

Brown Art Review



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Letter From The Editors



The Brown University Art Review was founded in 2022 as a magazine dedicated to art. We look at works, movements, practices, and people, from our own campus all the way to the metaverse, from the contemporary moment all the way to ancient times. We investigate, question, analyze, and reflect—each of us with a different perspective. Some of us ponder on the art in the everyday or the unexpected, some of us address art in the news, some of us interrogate injustice, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding, and some of us work towards the demanding goals of Art History. While we all have and document different experiences of art, we are all constantly thinking about change: change in perspective, change in representation, change in practice, change in fact.

With that, we present you *Novelties*, our first-ever printed publication. In this volume we have compiled 11 pieces that celebrate art's capacity to surprise and inspire, to challenge what we know, and to remind us that, even in the most familiar works, there is always something new to discover. We hope that these *Novelties*, in all their forms, resonate with you as you make a journey through the past and towards the future, thinking about what art has been and what it can become.

Welcome to *Novelties*,

Camille Blanco and Daphne Mylonas
Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director

Novelties, noun. The quality of being new, original, or unusual.

Art, in all its forms, is a living, breathing reflection of our times, which are constantly evolving, adapting, and reinventing themselves. Novelties are the sparks of **change** that propel us forward. They are the whispers of innovation and the echoes of past revolutions, sometimes avant-garde and other times quietly revolutionary. They arise from the tensions between tradition and invention, between the familiar and the unknown. Every brushstroke, every chisel mark, every sculptural curve that departs from what was before, holds within it the promise of **transformation**.

Art has never been static. It is always in **flux**. It is a collage that spans centuries and continues to bridge the gap between the world's cultures and sensibilities. Through its **keystone** and **cornerstone** ideas, the **new** and the **novel** pervade every pore of theory, idea, and practice.

Novelties

How will the *novelty* of today be remembered by those who come after us? What will they see when they look back at the world's *creations*, through its struggles and triumphs? Will they find within them the sparks that *ignite* new avenues of thought? How might we, in turn, continue to *shape* the future through the art we cherish, the histories we write, and the legacies we pass on?

Through this volume, it is our hope that you, too, have gained a new way of understanding the *novel* in art.

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Nude Figure Drawing in the 21st Century

Annabelle Nickoll '27

"My body makes me happy, not proud. They are looking at more than just me... A shape, an idea..."

In Agnès Varda's 1962 film *Cléo from 5 to 7*, Cléo, a French pop singer, undergoes an existential reckoning as she grapples with how she is seen by others. Varda challenges the traditional "male gaze," which, as described by Laura Mulvey, reduces women to passive objects, something to be looked at, rather than autonomous beings.¹ In *Cléo from 5 to 7*, Varda instead introduces a gaze of self-awareness and agency. Curiously, this empowered "female gaze" is in one scene embodied by Dorothee, a nude model who sees her body not as something to be judged or objectified for others' pleasure but as a form to be observed and interpreted.

Dorothee's perspective describes nude figure drawing as an exercise where the body is neither idealized nor scrutinized, but observed in a practice of deep observation for the purpose of artistic education. I was surprised by how true this sentiment really was when I experienced drawing a live model for the first time in VISA0100 Studio Foundations last semester. My 17-person class was set up in a circle surrounding a white rectangular box that acted as a pedestal. Each student chose a spot in the classroom where they could view the center and set up an easel with a large pad of newsprint and some vinyl charcoal.

Figure 1. Still from Agnès Varda's film, *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962)



When everyone was settled, the doors were shut, and the model undressed towards the side of the classroom and then stepped over and onto the central mound. We began with 30-second quick drawings, that forced us to observe and outline the figure gesturally without the time to address small details. Then, we moved into longer poses, working up to 5-minute holds. There were a few breaks in between rounds where we could walk around and observe each other's drawings, but the session went on for nearly the entire 110-minute class period. I was surprised by how totally freeing and beautiful the experience was as both an artistic exercise and psychological meditation on the the human form. The body was presented in such a stark contrast to the way it is viewed in our modern culture. It was the first time I had observed a nude body in a way that was entirely desexualized, raw, natural, meditative, and artistic.

Taken by this experience, I was also fascinated by the models themselves and what their experience must be like standing exposed in front of a room of their peers. When I spoke with one model, Kate, she said: "Once you're up there, there's not really time to think about how you look. You just have to move your body." She held a similar perspective as Dorothee in *Cléo from 5 to 7*: "I think one of the reasons why I really love doing it is because I can imagine myself as an art piece, or like a smaller part in this larger art form."

I became curious about the history of nude figure drawing, its artistic and psychological significance, and how its role has evolved since the High Renaissance. How has it retained its value to remain part of the curriculum at an institution like Brown University in the 21st century? An article published by the Royal Academy of Arts in 2018 recounted the 250 years of life drawing, the practice of drawing the human form in various poses from real-life models, as an established practice within their institution.²

“I was surprised by how totally freeing and beautiful the experience was as both an artistic exercise and psychological meditation on the human form.”

