plane, but also denoting a screen of al-

terity that becomes abruptly opaque. Within one system, the first that Lacan illustrates, the image-screen is the Kantian transcendental plane that is most readily duplicated in Alberti's *intersector*, the veil of taut threads forming a grid across a window-frame. Here, the picture as the image of the world lies on the same axis as its frame. Only in the second system do plane and picture come apart: the plane becomes opaque, and the subject himself becomes a *tableau*, a blot on a landscape he cannot behold.

How does the painter operate in relation to these two oscillating systems? Lacan's premise is that the eye fundamentally is an evil eye. It has an appetite, it is jealous, and it is aggressive. Never is the eye beneficent. The painter's initiative is thus to serve up something to the mercy of this eye, upon which it may feed. From this first perspective, the picture is a pasture upon which to graze, and this grazing on the part of the eye is tantamount to an effective pacification. Lacan likens it to a laying down of arms. He calls it a 'depositing' of the gaze. The agricultural metaphor allows for a fathoming of what Lacan has in mind when he speaks of the painter operating on a basis that he qualifies as *à ferme*. 'On lease', translates Sheridan, but this is a special kind of lease, which historically referred to a convention whereby the produce and profit derived from the exploitation of agricultural land would be handed to the landowner in lieu of rent payments. *A société fermière du peintre*, jests Lacan, the painter's farming society.²⁴

Already, in this first move, the gaze has peeled away from the eye. It has been laid down like an object, or shed like the deciduous scraps broached successively in *Seminar X*, the various bodily castoffs and offcuts of the object *a*. Recall that at this stage in Lacan's conceptualisation, the object is a part of the subject's own body that has been caught up in the economy of the Other. Whether yielded or retained, it is already countenanced as belonging to the Other. But further to existing as a sacrificed part, the object is the site of the subject's Being, which in its very yielding confirms the subject as a subject of the signifier. In the scopic register, the object at stake is the subject's own gaze as it returns to him from the Other. Thus, the painting itself is not the object; it is a lure that harbours the object.

In a second move, having neutralised the evil eye, the painter enters the fray as a subject, appropriating

the shed object. This is the *domte-regard* action of the painter, not simply the subduing, but the harnessing of the gaze-object. The shed skin has fallen away, says Lacan, only to be gathered up to cover the framework of a shield.

Lest this staging should appear overly caricatured, the ensuing elaboration allows Lacan to nuance the description in a way that shows the painter essentially occupying either position in alternation. The first cast-down gaze he gathers up is his own. Or more precisely, there is no gathering up, for the objects fall, like rain drops, directly upon the surface. Lacan speaks of *la pluie du pinceau*, rainfall from the painter's brush, emphasising how, in painting, the gaze object 'operates in a certain descent'. This descent is in direct contrast to his previous model of sublimation, in which there was a raising of the object to a higher dignity. Here it is a matter of falling, *like a bird letting fall its feathers, a snake casting off its scales, a tree letting fall its leaves*. Furthermore, this imagistic passage is immediately followed by Lacan's insistence that a painter's brushstroke is an entity in which a movement is terminated. Thus, through apposition, the brushstroke on the surface is read as the frozen moment at which the vertical falling is broken by a non-vertical plane.

Lacan's analogical elaboration anticipates somewhat remarkably Steinberg's literal notion of the flat-bed picture plane.²⁵ The Lacanian painterly surface is less a site for the production of illusionistic depth than the site upon which there settles an accumulation of discarded objects, thus largely akin to the Steinbergian 'symbolic continuum of litter, workbench, and data-ingesting mind'.

This leads Lacan to qualify this site not as a site for representation, but rather as a site for the stand-in, the placeholder, of representation, in an explicit nod to Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. And so in Lacan's scheme the *impression* of Impressionism is far less the impression of a view than the reasserting of the surface impression, the impressed trace of the brush, each stroke standing in for, not reproducing, representation *per se*.

Less cogent in Steinberg's account is his notional assertion, positively the most speculative passage in his lecture, of a movement from nature to culture in the shift from vertical to horizontal. Lacan's notion of the civilising aspect of painting is altogether different from Steinberg's, but draws on a similar intuition of

essential shifts between horizontality and verticality in its movements of descent and movements of alternation. It is not that one plane is more 'civilised' than another, but rather that the very movement from one plane to another – as it were, from the coronal ($X-Z$) plane to the transverse ($X-Y$) and vice-versa – implies in and of itself a specifically cultural planar division. It might be argued that Steinberg's flatbed plane, theorised locally for the new painting of the 1960s, can be usefully redeployed as a conceptual tool to amplify an intrinsic aspect of painterly practice in its greater extent, from its earliest attested beginnings.²⁶

Nevertheless, Lacan's disquisition turns most emphatically to focus on a variant orientation: the left-right axis that comes to the fore in virtue of the painter's gesture. Had I been delivering this lecture in Lacan's time – and this was still the case when I was a painting student in the early 1990s – a little time would have been devoted to loading transparent slides into a deck or carousel. This could prove to be a somewhat perilous exercise, especially with images of non-figurative work, where the miniature reproductions did not always permit a definitive conclusion as to orientation. Yet no sooner than the slide was projected onto the screen, it would become apparent to all in the room, even when they had no prior acquaintance with the reproduced work, should an error have been committed in the loading of the slide, whether the presentation was upside down or back to front. This charming inconvenience of analogue technology serves today as a reminder of the insistent axial character of the painted image, whether as a result of compositional dynamics or the movement of the brushwork itself. Is this brushwork reducible to the directionality of each individual stroke such as it might be read in reference to prior knowledge of the painter's dominant handedness? If this appreciation of the axiality is not palpable at the level of the transparent slide when held up to the eye, at the level of these small inch and a half reproductions on which the traces of the brush are seldom visible when viewed unaided, this might well be the case.²⁷ But perhaps there is something further at issue.

In his 1995 discourse on de Kooning's *Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point*, J.H. Prynne tentatively advances the category of 'declared strokes', defined as 'strokes that from a normal viewing distance manifest themselves as visibly gestural movements of the

hand holding the brush.²⁸ If Stella's painted lines are to be included in this category, and surely they must be, they will nevertheless expand the category somewhat.²⁹ What one sees in the Aluminium paintings are bands that conform to the width of the brush, but as noted above, a single band does not correspond to a single brush stroke, since each is comprised of layered coats. This distinction becomes more critical in regard to Prynne's subsequent observation on what he terms 'the *facture* of the particular brush in hand'.³⁰ Each stroke in de Kooning's *Rosy-Fingered Dawn* 'latently infers the painter's obscured body, while [...] attenuating and re-attributing its presence.' The reader comes to know that Prynne is not here entertaining a humanising bodily dramaturgy, because in an endnote he chides Richard Wollheim for this very tendency. The observation is further on refined:

the covert lateral drip-markings here, which were of course done while the canvas was temporarily in landscape format, are a kind of concealed play of punning upon [...] the displacement of the implied subject-position and the viewer's vertical stance.³¹

This appreciation of declarative brushwork works both with and against Lacan's premise of a fixed axiality when read according to a pictorial notion of orientation, while simultaneously endorsing a similar premise when read according to a corporeal notion of orientation. And if an amplification may be permitted of this implicit notion of a corporeal orientation – specifically the painter's body, not the viewer's – does this not lead to a reassertion of the flatbed picture plane such as it is suggested by Lacan's allusion to a surface that functions most fully in accommodating an accumulation of variously oriented oddments?

Lacan's fourth session on the gaze concludes with the painter's terminal gesture, its curious temporal collapse whereby the instant of seeing is concomitant with the moment of conclusion, annulling all time for understanding. It is in this that the painter's gesture can seem almost remote-controlled, as Lacan has it. The painter is invariably working on the level of the Other's desire: not desire *of* the Other, but desire *à l'Autre*, desire that belongs already to the Other. While no longer beheld, the subject is no less beholden to the Other. Is it not, then, that the ultimate gesture

of hanging the *tableau* on the wall is a reassertion of the plane of alterity whereby the Other is experienced somehow not as a catoptric reflection, but nevertheless as a singular corporeal architecture that coalesces semblance and Being subsequent to their sundering by the evil eye?

If Stella's aluminium paint really does *repel the eye*, whose eye is at stake? Is this to be classified, ambitiously but ineluctably, as a Modernist evolution of pre-modern prophylactic measures against the eye's maleficence? The Aluminium Paintings, with their allusions to sectioned bodies, to paradoxical ontologies, grounds without figures, or perhaps figures without grounds, not mirrors without silvering, but silvering without glass, reflecting non-mirrors, emphatically mineral yet 'straight from the can', operate as variations on this corporeal topography of the Other.³² Furthermore, whereas de Kooning's strokes are declarative of the oriented hand and brush in relation to the oriented surface, Stella's strokes in the Aluminium Paintings are declarative of orientation as such. Is it not precisely in this absolute evacuation of depicted form and stable pictoriality that the body is most powerfully invoked in its primal relations of symmetrical and gravitational orientation and reorientation?

*

It has often been asserted that the development and refinement of the formal concerns of Modernist painting arose in specific contradistinction to the emergence and advance in photographic technology, the latter purportedly giving rise to a colonisation of the pictorial territory traditionally commanded by the painter's discipline. The dominant model of the camera as a single-viewpoint device, aligned historically with the monocular viewpoint of perspective and further coupled with the overriding tendency to display the developed and printed photograph in the same orientation as previously occupied by the film in the camera chamber at the moment of exposure, on a similarly flat support surface, is often supposed to have acted as a prompt to searches for a painterly specificity that would lie beyond this technical confine. The assertion is not altogether satisfactory,³³ not least because one of the most complete yet apparently uncontrived transitions of photography into

the sector of pictorial practice more usually associated with art practice was the appearance of Hilla and Bernd Becher's photographic arrays in commercial art galleries from the mid-1960s onwards, and their enthusiastic reception by the contemporary art community; photographs that, while possessing the many distinctive features now to be appraised, were conventional in their respect of vertical orientation and single viewpoint.

The Bechers had their first show at the Galerie Ruth Nohl in Siegen in 1963, where they exhibited a sequence of photographs of water towers. Thereafter, they went on to exhibit photographs of mine heads, steel mills, cooling towers, blast head furnaces, coal tipples, gasometers, storage silos, coke ovens, lime kilns, grain elevators, and oil refineries, among other industrial structures.³⁴ Most of these were photographed in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the UK, and later in Italy and the US.

The 1963 show exhibited a selection of works executed following a recent modification to the Bechers' methodology. Between 1959 and 1962, a Linhof Technica 6 x 9 cm camera with 12 DIN glass plates had been their device of choice, but 1963 saw them switching to a Plaubel Peco 5 x 7" camera, which accommodated sheet-film (13 x 18 cm) of finer grain.³⁵ They employed as many as eight different lenses, sometimes even a 480 or 600 mm for long focal distances. The front and rear sections of the Peco allowed for perspectival distortion to be lessened still further. The exposure times were long, sometimes extending in excess of one minute, but more often than not 10 seconds at an aperture of 45.

The gelatin silver prints that the Bechers produced from their photographs were initially mounted individually on square supports that could accommodate portrait or landscape formats, then to be associated with other prints in a grid. These measured 12 x 16". Later they made larger 20 x 24" prints in editions of five. Hilla Becher has remarked that, 'there was no money for frames'.³⁶

From the late 1950s onwards, the on-site working methodology of the Bechers changed very little. Each of the industrial structures that feature in the works is photographed, when possible, frontally from a raised viewpoint. When constrained by obstacles in the vicinity of the structure to adopt a closer position,

they would raise yet further the vantage point of the camera and attach a wide-angle lens.

During the process of establishing the prints, the structures were close-cropped. There is a strict minimum of incidental detail in the surroundings. The large plate camera, fine-grain film, and powerful lenses, allow for great image sharpness from a distance in relation to the structures that, seen with the naked eye, would not permit the same scrutiny of detail.

The space above and around the central structures in the photographs is of an even white or near white. One of the most painstaking features of the Bechers' on-site working process, aside from the frequently drawn-out administrative process of gaining access to the object-structures, was anticipation of uniform cloud cover or light fog that would facilitate the white background in the photographs.³⁷ Sometimes the blank surrounds would be further accentuated during the process of exposing the paper to the negatives in the dark room.

Emphasis is frequently laid upon the typological aspect of the Bechers' work³⁸, following their own qualifying of a suite of photographs in 1970 as *Eine Typologie technischer Bauten*, ['A Typology of Technical Buildings']. However, despite the not inconsiderable typological interest of their various projects, the title is a reductive one. Photography holds scarcely more interest when it comes to the scrutinising of types in architectural typology than does the corrupted form of the rendering in commercial architecture. Plans and elevations have long held the ascendant role in the study of architectural form and engineering. In a late interview shortly before her death, Hilla Becher remarked that she never really thought of the photographs in typological terms, considering the structures simply as 'objects that reappeared in different countries'.³⁹ The Bechers' commitment to single-view photographic composition has the consequence of omitting as much information about each structure as it documents, and even in the dual-aspect 'comparative juxtaposition' tableaux, the photographs do not reveal a great deal more about the structures than could be garnered by a passer-by. It may be supposed, for instance, that the top of a cooling tower is an open aperture, or that the upper surface of a gasometer is closed, but nothing allows the specificity of such inferences to be inspected or confirmed. The inquisitive

eye is allowed no further than the skirting plates or the sheath and brace armatures.