It traced live drawings' formal role in artistic education to the Renaissance, when classical art from ancient Greece and Rome began to resurface and inspire artists to emulate the idealized human forms depicted in such works. The Renaissance masters believed that the rigorous study of human anatomy was the key to mastering form and movement. Leon Battista Alberti, in his 1435 treatise *On Painting*, said that nude drawing was an essential foundation for artistic skill: “Before dressing a man, we first draw him nude, then we enfold him in draperies. So in painting the nude, we place first his bones and muscles which we then cover with flesh so that it is not difficult to understand where each muscle is beneath.” Alberti is highlighting the fact that life drawing was never simply about creating works strictly of the nude body, but a fundamental step in becoming a truly skilled artist.

The practice soon gained institutional prestige when art academies were established across Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries. These institutions codified hierarchical systems of teaching, and life drawing was almost always seen as the pinnacle of artistic training. By the 19th century, life drawing had become a rigidly structured practice, reinforcing classical ideals of proportion and beauty. Then, in the 20th century, modernist artists began rejecting academic traditions in favor of expressive and abstract approaches to the human form, and the practice lost its pervasiveness for some time. However, the practice has returned, and being that it was a mandatory exercise in the VISA0100 class, it still must hold value. Even with the technological advancements in photography and digital media, and with contemporary artists rejecting rigid canons in favor of abstraction and individual expression, life drawing has somehow prevailed but also seemingly evolved into something different.

I spoke with a second model, Dylan, who is non-binary, about representation within a practice that has historically been reserved for cisgender male bodies: “One of my friends, who is also trans, told me it was really cool seeing me up there because there’s just not a lot of representation. Nude modeling is probably one of the most extreme forms of representation, so in a way, it felt really important.”

For Kate, her identity as a woman in a world that often objectifies the female body also plays a significant role in her experience. She said, “As a woman, you’re objectified; you’re taken advantage of. And, to be able to resist that, to be able to be like ‘you can look at me, but you can’t touch me. You can turn me into a work, but you can’t do anything else,’ I found that to be meaningful.”

Just as Cléo from 5 to 7 reframes the act of looking, nude figure drawing in the 21st century challenges conventional ways of seeing and being seen. It transforms the gaze from objectification and judgment to observation and artistic inquiry. The models who pose, like Dorothée in Varda’s film, have agency over their own visibility, and they are studied as forms rather than scrutinized as bodies. Kate said: “Turning your body into art in any way is a really meaningful experience, and I think that as artists and as people, we should think more about how to do that and how to understand ourselves to be very beautiful, to be works.”

This perspective really encompasses what I discovered as an artist in my first live drawing session and through learning more about the practice; what I anticipated to be uncomfortable and unnatural was a profound personal exercise. I think nude figure drawing continues to hold value today because it is much more than a technical means to an end, but a meditation on the human experience and the experience of living in a body. Attending a live drawing session is about being present and challenging the way we see and experience life. It offers the deeply human, tactile experience of seeing and translating the body through art. The British sculptor Henry Moore said, “You can’t understand life drawing without being emotionally involved ... It really is a deep, long struggle to understand oneself.”³

"In my childhood, I used to sleep in the same bed as my older sister. One night I was awakened by the sound of sobs; I saw her sitting up with the quilt over her shoulders, holding her feet in hands and weeping... I asked her what was wrong. She replied in a low voice, 'My feet have been bound by Nanny Ho. Although during the day it makes walking difficult, I can still bear the pain. But at night, my feet get hot under the quilt, and I can't sleep with the cutting pain. What am I to do?' Zhang leaped off to tear off her sister's binder, but hesitated when Sister did not want to provoke Mother. At daybreak, Zhang beseeched Mother to let sister off the hook. She also made her own wish clear, 'I would rather no one showed any interest in me all my life than trying to curry favor by injuring the body my parents give me.'"¹

This scene, quoted from Dorothy Ko's paper *The Subject of Pain*, draws attention to the recollection of Zhang Mojun (1884-1965), a former Chinese politician and educator. It displays not just the physical suffering of Zhang's sister but also the hidden, unspoken pain of this tradition. The agony of being forced to give up the subjectivity of one's own body, the silent suffering endured in the quiet of the night, and the pain of a mother binding her daughter's feet as a choiceless act, yet a painful way of loving, are all part of this layered narrative of pain. This narrative of pain, while physical in its immediate manifestations, is also bound with complex emotional and psychological dimensions.



Figure 1. Lotus shoes, c. 1900. Cotton, silk, 13 x 12.5 cm



Figure 2. China (Han, northern style), Lotus shoes (Dark blue funeral shoes with crane and lotus symbolizing longevity and peacefulness), c. 1900. Cotton, silk (handmade with satin stitch embroidery), 19 x 7 cm

Dorothy Ko's 2001 exhibition at Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto aims to capture this timeless narrative and the complex relationship between pain and beauty. The space is divided into sections that simulate a Chinese house. Each room presents a chapter of a footbound woman's life. This approach not only reflects the cultural context of the practice but also physically invites the audience to perform the daily rituals and moments that confined women in their rooms and bound them to the social norms. From childhood to adulthood, the exhibition guides visitors through pivotal life stages: from the early years of footbinding to marriage, motherhood, and old age. Each scene is enriched with both the objective curatorial voice and the intimate, first-person narratives of women, offering a multifaceted perspective on the practice.

Initially, I questioned the ethics of such an exhibition after seeing the curatorial plans. Can one truly present these shoes, symbols of profound pain, as mere aesthetic objects? Does exhibiting them risk reducing a deep and painful history to a passive visual experience for the audience?

Ko claims that the shoes themselves are "magnificent to look at."² Yet, can their beauty ever truly encapsulate the complexity of the narrative they carry? When displayed in a foreign context, across time periods, how can we ensure that the audience engages with the history responsibly?

The exhibition challenges us to confront these questions by intertwining the beauty of the shoes with the histories they represent. Once deeply intertwined with the struggles and pain of the women who endured footbinding, the lotus shoes transform into delicate artifacts for public display. These tiny shoes, some no larger than 6 cm, which once carried the entire life of a footbinding woman, transcend their original purpose. They now serve as symbols—abstract representations of a complex history. From their original place in the intimate, private spaces of women's rooms to their position in a museum exhibit, these shoes have evolved into signs that compress centuries of cultural, social, and personal narratives into visual objects. In the museum, the shoes are no longer just functional items; they represent a long and painful history, reimagined through the lens of art and history.

In ancient China, footbinding was not just a tradition but a deeply ingrained practice that shaped the lives of women from an early age, often leaving them with permanent physical limitations. The curatorial practice gave rise to an innovative narrative of resilience, survival, and subtle agency—one in which women, despite their constraints, navigated their circumstances and left behind stories of quiet strength. The lotus shoes, though symbols of physical restriction, also tell the story of women's ability to survive. The efforts women put into making these shoes—embedding their hopes and aspirations in various colors and visual symbols—illustrate their resilience.



Figure 3. China (Han, Shandong style), Lotus shoes, c. 1900. Cotton, leather, paint (handmade with satin stitch floral embroidery), 15 x 7.5 cm



Figure 4. China (Han), Book (Handmade embroidery pattern design book, including those for lotus shoes), early 20th century. Paper, ink, 26 x 17 cm

Despite their physical limitations, these women still found ways to see beauty and hope in life, weaving that beauty into the objects they created. The aesthetic beauty of these shoes invites us to reflect on the strength embedded in them, and in doing so, we gain a new perspective on the history of footbinding. This evolving female voice transcends the painful past and connects us to the enduring strength of those who lived it.

The exhibition does not seek to simply repeat the pain of footbinding but instead invites the audience to join in the ritual of remembering. The exhibition's form is an artistic representation of female voices—not an overt condemnation of the social structures that suppressed women but a celebration of their ability to survive, pursue beauty, and navigate love. Through intricate craftsmanship and symbolic patterns, the lotus shoes tell stories of these women's growth and aging, weaving life into symbols that future audiences can read and interpret. These visual symbols evolve the women's voices, allowing their agency to break free from the confines of silence and speak anew.

Unmasking Robert Cumming's Fiction

Camille Blanco '26

A good work of fiction, as English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge observes, elicits a "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" from its audience.¹ Though Coleridge coined this phrase with respect to the tales of lyrical ballads, this concept proves useful in our considerations of photography, especially the camera's role as a problematic recording tool. Even before the onset of "first generation postmodernism" in the 1980s, photographers were aware of the fictive elements of their chosen medium.²

They discovered a variety of fictional strategies through which they could compel a viewer to immerse herself in and readily accept an otherwise implausible photographic reality. To illustrate this argument, I consider Robert Cumming's (1943–2021) 1978 photograph, *Quick Shift of the Head Leaves Glowing Stool Afterimage Posited on Pedestal* (Figure 1), which encourages viewers to reevaluate their understanding of how photography and vision work.

Cumming's first strategy, setup, encompasses the ways in which the photographer stages and frames his scene. In *Quick Shift of the Head Leaves Glowing Stool Afterimage Posited on Pedestal*, Cumming photographs a seemingly ordinary 'found' scene in his studio. Against the backdrop of a plainly painted wall, a metal stool sits in a beam of bright light. To its right, closer to the viewer, a scuffed pedestal bears a bright white impression of the stool. In this photograph, Cumming does not hide behind a supposed happenstance in the world; rather, evidence of the photographer's presence is a welcome and intended effect.

Figure 1. Robert Cumming, *Quick Shift of the Head Leaves Glowing Stool Afterimage Posited on Pedestal*, 1978, gelatin silver print, Image: 19.3 x 24.6 cm



"Cumming does not hide behind a supposed happenstance in the world; rather, evidence of the photographer's presence is a welcome and intended effect."

With this in mind, the viewer notices two aspects of the photograph that were not apparent before: the can of spray paint on the pedestal and the central dividing line. These initially unassuming, but intentionally conspicuous, details call attention to the photographer's directorial eye, beckoning the viewer to pay attention to what she sees beyond the photograph's surface.

In placing the spray paint can in the top right corner of the photograph, Cumming anticipates that the viewer's eye will not immediately focus on it. Upon first glance, the distracted viewer glosses over the shape of the can, for more interesting and important pieces of visual information demand her attention. This setup belies the can's importance to the scene at large, deliberately relegating it to the hinterlands of perception. Additionally, by turning the can around, Cumming makes the Wet Paint brand logo inconspicuous, ensuring that his viewer only happens upon these details on her second or third consideration of the work. As this previously invisible detail becomes visible to the viewer's eye, Cumming reveals a direct manipulation of his subject (the spray painted outline) to achieve the desired afterimage effect.