And so another path opens, somewhat divergent from this insistence on typology.

First, from what kind of tradition or historically sustained thematics might this representation of impermanent functional structures proceed? What might be deduced from the suite of various unwieldy monikers used to designate and unite the structures that the Bechers photographed – from ‘industrial architecture’ or ‘anonymous sculpture’, to ‘anti-architecture’ or ‘nomadic architecture’ (terms coined or ratified by the Bechers themselves)?

In the posthumously published *The Projective Cast*, Robin Evans revisits the same enmeshing of architecture and perspective in Renaissance painting that had then been recently explored at considerable length by Damisch, Bryson, and others, but in approaching the question from the field of architectural history he succeeds in articulating a fresh consideration. Evans notes how the ‘setting’ in perspectival painting was always liable to transform into architecture, since indeed it was already a kind of ‘virtual architecture’. ‘What could be easier’, he observes, ‘than to turn a grid into a pavement?’ Yet where one might have expected in the Quattrocento ‘a spate of topographical paintings to exhibit the verisimilitude of the new technique [of perspectival construction]’, very few such paintings exist.⁴⁰ Perspective is quite apt to ‘report direct from reality’, as is familiar to us from the examples of Dürer’s machines and the Brunelleschi panel of the baptistery so regularly trotted out by way of illustration, but seldom does this describe what in fact occurred in Renaissance painting. ‘Whatever an artist using measured perspective is tied to,’ writes Evans, ‘it is not the objective data from the real world’; it is rather ‘the method of construction’, and so in this painterly practice one meets not topographical depiction, but ‘inventions and fantasies’.⁴¹

What kind of fanciful pseudo-architecture did painters of the Renaissance commonly concoct? Nagel and Wood in their erudite *Anachronic Renaissance* note how Quattrocento paintings of the Nativity and the Adoration marked a kind of about-turn in the process of substitution in which architectural advance consists. In the ruins of classical stone architecture roughly supplemented with makeshift timber buttresses and thatched lean-tos – Nagel and Wood

cite the Botticelli *Adoration* in Washington DC and Francesco di Giorgio’s *Nativity* in San Domenico, Siena, to which many further instances may be added – they read an ‘image of pure functionality’, an ‘architecture stripped of its representational dimension’, which in turn permits of diagnosing a series of concomitant reversals, from stone to timber, from permanence to impermanence, from the legendary Casa Romuli to the Nativity shed, and from sophisticated masonry to elemental *bricolage*.⁴² Slightly later, in the Beccafumi *Nativity*, also in Siena, the crumbled triumphal arch is supplemented by an improvised oculus of hovering angels: this return to a ‘degree zero’ of architecture is, by the reckoning of Nagel and Wood, as much an ‘improbable bridge to an eternal, immaterial architecture’.

Nagel and Wood’s study is especially pertinent for its critique of typological approaches, suggesting these were most productive when ‘type and token, model and copy, did not resemble one another too closely.’⁴³ To this notion of typological substitution is contrasted one of performative spoliation. Spoliation is essentially a military metaphor: ‘the carting off and display of the artefacts of the vanquished’; a metaphor that has survived ‘because the elements of violence and of the reassignment of meaning as the perquisite of cultural dominance are so often present in the history of European architecture, well beyond a strictly military context’.⁴⁴ Dale Kinney, cited by Nagel and Wood, traces the etymology of the wartime ‘spoil’ to the *spolium* that is the armour stripped of a defeated opponent, just as a hide is stripped from an animal.⁴⁵ Unlike the type, the *spolium* often exists unacknowledged, or decontextualized beyond the legibility of referential linkage. If it *is* acknowledged or asserted, it is an anonymous material link, and not a formal-historical one, indeed it ‘rhetorically interferes with the model of a smooth succession of regimes’.⁴⁶

The anonymous hand, the de-historicised and generic entity, could not be more implicit in the industrial structures that the Bechers captured, framed, and reconfigured in the two-dimensional grids on the gallery wall. Just as Nagel and Wood insist on spoliation’s aspect of ‘authorial invention’ in the ‘repurposing and sometimes deliberate framing of reused material’, the Bechers’ authorship is asserted in the lacunae of the anonymous and forgotten designers of these

functional structures, which are thereby appropriated as ready-mades, to be rerouted into a field historically infused with an altogether different tradition of appreciation and engagement.⁴⁷

In the same way that the question was asked, apropos of Stella's painting and its commentators, whether the constraints of the formalist readings has adequately been left behind, the similar question arises as to whether this shift in emphasis from typology to a notion of performative practice is sufficient to account for the larger poetic and associative dimension of the Bechers' work.

What exactly is the encounter or scenario that the Bechers stage? Its barest constituent elements may be itemised as follows. One industrial mechanism, a camera, is placed frontally in relation to another industrial mechanism. Both mechanisms date from approximately the same era, the mid-twentieth century, and were conceived and built in the same geographical zones, northwest Europe. Both mechanisms are fashioned from durable materials – for the most part highly resistant, extra-hard metals – and their form corresponds strictly to the function for which they were designed. Indeed, in both cases the visible exterior shell is an outer casing that also possesses a concealed inner surface. The interior dynamics, humanly inaccessible when the chamber is in working mode, determine the surface shape. Any apertures in the chamber surface are carefully controlled valves or shutters, permitting the calibrated ingress or egress of a material substance or, in the case of the camera, light. The dynamics of the chamber are often designed to operate a controlled physical modification of its transient material contents.⁴⁸ In the case of the column-guided gasometers, the state of the material content modifies the two-component exterior form in a telescopic movement that is strongly reminiscent of the movement of a telephoto lens. The chief differences between the mechanisms lie at the level of scale and mobility. The camera device is comparatively small and portable. The industrial structures are enormous and, as Bernd Becher was wont to stress, firmly rooted in the ground.