As her eye roams, the viewer finds a black line that vertically divides the photograph in half. This detail plays with her visual perception of the photograph, upsetting the logical, preconceived hierarchy of information with which she approaches the work. The crucial details, including subconscious impulses to seek order and a presumed left-to-right hierarchy, present in the photograph lead the viewer to subconsciously sort information as important or unimportant on the spot. She notices immediately that the wall on the right appears darker than that on the left, contributing to a sense of separation between the sides. To further support this notion of separation, the viewer then searches for other differences, only to notice that the bottom of the beam of light and the paint stains on the floor creep under the dividing line. Cumming's awareness of the power of a diptych to create compelling narrative informs his decision to divide the photograph into a seeming "before" and "after." As such, the viewer gets stuck searching for those instances where the story begins and ends. No true narrative exists in this photograph, however, only the staged objects that exist at the same time, in the same place.

On this question of perception, then, we must consider how Cumming exploits the work's title—Quick Shift of the Head Leaves Glowing Stool Afterimage Posited on Pedestal—as his second strategy. To dissipate the tension she encounters in the photograph, the viewer turns to the title. In her mind, the ideal relationship between photograph and title suggests that she should see the photographer's visualization of the title. By this logic, then, the syntax of Cumming's title suggests that the viewer's active participation, even if it is imaginative, attains the final after image. The viewer should, ideally, deposit a stencil of the stool's basic form (the object's negative afterimage) on the pedestal by focusing on the stool and then quickly shifting her head. But nothing is as it seems at first glance in a Cumming photograph. Considering the image again, however, the viewer finds that Cumming already offers his own afterimage, one he permanentizes with white spray paint. The image looks this way because the photographer staged it as such, not because the viewer executed the perceptual exercise that the title prescribes.

In this relationship between title and image, then, the photographer embeds a similar kind of dissonance that we observe between the left and right 'halves' of his work.

These details revealed that the still image does not contain a narrative. Instead, Cumming constructed a fictional "before" and "after" that neither explicates nor develops the isolated scene. The relationship between title and image, however, presents a logical "before" and "after," if not a clear "first this, then that" condition. Thus, this work embodies the inextricable link between idea and photograph, guided by the photographer's directorial eye. Photography begins first with the identification of a concept (e.g., the process of depositing a retinal afterimage). Then, it literalizes the concept through an image that the photographer finds in the infinite found or fabricated stills that exist in the world. At first glance, Cumming presents his viewer with a plausible scene that represents one of the many processes by which the human eye captures and perceives images.

As the photograph draws the viewer in for a second look, she notices absurdities that unravel the illusion.

Thus, Cumming's work explores the conditions of cause and effect that arise from the mechanisms of looking—the distinct moments of seeing, including those automatic, and sometimes mistaken, images that arise from the viewer's imaginations of a reality that she does not observe critically. We find such a susceptibility to visual distortion both in the complex phenomenon of a retinal afterimage and even in the moment when we think we see someone we know walking down the street, but a second glance confirms that it was just a stranger.

At this point, Cumming jolts the viewer out of a state of suspended disbelief, revealing one of his many sleights of hand. Though the viewer sought out the title for conceptual and intellectual respite from the complex illusion of his photograph, Cumming's work further complicates the contradictory information of the title. Underneath the title's explicit directive on what to consider (the stool and its afterimage), the photographer wants the viewer to consider the elements that, if she only spares the photograph a passing glance, she cannot see.

In telling his viewer exactly what she ought to see—by setting up and literalizing the stool's afterimage in spray paint—Cumming forces her to reflect on what photography entails as a process of capturing light and how human vision works along with it.

Now, the viewer has opened a Pandora's box of perception. In order to understand the concepts that Cumming proposes for consideration through his photograph, we must consider how photography and vision work, physically. Photography, as a medium, operates on a principle analogous to vision: as the camera (the eye) focuses on a particular scene, light falls on the lens and reflects onto a light-sensitive plate (the retina), which retains the image for a set amount of time. While a retinal afterimage is ephemeral, a camera afterimage can last forever. The way in which a camera produces an image from a negative cannot compare to the elaborate photoreceptive processes of image transmission in the human eye.

Nevertheless, both instruments that the photographer and the viewer use to present and perceive the world are subject to perceptual glitches that generate distortions. The language of photographic illusion depends on those moments when vision fails—it lulls the viewer into seeing what she wants to see at first, then shatters the illusion as she looks again and sees what was right in front of her.

At its most basic level, then, Cumming's work is an afterimage within an afterimage: the photograph is a mechanical afterimage (produced from a negative) that contains an impression of a stool which Cumming reproduces from an imagined retinal image (which is also a negative image). If we think about the broader relationship between text and image, the photograph becomes an afterimage of the title—it visualizes the outcome of the visual process that he outlines in the title. The extent to which any photograph deceives or enlightens its viewer depends on the attentiveness of her viewer experience. Finding truth in any photograph demands its deconstruction—it is a fiction waiting to be unmasked.

A Conversation with Lorena Park

Ami Kobayashi '27

What began as a scheduled interview with my professor, Lori, quickly unraveled into a candid, laughter-filled conversation about the absurd yet beautiful struggle of making art at RISD, but much more importantly, making art simply as a human being! We covered everything—her creative process, being a mother, and existential crises fueled by galleries, networking, and display shelves.