The transience of material contents is another important thematic that unites the two mechanisms. The camera plays initial temporary host to photographic film later to be darkroom processed, just as the industrial structures accommodate *ad interim* gases, oil, grain, molten metals, ore, and so on, to be

treated and reprocessed elsewhere prior to human use or consumption. To pursue the allusion to darkroom practice a little further, since it forms an integral part of the associative matrix of the Bechers' work (while becoming increasingly less familiar in the present age of digital image capture and relay), photographic practice in the darkroom, far more essentially than painterly practice, was compelled to pass via a horizontal 'flatbed' phase of execution, if not necessarily in the exposure of the light-sensitive paper, then at the very least in the chemical treatment thereof in open trays.⁴⁹

This associative dimension may be pressed yet further, prompted by the Bechers' enigmatic remark that in their work they 'wanted to complete the world of things', to ask in what way the specific staging of an encounter between industrial mechanisms might contribute to such completion of the manufactured *res extensa*? In what way might the industrial structures be *incomplete*? Could the camera mechanism be considered as completing in some way the mechanical industrial structure? As noted above in relation to Stella's fragmented canvases, to attribute the quality of incompleteness to an object is always to humanise or anthropomorphise it to some degree, and this tendency is by no means absent from the literature on the Bechers' photographic prints. Pepe Karmel has proclaimed that 'the theme of the revelation of the body's interior [...] plays an important, albeit subliminal role' in their work, notably in the tubes and tanks which he reads as 'the industrial equivalent of the body's circulatory system.'⁵⁰ Susanna Lang refers to the outer armature of the structures as an 'epidermis'.⁵¹ Michael Fried (again) remarks on how the selection of water towers on the cover of the 2003 *Typologien* volume is 'openly anthropomorphic'.⁵² Would the camera thus complete the industrial structure as a disembodied mechanical eye that furnishes the structure with its own mirror image, with which then to identify? This interpretation is strangely absorbing, with its Hofmannesque overtones of an eye restored to an automaton, but still will not altogether convince.

There is a further aspect to the Bechers' project, perhaps its defining trait given its presence from beginning to end of their project, namely the specific way in which they transform the geographical sites they visit into scenes. Two methodological procedures are entailed, noticed very briefly above: the white

backgrounds that surround the industrial structures and the expansive physical distance maintained between object-structure and camera lens.

Various verbs might describe what the white backgrounds do – isolating, framing, silhouetting, and so on – but perhaps they are most effective in what they do not do. They decline to provide any local incidental detail. Whereas the initial defining trait of photography had been, as Barthes argued, the *punctum*, the non-deliberated and unintentional index of the photographer-subject's having been at a specific site, without that subject necessarily having been attentive to this one aspect of the site, the Bechers bring about an evacuation of the *punctum*. The careful omission of cloud forms, airborne wildlife, and other transient entities moving through the sky, is an effective sublation of any indexical marker that could be construed as confirming human corporeal presence in a spatial and temporal locality.

This sublation is duplicated in the remote vantage points, which reduce as far as mechanically possible the dramatic perspectival convergence of parallel lines. I couldn't resist reproducing this image of the Bechers' print of a cooling tower alongside a reconstruction of the lost Brunelleschi panel of the east face of the Florence baptistery, mentioned in passing above. By the goodness of Brunelleschi's biographer, Antonio Manetti, the architect's viewpoint from the recess of the western portal of the Cattedrale di Santa Maria can be calculated as exactly 60 *braccia* from his model, just over 114 feet (35 meters). It takes no effort to see that the perspectival convergence is far less dramatic in the Bechers' print, indicating that the camera was stationed at a much greater distance from the object-structure. This protracted expanse softens the angles of the receding lines to the extent that the vantage point becomes far less certain.

As a parenthesis, it may be noted that at the same time as the Bechers were employing the new photographic technology to offset the overpowering perspectival convergence that is a direct consequence of stationary monocular vision, Euan Uglow in London was devising contrivances to circumvent the same phenomenon within the 'close-up' tradition of still-life and nude painting. In the 1967 *Nude from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*, the vantage points are multiplied but consolidated on the single plane of the support surface. In the 1971–72 *Summer*

Picture, the dramatic convergence of a rectangular table-top was overcome by building a new support for the model with a parallelogram surface, wider at the back than at the front, as is perhaps more evident, though just barely, in *Still Life with Model Marks* of the same year, depicting the same surface when unoccupied by the nude model.

What the Bechers bring to the industrial structures that command their works through the dual aspect of the blank background and the deep visual field is not the seeing eye, but precisely the gaze-object with its uncertain perceptual capacity. Lacan's reiterated lesson on the gaze is that it is never less palpable than when the seeing eye is present. The industrial landscapes that the Bechers put before us are completely bereft of such presence, yet strangely inhabited in their appropriation of these anonymous casings of one same invisible void, these alchemical crucibles that stubbornly shield from us the intensity and mystery of their inner workings. The authorial subject is thus reasserted not as a localised presence at a particular site, but as an object-gaze, looking back at the subject-viewer precisely when he was most off-guard. Far from ushering in a new ideal objectivity, which is how the Bechers' project has often been categorised, these peculiar photographs put before us a new *objectivity*, to use Lacan's term; they give us a sense of this 'part of ourselves, this portion of our flesh, which necessarily remains snagged in the formal machine'. And just like logical formalism, formalism in art, without this irretrievable bodily morsel, 'would amount to absolutely nothing for us'.⁵³

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In conclusion, where Frank Stella's Aluminium paintings problematise the immaterial picture plane as such, by compromising or de-completing the integrity of the support surface – and here support can be heard as much as the support for the plane as the support for the applied medium – Hilla and Bernd Becher's photographic arrays problematise any conflation of geometral point and subjective position, pushing the perspectival intersections towards infinity. In so doing, each of these bodies of work constitutes a critical inflection to the discipline of pictorial plastic art, but above all betrays an exemplary sensitivity to the question of the object of alterity in the scopic field.

As an additional remark, to close: these developments from an era that is now a half century behind us, along with the questions of orientation and captivation that they engage, afford an unexpected angle on the radically different relation to the screen that has emerged over the last two decades with the rapid proliferation of digital technology. Just as Giorgio Agamben has been led to decipher the contemporary use of the virtual ground in terms of a tension between the frame of the folio page and the unfurling of the infinite scroll⁵⁴, one might also enlist the tension between the vertical and the flatbed plane as a line of approach to our vertical ‘desktops’ and viewfinders that double as mirrors. Between the illusionistic recession of the constantly accessible image and the touch-sensitive surface of the tablet, there is a new tension between the virtual and the real that is perhaps not quite where it was before, but not altogether elsewhere either. Concomitantly, in a grotesque return of the antique module of the *braccio*, the world is incessantly beheld at arm’s length in the stopgap image of a self maintained at constant measure.