What followed was less of a formal interview, rather more of a heart-to-heart—one so special and comforting that I was initially hesitant to turn it into an article. Yet through this conversation, I realized that I'm not alone in trying to protect the joy of creating from the pressure of success metrics. If you feel like you're bearing a similar weight, I hope this can lighten it, even just a little. Here is a glimpse into my conversation with Lori.

Lorena Park: The way I feel about it is that, all I think you're doing by getting this degree is trying to figure out you better. And then understanding yourself better—like, you haven't abandoned anything by experimenting with your art in one direction versus another. You're just starting. And a great way to start is by figuring out you.

And, I think I said this earlier in the semester, but it's so much easier to know what you're not sometimes than what you are. And so there's something pretty important about understanding what we have decreed as good art. Finding friction and the places where you push back on, and the things that don't feel right to you—back to those muscles you're building up.

Ami Kobayashi: Right.

LP: I also teach spin classes [laughs]

AK: Oh!

LP: It's very much near and dear to my heart. I do it because it's fun and it's, frankly, deeply uncomfortable. I actively practice sitting in discomfort and not walking away from it.

"You're just starting. And a great way to start is by figuring out you."



Figure 1. Lorena Park, *Parabole Winkie*, 2022, sculpture

That's an example of how my research is not just in the library.

AK: Mhmm.

LP: The research can be the spin class itself. I've had people say to me "I need to see the spin class in your work" [laughs] it's like—no no no! The spin class created me in this way. You are seeing it. You just don't know? you're seeing it. Because it taught me how to sit and be uncomfortable while singing at the top of my lungs. You know?

AK: Yes! It's like so much of what we are inspired from as an artist is not even the museum. It's in our day to day lives.

LP: You have to trust me that it's in the work. Even if I'm not articulating it. And so when you are like "it's the shelves" you know? That—I'm not saying you were crying over the display shelves, but if you were I would totally get that!

AK: No, I was crying over the shelves... [Both laughs]

LP: Lets just put that out there! [laughs] But when somebody has been on that journey, we're here to be like "I KNOW!!". That's the strength of it. And, and not that you'll get through it because it's not something you get through. But sometimes you just want someone to sit there with you while you're like "I'm lost, I just need a minute, and we're gonna get back up again." Like, in my soul, I get exactly what you're going through right now. And your parents can love you but not get that. Like you just need to meet somebody that is like "Let's talk about Severance!" or whatever—you know. Without leading back directly to the thing, that is the thing that ends up coming back to like "all work is political" like What? Yes. It is. All work is you know, I got it. Okay. Okay. Okay. We get you! [laughs]

AK: Right! I need to get out more [laughs]

Read the full interview on the Brown Art Review website! (brownartreview.org)

Noah Verrier — Artist, Foodie, or Businessman?

Menasha Leport '25

Noah Verrier started his artistic career before he hit double digits. By seven years old, he already knew he loved to draw and to explore with color, so from there he began to paint. “Every year my passion grew more for art” he recalls fondly.

Verrier went to school for art, receiving both his MFA and BFA in oil painting before beginning work as an art professor. Despite possessing an expansive knowledge of 19th-century and contemporary artists, he maintains a distance between teaching and making his own art. He has noticed that they are “two separate things” in his journey.

The art market has not interfered with his creativity either, even in his professional practice. “Creating my best work is always the priority,” Verrier states proudly. “Whatever avenue is available to show that work is secondary.”

Verrier and his work have gone extremely viral online. The artist has amassed nearly 200K followers on Instagram, while media outlets such as The New York Times and Vogue España have covered stories on his success. A large portion of this success stems from the unique appeal of his art to an expansive audience—fellow artists, painting students, and even those simply scrolling through TikTok before bed all form Verrier’s clientele.

Social media, despite not being the root of Verrier’s passion for art, has allowed his work to reach any person with access to the internet. And with his classic stylistic approach to youthful, consumerist, humorous subjects, he intertwines old-school art appreciation with new-age virality.

Verrier creates still life paintings that are both nostalgic and mesmerizing.

Figure 1. Noah Verrier, *Eggos*, Oil, 13x12 in



From a Dunkin’ iced coffee and donut staged beside a floral bouquet to an Uncrustables sandwich oozing jelly onto a tablecloth, his subjects engage with not only artistic audiences but anyone who has visited a 7/11 in modern-day America. An Instagram-goer can scroll past a post by Verrier and like it because they love iced coffee, because the contrast of aesthetic and subject makes them laugh, or because they admire the intricate details achieved with a paintbrush.

On one hand, Verrier’s still lifes peer nostalgically into the comforts of an American childhood. After school snacks, summertime treats, and even bottled-up children’s toys have all been featured on Verrier’s tabletop. He has painted everything from marbles to chalk, Bell jars of milk to Chinese take-out containers, gummy bears to that one specific brand of maple syrup that everyone saw in their grandparents’ fridge. He has even illustrated a close-up view into a bag of dusty orange Cheetos.

On the other hand, perhaps all of these beautiful encapsulations of American staples actually compose a larger commentary on the nature of modern consumerism. Does beauty now lie in junk food, plastic waste, and over-processed meals? Is the picture of America, the life represented by Verrier's brush, one full of advertisement and capitalism?