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ENDNOTES

1 ‘I liked that width brush and built my paintings around it. That is the module of my work.’ Geldzahler, ‘An Interview with Frank Stella’, 1964, p. 56.

2 Fried writes that his impression from conversations with Greenberg was that ‘he never really approved of paintings that departed from the rectangle’. Thierry de Duve notes that ‘Greenberg’s taste stopped short of including Stella’s black paintings’, and wonders, ‘is it perhaps because they transgressed this ultimate limit and became “arbitrary objects”?’ (p. 247). In an endnote, de Duve discloses that he later wrote to Greenberg on the matter, receiving the following reply dated 23 January 1987: ‘As for Stella’s black paintings: they’re plausible, but not good enough; his aluminium ones are better, but still not good enough.’ De Duve also quotes Rubin relaying a line from Motherwell in connection with Stella’s black paintings: ‘It’s very interesting, but it’s not painting.’

3 Judd, D., (1965) ‘Specific Objects’, in *Arts Yearbook* (8): 74–82 (several subsequent reprints in various sources). As de Duve observes, Judd did his level best to appropriate Stella’s paintings in his new category of ‘specific objects’, arguing that each aluminium painting ‘is a single thing, not a field with something in it, and it has almost no space’ (de Duve, T., ‘The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas’, in Guilbaut, S. (ed.), *Reconstructing Modernism; Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945–1964*, MIT Press, 1990, pp. 271–2; reprinted in de Duve, T., *Kant after Duchamp*, MIT Press, 1996, p. 237). Benjamin Buchloh, meanwhile, calls Stella’s Black Paintings ‘an assault on the formalist traditions of New York School modernism’ (Buchloh, B., (2013) ‘Painting as Diagram: Five Notes on Frank Stella’s Early Paintings, 1958–1959’ in *October* (143): 126–44). De Duve also provides a short inventory of proto-minimalist works, ostensible paintings that each after their own fashion ‘transgress the limit where, according to Greenberg, *a picture stops being a picture and turns into an arbitrary object*’, by authors who, within a few years, would only very rarely work within a painting format, even in the wider sense of this term.

4 Fried, M., (1963) ‘Frank Stella’, collected in *Art and Objecthood; Essays and Reviews*, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 277. Fried had been in the year below Stella on the creative arts programme at Princeton. The two were closely acquainted and Fried has credited Stella as the chief instigator of his career in art criticism.

5 The initial subtitle ‘Frank Stella’s New Paintings’ was modified in Fried’s collected essays to ‘Frank Stella’s Irregular Polygons’: *ibid.*, pp. 77–99.

6 In 1966, Meyer Schapiro examined the conditions of the transparency of the picture-plane and the representation of three-dimensional space, arguing that in non-Western, non-‘modern’ art, ‘figure and ground did not compose for the eye an inseparable unity.’ For Schapiro, the prehistoric surface in particular was ‘neutral, a still indeterminate bearer of the image.’ Introducing some degree of inconsistency in his argument, Schapiro does concede the hypothetical possibility that ‘the unprepared ground had a positive meaning for the prehistoric painter’ and asserts the inevitability of reading the unpainted empty field as ‘belonging to the [depicted] body and contributing to its qualities’. He also notes that the invention of a continuous isolating frame around an image was a comparatively late arrival, perhaps from the second millennium BCE. This frame is defined as ‘a finding and focussing device’ placed between observer and image, but which belongs definitively to the space of the former. In a further inconsistency, however, he will accord a paragraph to the crossing of the frame, when it ap-

pears 'as a pictorial milieu of the image', belonging 'more to the virtual space of the image than to the material surface [in the space of the observer].' Having defined (ambiguously) the frame in spatial terms, he specifies the potential action of the device: it 'may enter also into the shaping of that image; and not only through the contrasts and correspondences incited by its strong form, especially in architectural styles, but also, as in modern styles, in the practice of cutting the foreground objects oddly at the frame [...]' (Schapiro, M., (1969) 'On some problems in the semiotics of visual art: field and vehicle in image-signs' in *Semiotica* (1):223–42; reprinted in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 6(1): 9–19). Earlier, in 1944, Rhod Rothfuss was proclaiming: 'just as the problem of pure plastic creation was being solved, the same solution (through an unshakeable dialectical principle) was creating another, which was felt less in neo-plasticism and constructivism, due to their orthogonal composition, than in cubism and non-objectivism, and this was: *the frame*.' He further asserts, 'A painting [*cuadro*] with a regular frame foreshadows a thematic continuity, which only disappears when the frame is rigorously structured in accordance with the composition of the painting; in other words, when the edge of the canvas is made to play an active role in plastic creation. This is a role that it ought always to have. A painting ought to be something that begins and ends in itself. Without solution of continuity.' ('El marco: un problema de plástica actual' in *Arturo: revista de artes abstractas*, No. 1, Summer 1944, not paginated; *my translation*).

7 From the first of Stella's 1983–84 Charles Norton Lectures, collected as *Working Space*, Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 10. The scope that Stella intends for the term 'modern' is not entirely unambiguous. Initially it might be construed to reach back at least to the sixteenth century, since he credits Caravaggio with lightening the said 'burden', before citing Géricault and Manet in the close of his lecture as establishing the 'foundation for modern painting' (p. 22), only to reassert in the closing paragraph that Caravaggio 'began modern picture making'. Stella also argues that Caravaggio's pictorial space requires some kind of image if one is to appreciate its 'design and purpose', offering that of a 'gyroscope – a spinning sphere, capable of accommodating movement and tilt' (p. 11).

8 The lecture was published as 'The Flatbed Picture Plane' in *Artforum*, March 1972, later reworked into the latter half of 'Other Criteria' in *Other Criteria*, 1972, pp. 55–98.

9 Steinberg makes this second comment in specific connection with Rauschenberg's *White Painting with Numbers* (1949), but it is surely open to legitimate extraction and realignment with his overall thesis on the flatbed plane.

This ought not to detract, however, from the brilliance of Steinberg's observation that Rauschenberg's work in particular takes on 'a kind of stylistic consistency' from this new perspective, even, and perhaps most especially, when the work affects a clowning or prankish stance. Regarding Duchamp's *Tu m'*, it may be noted that among the many items accumulated on the surface one can make out the forms of his coeval work, *3 Standard Stoppages*, which were dictated precisely by the lines of threads left to drop vertically onto the floor.

10 The critical factor in Steinberg's notion of the flatbed is its ability to support a picture plane that does not give rise to an illusionistic pictorial field that would appeal to the station of the viewer's body. Hubert Damisch, in his *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting* (Stanford, 2002), makes repeated reference to the relative positioning of viewer and imagery in *da sotto in su* painting. See also, Prynne, J.H., (1996) 'A Discourse on Willem de Kooning's *Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point*' in Steyn, J. (ed.), *Beautiful Translations*, London/Chicago: Pluto Press, p. 59, endnote 24.