Despite claiming his focus and love to be on the fulfillment of his artistic vision, Verrier regularly auctions off his original oil paintings through Ebay. As of March 10th at 3:00pm, the top bid for his original "PBJ & Jar of Milk" sits at a whopping \$5,600. Smaller prints and canvases of this work are available for between \$50 and \$350 on the same auction page, run by Verrier himself.¹ "For me every painting is like a prayer to God," he says at the bottom of his Ebay bio. "I can be still, look closely, and interpret the colors, shapes, and emotion before me." Here, he does not claim to place artistic practice above economic value, but rather silently intertwines the two.

His works feature designer clothing items, TikTok famous Stanley cups, and forever-famous fast food orders. When the subjects of these still lifes are not derived from pop culture, they are drink glasses, shiny coffee pots, blooming bouquets, and bowls of fruit—just like the traditional works of Chardin or Manet. Verrier says he selects his subjects sometimes based on how they look, but also how each one feels emotionally. On his website, he writes that his "aim is to accurately yet personally discern color and light," a theme which intertwines the nostalgia of his take-out cups and half-eaten tacos with the classic beauty of his brushstrokes.² The items he paints are random, but what they do have in common is an ability to reflect delicate sections of light and shadow through oil paint. Perhaps it is this classical portrayal of these modern subjects which transforms them into instances of childhood reminiscence.

Citing still life greats like Chardin and Manet as inspiration, Verrier mimics their skillful approaches to light and shadow in his own work. This comes across in his utilization of florals, reflective surfaces, simple backdrops, and the softness of his palettes.

Just as Chardin traced the intricacies of light passing through a glass of water, Verrier has done the same gorgeous work in the shiny plastic of a Baja Blast cup and its squeaky straw. He also claims Wayne Thiebaud and Andy Warhol as influences on his work, and their quirky approaches to food and composition shine through his still life subjects.

Verrier's paintings are definitively realistic as still life works, yet the odd mixture of artistry with the messiness of humanity and consumerism form an underlying feeling of surrealism. Whereas many typical still lifes feature the classic beauties of nature and humanity (fruit, curated platters, decadent goods, jewelry acquired through international trade, and other extravagant displays of wealth), Verrier's work nods to the echelon of capitalism most often scoffed at—fast food and cheap toys. The inherent contrast between style and subject feels unbalanced even in its beauty, evoking a curiosity from its audience which questions the reality of modern beauty. Beauty can exist in the most mundane objects and obscure moments, especially when captured carefully and passionately. Perhaps the beauty is despite, within, the wastefulness and corruption of capitalism and consumerism, not because of it.



Figure 2.
Noah Verrier,
PBJ & Jar of Milk. Oil on
canvas, 18x24
in

"Parts of me I hope shine through are brushstrokes left in gesture," Verrier said when asked about how his work expresses himself. But it is also the choices he makes in subject and composition, the care he places into the construction of his paintings, which reveal his unique and personal perspective of the world. Even the most mundane objects can evoke feelings of nostalgia, and even items which embody the messiness of modern capitalism may provoke reminiscence for childhood. "I try to always be my authentic self, no matter where I show up." Even if this self reveals itself in a jar of jellybeans.



Figure 1. Artwork in Hauser & Wirth, 542 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011

“It’s not like we’re selling eggs”:

8 gallerists reflect on what it means to devote oneself to the vibrant art business

Naisha Didwania '27 & Adelaide Ng '27

United by a mutual passion for experiencing art and a rousing curiosity of the industry as a business, we temporarily switched the serene corners of College Hill for the pulsing nucleus of the art world—New York City. Seeking to be wholly engrossed in it all, we spoke with several curators, gallerists, and museum directors who, collectively, sustain and propel the invigorating energy of the buzzy Chelsea art scene.

Ingrid Schaffner, the Senior Curatorial Director of Hauser & Wirth New York, began her career in the 90s, fighting to advance the rank of contemporary art within academia. “When I went to the Institute of Fine Arts, you couldn’t study contemporary subjects — the subjects were dead. Very dead,” she explains. Yet in spite of her odds, Ingrid resolved to curate trailblazing shows that spotlight overlooked contemporary female artists.

Meanwhile, **Alexis Lowry**, the Senior Curatorial Director of the LA gallery, took a more circuitous route. After building a digital database for an arts organization in Cairo, Alexis realized her true passion was to work directly with living artists. “I had to resist the urge to just do logistics,” she admits, “because my brain works really well that way.” Upon reflecting on her experience with project management, she cites her installation works for Creative Time as one that shifted her outlook, cultivating her commitment to help artists realise their visions.

As Ingrid puts it, “the intellectual curiosity driven by artists’ own creativity” is what draws her to her present career while Alexis revels in the “satisfying” process of “shaping the poignant stories” each exhibition tells. Despite their disparate paths, both Ingrid and Alexis agree that the key to curatorial success is willingness to work hard.

"There's nothing worse than working with someone who has expectations beyond their experience," Alexis brazenly adds.

Adam Cohen is the founder of A Hug from the Art World, a snug two-story gallery, decorated in a quintessential British farmhouse manner. After his studies, Adam found his way to interning at Christie's in London. "It was the underground thing: art handling, cataloguing and things like that," he explains. Near the turn of the millennium, Adam was invited to apprentice transatlantically under the reputable art dealer, Larry Gagosian.