11 William V. Dunning in his comprehensive survey *Changing Images of Pictorial Space* (Syracuse: 1991, p. 222), and Rosalind Krauss in *The Optical Unconscious* (pp. 327–28), provide complementary bibliographies tracing some of the subsequent employments and modifications of Steinberg's flatbed hypothesis. Yve-Alain Bois has also uncovered a precursor in Walter Benjamin's short note, printed posthumously, on 'Painting and the Graphic Arts' (*Selected Writings, Vol. I, 1913–1926*, p. 82).

12 Fried, M., 'Shape as Form: Frank Stella's Irregular Polygons', *op. cit.*, p. 92.

13 See Fried's reply to a question during a panel discussion with Jean-François Chevrier at the 2011 conference *Tableau: Painting Photo Object*, at the Tate Modern. Stella makes critical mention of Steinberg in his Norton lectures, but the reference is obscure and presented by the author as second-hand: 'I remember being infuriated by a friend's account of Leo Steinberg's description of the space in my black stripe paintings when he cited the similarity of their spatial organization to the recessional character of perspectival Italian Renaissance space. This was exactly the opposite of what I intended; I wanted everything to be on the surface' (*Working Space*, *op. cit.*, p. 155). In imagining himself to be contradicting Steinberg, Stella effectively confirms the flatbed hypothesis. Could the nameless friend, who had clearly misrepresented Steinberg, be Fried himself? Either way, Stella goes on to concede: 'I cannot deny that the link to Italian painting in my work is obvious'.

14 For extensive comparison of Averroës and Avicenna on ontology, see Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, Second edition (corrected and enlarged), Montreal: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952; and also, far more briefly, L.M. de Rijk, *Aristotle: Semantics and Ontology, Vol. II: The Metaphysics. Semantics in Aristotle's Strategy of Argument*, Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 2002, §10.82, pp. 291–2.

15 Fried notes that by the mid-1960s Greenberg himself had dropped the term 'opticality', preferring terms such as 'openness'. T.J. Clark mentions that the term 'optical' (in both Greenberg and early Fried) is a 'word called on to do an immense amount of rhetorical work' ('Jackson Pollock's Abstraction' in *Reconstructing Modernism*, op. cit., p. 193).

16 Lacan cites Caillois's book, *Méduse et Cie*, Gallimard, 1960, of which the here relevant passages had previously appeared in slightly different form in the 1935 'Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire' (*Minotaure* 7: 5–10), later translated by J. Shepley as (1984) 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia' in *October* 31: 16–32. Consider also the then recently published *Esthétique généralisée*, Paris: Gallimard, 1962, and the essays since collected and Englished by Claudine Frank and Camille Naish in *The Edge of Surrealism; A Roger Caillois Reader*, Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2003. Lacan also cites Merleau-Ponty's posthumously published manuscript, readied for print by Claude Lefort, *Le visible et l'invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis as *The Visible and the Invisible*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968. See too Merleau-Ponty's last article published during his lifetime, 'L'œil et l'esprit' in *Art de France* 1 (July–August 1961, unpaginated; subsequent reprints in various sources), translated by Galen Johnson as 'Eye and Mind' and revised by Michael B. Smith in Johnson, G. A. (ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993, pp. 121–50. Lacan celebrates in both Caillois and Merleau-Ponty a treasure of engaged, associative reflection that transcends niche discipline and specialist conceptualising. In this light, more recent bids to drive a wedge between psychoanalytic theory and a tenuously discriminated 'intentionalist phenomenology' can only appear decidedly mean in their zealous elevation of loosely sourced hapax terms (*narcissisme charnel*), and stubbornly programmatic approach to a thought always in movement, indeed cut-down in full-flight before it could settle to its final landing place. If there is indeed a lightly pressed critique, in the seventh section of Lacan's memorial text, levelled at Merleau-Ponty's account of subjective presence, it is not that the mirror-stage theory issues a contradiction, but rather a fuller description of its condition, the counter-case being not the silently performed act that goes under the misleading nomenclature 'mirror sign', but the verbal hallucination

with its 'perceptum of the signifier'. Still it remains, as far as the scopic dimension is concerned, that Lacan turns unequivocally to Merleau-Ponty's late work for the structural features it furnishes for a sifting apart of the imaginary and the scopic, the latter instantiated never as a virtual signifier, but precisely as an abrupt real irreducible to its symbolic matrix, thereby showing 'well enough that it is elsewhere than in the field of perception that Maurice Merleau-Ponty here advances' (*Autres écrits*, p. 183).

17 For a more involved contextualized reading of the development of these four lessons, see Price, A.R., 'From repetition to the drive', in *Hurly-Burly* 5 (2010): 51–60.

18 As Damisch records, *macchina* was Annibale Carracci's qualification (*A Theory of /Cloud/*, op. cit., p. 2). In her review of the English-language translation of *The Origin of Perspective* (alongside Christopher Wood's translation of Panofsky's *Perspective as a Symbolic Form*), Margaret Iversen understands Lacan's account of perspectival representation to be 'very much at odds with Damisch's' (Iversen, M., (1995) 'Orthodox and anamorphic perspectives' in *Oxford Art Journal*, 18(2):81–84). Keith Broadfoot offers a more conciliatory pairing, turning to Damisch's reading of the veiled dissimulation of the vanishing point in Lorenzetti's *Annunciation* ((2002) 'Perspective yet again: Damisch with Lacan' in *Oxford Art Journal*, 25(1):71–94). Iversen returns to the theme in (2005) 'The discourse of perspective in the twentieth century: Panofsky, Damisch, Lacan', but her integration of Broadfoot's advance (mistakenly cited as 'Broadbent') is partial and unacknowledged (in *Oxford Art Journal*, 28(2):191–202).

19 Adams, P., 'Father, can't you see I'm filming?' (1994) and 'Operation Orlan', in *The Emptiness of the Image*, 1996, pp. 91–108; 141–59.

20 Bryson, N., *Vision and Painting*, London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 106.

21 Žižek, S., *Looking Awry*, MIT Press, 1991, p. 143.

22 Here, Lacan seems to be moving away from his own position in *Seminar VII*: 'no correct evaluation of sublimation in art is possible if we overlook the fact that all artistic production, including especially that of the fine arts, is historically situated. You don't paint in Picasso's time as you painted in Velazquez's; you don't write a novel in 1930 as you did in Stendhal's time' (*The Seminar Book VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, p. 107). The two positions are not, however, mutually exclusive.