During his time in Gagosian, artist Oliver Clegg requested his assistance with hosting a pop up. Adam recounts, "he already was a great artist but he wanted to be on the inside so he asked me provide that for him." Together, they did a show called "Euclid Porsche" and published a book titled *Euclid*, which was composed of hundreds of little paintings, "based on images of people trying to sell their old Happy Meal toys on eBay."

Jokingly, his wife made a bunch of celebratory merchandise, consisting of socks, pens, lip balm... anything you could possibly imagine. "It was all bullshit. A total joke," he laughs. One night as he was working at a Gagosian exhibit, wearing the hat, Adam ran into the artist, Jeff Koons.

"I was like, 'Can I take a photograph of you with the hat?' And then I plugged the picture on Instagram. After that, Frank Stella did it, then, a Korean pop star from BIGBANG. Suddenly, I had \$60,000 worth of orders for these hats on my website."

From selling baseball caps outside of Gagosian or sometimes even in the office, his pop ups eventually expanded all around Manhattan curatorial projects. In 2018, Adam got a fixed location for his own space and his business was launched. In his own words, "[he] made a bit of money and that's how it all started"—making for a brilliant though unconventional (to say the least) origin story.



Figures 2 & 3. Artwork in Hug From the Art World, 515 W 19th St, New York, NY 10011



Figure 4. Artwork from Pace Gallery, 540 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001

Working as an intern before rising to her present role as the director at Pace Gallery, **Nicole Glimcher Dach** has witnessed the evolution of the art world. “When I was an intern, most people got their spots through family connections,” she says. With sales especially, networking is essential. “There’s a limited number of serious collectors, and most already have someone. Finding new buyers who trust you is the hardest part,” she explains. Much of that occurs beyond the gallery—by networking un events. Therefore, “there’s no shame in leveraging your network.”

With 200 staff and departments from research to shipping, Pace offers a deep dive into global gallery operations. “You’re the receptionist, the organizer, the problem solver,” Nicole explains. There truly is no set path—assistants may go on to roles in sales, artist liaison, curation...

As the director of Tanya Bonakdar, **Ethan Sklar** sees the art business as one that is “very much about relationships,” noting that many collectors come from families already involved in the industry. Ethan analogizes “there are only so many collectors.... It’s not like we’re selling eggs that everyone needs.”

Considering many internships with art galleries are unpaid, it is understandably difficult to enter and commit oneself to the field. Thus Ethan encourages students to explore alternative, distinct routes to entering the field, such as working for artists or being studio assistants.

Similarly, Ethan emphasizes the need to leverage unique skills when applying for opportunities. “Maybe you use social media better than any of the older people at the gallery,” Ethan jokes. And Ethan’s own journey into the field reflects exactly this. He had been designing cartoons for the school’s newspaper when he was asked to take over as editor. During that time, he learned the operations for desktop publishing, which allowed him to land a job organising catalogues for an art gallery. Eventually, he moved to New York and was offered a long-term job with Tanya Bonakdar herself. Evidently, passion and dedication are essential. “You have to really love the art, love talking to people, and love working with artists,” Ethan concludes.



Figure 5. Artwork from Tanya Bonakdar, 521 W 21st St #1, New York, NY 10011

Sam Agnew, an artist liaison at Greene Naftali, has spent over three years navigating the dynamic and often intense New York art world. The gallery, as a whole, represents 40 artists and Sam, individually, works with 7 artists. Much of his role involves building close relationships with the artists, “meeting them in their studio spaces and seeing how they experience the world through art.” Reflecting upon his experiences thus far, Sam emphasizes the idiosyncrasies of every artist’s process:

“Some artists want a lot of feedback, a lot of dialogue, and a much more back-and-forth type of relationship. Then some other artists just ship the paintings directly to you. They all work in their own ways and that’s why their work is what it is. You need that to be a great artist, I think.”

Reflecting on how he paved his path into the art world, Sam credits internships and merely engaging with art through any means possible. Prior to his present position at Greene Naftali, he devotedly worked his way up from unpaid internships at small art spaces to more established institutions such as Petzel Gallery. When asked to share advice to aspiring students, he concisely stated to “see a ton of art all the time,” stressing that a breadth and depth of knowledge matters more than any single credential.



Figure 7. Artwork from Greene Naftali, 508 W 26th St, New York, NY 10001



Figure 6. Artwork from Greene Naftali, 508 W 26th St, New York, NY 10001

As a recent graduate, **Bridget Jones** is currently a gallery assistant at Lisson, a role secured after interning at the gallery during college. Despite the demanding nature and the odd schedule (working Tuesday through Saturday instead of a typical Monday-to-Friday schedule), Bridget finds the experience rewarding, especially getting to work directly with living artists. “You don’t get that in a museum,” she adds.

For those hoping to break into the industry, Bridget emphasizes the importance of internships, persistent networking, but most importantly, always be open to learning. “I had no idea what I wanted to do in college,” she recalls, “but I took an art history class and realized—wait, I really love this.” A career in the art world is “definitely competitive,” she says, “but it’s really embracing and fulfilling once you’re in it.”