23 The present discussion leaves out of account the third

and by no means negligible signification of *tableau* as an abbreviation of *tableau vivant*, a yet more specific condition which has also been the subject of important discussion in art history and theory, especially over recent decades. Cf. Chevrier, J.-F., (1989) 'The adventures of the *picture* form in the history of photography' in Fogle, D. (ed.), *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960–1982*, Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003, pp. 113–28; Briony Fer, (2001) 'The Somnambulist's Story: Installation and the Tableau' in *Oxford Art Journal*, 24(2):75–92; and Michael Newman, (2007) 'Towards the Reinvigoration of the "Western Tableau": Some Notes on Jeff Wall and Duchamp' in *Oxford Art Journal* 30(1):81–100.

24 Cf. Alfred Cobban, (1956) 'The Vocabulary of social history' in *Political Science Quarterly*, 71(1):13–14: 'the term *ferme* came to be used for any large-scale exploitation and *fermier* became practically synonymous with *laboureur*, the peasant proprietor of the largest holdings. Hence when we read of a *fermier* we do not really know if he was a tenant or a proprietor.'

25 Gérard Wajcman makes a similar point in his 'Desubmilation: An art of what falls': 'Lacan suggests seeing things [...] in a terracing from top to bottom, with a movement of descent or rising, ascension or fall.' The ellipsis marks the expunging of an imprecise employment of 'on a vertical plane', when clearly 'on a vertical axis' would be more suitable (*Lacanian Ink*, 29 (2007): 88). Wajcman also turns to Rauschenberg's combines, noting in a work like *The Pilgrim* that there are 'two axes, the vertical and the horizontal, the tableau and the chair seat [...] and there are also two movements, that which elevates, in effect, the tableau which sticks out, but also that which falls or descends, the chair' (p. 103). Consult also Lacan's later descriptions of his aerial view of the Siberian plains on his flight back from Japan: in 'Lituraterre', the gullies and their coursing waters are read as effectuating a calligraphic relief in the shadowy terrain. Japanese architecture and urban planning are also considered as fundamentally bound to the sky and to what falls from it.

26 Having thus redeployed the flatbed-plane concept, it is tempting to agree that what might be most specific to pictorial practice since Rauschenberg is what Dunning identifies, in his parsing of Steinberg's lecture, as the apostrophic effect of the accumulated items on the plane. To clarify, he writes: 'I mean *apostrophe* in the sense of a turning aside from the main text: a digression or a footnote. Thus, some of these paintings may be seen as a series of footnotes in place of the central text' (*Changing Images of Pictorial Space*, op. cit., p. 225n). This remark comes in response to Steinberg's comment that Rauschenberg's photographic trans-

fers keep 'interfering with one another; intimations of spatial meaning forever cancelling out to subside in a kind of optical noise.'

27 In his courses at the Architectural Association, Robin Evans would occasionally and deliberately show Van Doesburg's isometric works upside down.

28 Prynne, J.H., 'A Discourse on Willem de Kooning's *Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point*', op. cit., p. 36.

29 One also wonders whether Stella's work from the 1960s might fall foul of the critique of 'busy proceduralism' and overwhelming 'tacit historiography' that Prynne levels at many of de Kooning's paintings (ibid., p. 45). *Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point* eludes this critique to the extent that its 'composure is able to mobilise a history of its own accomplishment, and even of the dynastic precedents for it, and then to resynchronise them there, deployed to give a space not calibrated by debt but not stupidly ignorant of its understood constraints.' Compare this with Brian Ferneyhough's appeal in 1982 for an overhaul of gesturality in musical composition: 'It is thus imperative that the ideology of the holistic gesture be dethroned in favor of a type of pattering which takes greater account of the transformation and energetic potential of the subcomponents of which the gesture is composed' ('Form – Figure – Style: An Intermediate Assessment' in *Collected Writings*, 1995, p.26.

30 Ibid., p. 46.

31 Ibid., p. 50. Consider too in this respect the audience question and Prynne's extempore response regarding the tension between de Kooning's all-overness and cubism's centrally huddled focus, pitched in similar terms to Fried's 1967 observation on Stella, audible on Ben Watson's recording consultable online at: [//archive.org/details/jhp5-v-1995](http://archive.org/details/jhp5-v-1995).

32 This is why we can endorse neither the recent pronouncement of a withdrawal and withholding in these paintings of 'even the slightest reminiscence of corporeality, of bodily plenitude, of the fullness of the somatic register of painting', nor the claim from the same author for a 'condition of a non-motivated relationship between title and work' ('Painting as Diagram: Five Notes on Frank Stella's Early Paintings, 1958–1959' op. cit.). Buchloh's more central contention, that Stella's Black Paintings are, contrary to their author's belief, 'diagrammatic', is certainly engaging, but whether one retains his definition of this term, namely 'spatial and linear symmetrical schema that rigorously displaces all claims and pretences to compositional decision-

making processes or authorial intentions', or one resorts to a more extended notion, like that of Deleuze, which lies somewhere between Francis Bacon's unspecified sense of 'graph' (from an interview with David Sylvester) and an 'operative set of asignifying and nonrepresentative lines and zones, line strokes and colour-patches' – which is peculiarly idiosyncratic, because conventionally the lines in a diagram have a signifying and representational value – the notion does not sit well with the associative content to which the titles so vividly cause us to attend.

33 Various authors have touched on this theme from a critical stance. Margaret Iverson offers an insight into T.J. Clark's reception of her 1994 paper on Damisch's *The Origin of Perspective*, revealing that Clark accorded with Damisch's account of perspective as containing 'the seeds of its own deconstruction', as realised most fully in Cubism. Eric de Chassey, in *Platitudes: une histoire de la photographie plate* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), offers a historical overview of photography that aligns it with his notion of *platitude* in its threefold signification of 'frontal', 'without depth', and 'without narrative or symbolic interest'.

34 The discussion here bears essentially, though it may be argued not exclusively, on the single-motif prints where the object-structure fills most of the frame. The Bechers also produced occasional prints of details from the structures (shafts, control panels, winding units, &c) and of 'landscapes' (the structures in the wider geographical environment). Nor does the present discussion accommodate easily the series on timbered- and half-timbered houses, begun prior to the 1963 show but pursued intently thereafter.

35 Lange, S., *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*, MIT Press, 2006, pp. 30–34; p. 89 endnotes 75 & 76. Lange notes that 'the sheet films have a very high grain, meaning that the grain structure is not superimposed on the surface structure of the object.'

36 Ziegler, U. E., (2002) 'The Bechers' Industrial Lexicon', in *Art in America* (19): 99–100.

37 Cf. the selection from Hilla Becher's travel notes, translated in Lange, S., *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*, op. cit., pp. 179–83.

38 Many have taken up the Bechers' loose invitation to read their project in terms of a study type, a seam most extensively mined by Michael Fried in the tenth chapter of *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 303–33.

39 Becher, H., (2013) 'Hilla Becher in Conversation', *AA Files*, (66): 17–36.

40 Evans is more categorically negative, proclaiming that any such paintings 'have disappeared without trace' (*The Projective Cast: Architecture and its three geometries*, MIT Press, 1995, p. 138). Compare, however, the short inventory of 'architectural portraits' by Nagel and Wood in *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York: Zone Books, pp. 147–150, though the enmeshing of actual and non-actual in their examples may not respect the condition of verisimilitude that Evans has in mind. Nagel and Wood are drawing in turn on: Ratte, F., (2001) 'Re-presenting the Common Place: Architectural portraits in Trecento painting' in *Studies on Iconography* 22: 87–110; Ferino Pagden, S., (1994) 'Painted Architecture' in Millon, H. & Magnago Lampugnani, V. (eds.), *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi to Michelangelo: The representation of architecture*, London: Thames & Hudson, pp. 446–52; and Gambuti, A., (1994) *L'architettura dei pittori*, Florence: Alinea.

41 Evans, R., *The Projective Cast*, *ibid.* This observation may be supplemented with Judith V. Field's quote from Daniele Barbaro's 1568 treatise on perspective, lamenting that by the latter half of the sixteenth century, there was 'almost no perspective in painting', which Field persuasively construes to mean *no architectural vistas* (Field, J.V., *The Invention of Infinity: Mathematics and Art in the Renaissance*, Oxford, 1997, p. 125). Evans also cites Lise Bek, who in her 1980 study *Paradise on Earth* observes how painters started to limit the extended perspectival vista to lateral architectural features, preferring to screen off, by means of an aedicule or wall panel, the central zone of converging parallels. Architecture followed suit, and Evans duplicates Bek in offering the example of Ammannati's late sixteenth-century garden prospect at the Villa Giulia (Bek, L., (1980) *Paradise on Earth: Modern Space Conception in Architecture, a Creation of Renaissance Humanism*, Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, pp. 95–163).

42 Nagel, A., and Wood, C.S., 'Anti-Architecture' in *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York: Zone Books, pp. 303–5. Francesco di Giorgio, cited by Nagel and Wood, writes of his effort to match *signo cum il significato*, sign with signified, in 'such a way that it is almost like discovering [architecture] anew.' For further discussion of the hut thematic, consult the chapters on 'Architectural Models' and 'The Primitive Hut Amidst the Ruins of St. Peter's'. Compare, also, Prynne, J.H., (2008) 'Huts', in *Textual Practice*, 22(4): 631: 'Because the primal hut strips away a host of circumstantial appurtenances and qualifications, it does represent

an elemental form, a kind of sweat-lodge; but it is confederate with deep ethical problematics, and not somehow a purifying solution to them.’ This remark follows a consideration of Celan’s meeting with Heidegger at the latter’s famous refuge in Todtnauberg, on 25 July 1967, and an associating of the early modern hut with watchtowers in military or punitive contexts. Prynne, like Nagel and Wood after him, draws at some length on Joseph Rykwert’s treatise, *On Adam’s House in Paradise: The idea of the primitive hut in architectural history*, New York: MoMA, 1972, reprinted Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981. Rykwert was also the translator of Giulio Carlo Argan’s key 1960 article on ‘Tipologia’ (cf. (1963) ‘On the typology of architecture’, in *Architectural Design* 33, reprinted in Nesbitt, K., *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965–1995*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996, pp. 242–46).

43 Nagel, A., & Wood, C.S., *Anachronic Renaissance*, *ibid.*, p. 169.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

45 Kinney, D., ‘Spolio. *Damnatio* and *Renovatio memoriae*’, in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, Vol. 42, 1997, p. 120.

46 Nagel, A., & Wood, C.S., *Anachronic Renaissance*, *ibid.*, p. 312.

47 On the issue of wartime spoliation, Ian Wiblin notes that the heavily industrialised Ruhr district, which played a central role in the development period of the Bechers’ formal vocabulary, had been occupied by the French and Belgian armies between 1923 and 1925, and was thus a politically contested zone much advertised during the rise to power of the Nazi regime, which campaigned recompense for this period of perceived humiliation. It was subsequently to lie at the hub of the vast industrial expansion that accompanied the military ambition of the Second World War, and thus the blast furnaces and related industrial sites photographed by the Bechers would inevitably have been sites of slave labour, just fifteen years prior to the execution of their works. Wiblin, I., ‘Looking for the Affect of History in the Photographic Work of Bernd and Hilla Becher’, in *Camera Constructs: Photography, Architecture and the Modern City*, p. 229.

48 This description does not embrace the unclad winding towers that came to be such an emblematic part of the Bechers’ photographic output. While these structures in themselves lack chambering, they do implicate vertically the obscure subterranean chambered spaces of the mines.

More visually compelling, however, is the reflection between the angled strut and the indispensable camera tripod.

49 Compare, however, Chevrier, J.-F., (1989) ‘The adventures of the *picture* form in the history of photography’, *op. cit.* Fried pays lengthy tribute to this article in ‘Jean-François Chevrier on the “Tableau Form”’; Thomas Ruff, Andreas Gursky, Luc Delahaye’ in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–89.

50 Karmel, P., ‘Terrors of the Encyclopedia: Max Ernst and Contemporary Art’ in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, p. 90. In similar vein, Roberta Smith noted in 1988 a resemblance between the Bechers’ photographs of spherical blast furnaces and gas tanks, and Max Ernst’s painting *The Elephant Celebes*.

51 Lange, S., *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

52 Fried, M., ‘“Good” versus “bad” objecthood’ in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, *op. cit.*, p. 331. Elsewhere, he uses the term ‘physiognomic’.

53 Lacan, J., *The Seminar, Book X, Anxiety*, Cambridge: Polity, 2014, p. 215.

54 Agamben, G., ‘Dal libro allo schermo. Il prima e il dopo del libro’ in *Il fuoco e il racconto*, Rome: Nottetempo, 2014, pp. 87–112. On the shift from roll to codex in late Antiquity, see Roberts, C.H. & Skeat, T.C., *The Birth of the Codex*, Oxford University Press, 1983.



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