Emma Bowen, now a senior director at Kasmin Gallery, has spent over a decade in the art world—though her start was unplanned. She interned at David Zwirner in college, despite “[having] no idea how a gallery even worked.” After graduating, she found herself in a small SoHo photography gallery with only three staff, hence she did everything. “It was the best crash course,” she expresses. Since then, she’s steadily risen in the field. “Every day is different,” she notes, recalling a recent “whirlwind” project curating a 1960’s show that involved conservation, research, pricing, and sales strategy.

Networking with peers often occurs at art fairs but as for clients the dynamics may be more complex. “The gallery has its own roster, but I’ve built my own relationships over time. If I ever left, some clients would come with me but others may feel a sense of loyalty to the institution itself. So it’s not always black and white. That’s why trust is everything—you have to earn it, and then keep earning it.” Her advice to newcomers? Intern, network, and be persistent. “Ask good questions, show up, and don’t be afraid to connect.”

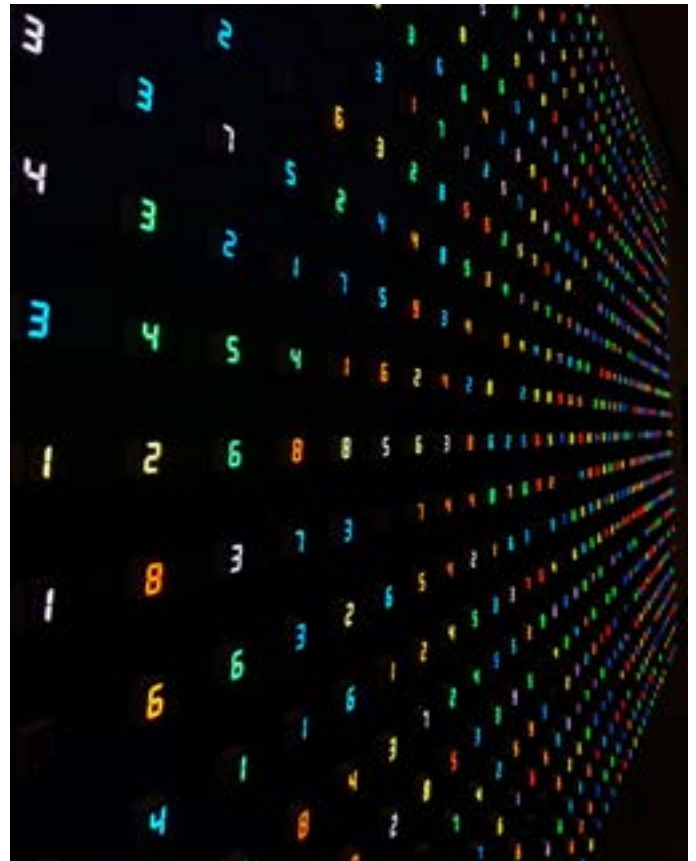


Figure 8. Artwork from Lisson Gallery, 508 W 24th St, New York, NY 10011



Figure 9. Artwork from Kasmin Gallery, 509 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001



Figure 1. A museum visitor gently engages with a tactile artwork, gliding a hand over the texturized surface

There's More to It Than Meets the Eye

Ella Blanco '28

Imagine this scene: a mother, in a dress, and her son, in a t-shirt and shorts, are enjoying the sun, standing in a hilly park. To their left is a singular flower bush, to their right a medium-sized rock.

Now consider this image you've created in your mind, or perhaps drawn out on a piece of paper. How certain are you that your scene and my own imagined version look identical? Regardless of how detailed my description is, can you ever truly replicate the image I envision? Furthermore, how important is it for you to understand the image exactly as it is?

Imagination's subjective nature renders it highly unlikely that two listeners, hearing the same exact narration, would picture identical images in their minds. With visually unimpaired individuals, there is typically less debate on the subject of the painting—since they perceive the same artwork—and a stronger focus on the interpretation.

However, if the paint, the medium interpreted by sighted individuals, must in some way be translated into another form that accommodates the blind and visually impaired, conflicts in understanding may arise before interpretation begins. How much does this change the experience of art?

The official MOMA audio description of Vincent Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* (Fig. 2) focuses heavily on Van Gogh's affective painting style, highlighting his dynamic brushstrokes and vivid colors and color transitions in different areas of the painting. A cheery voice details the size, the artist's inspiration for the painting, noticeable features, and colors, as well as a curator's interpretation. Splitting the painting into thirds, the narrator highlights the "crescent moon and starry night sky" with characteristic "swirling light blue bands," suggesting "a tempestuous wind" sweeping the "rolling hills" dotted with a dozen rooftops.¹

But how useful is this information to someone who is colorblind or has been visually impaired their entire life? Knowing the color of each part of the painting may be useful in constructing an understanding of the painting, but if color is used to evoke emotion or somehow subvert a scene a visually unimpaired individual may have seen, does knowing color add meaning?

Therefore, we must question what matters more in a narration: an exact description with colors, features, and technique explicitly stated or a discussion of the meaning and potential interpretations based on features of the painting. To answer this question, we should turn to the experience of visually impaired individuals. One Redditor in r/Blind, when prompted with the question “What does Art mean to you?” answered, “Nowadays, art for me has a lot to do with harmony. I can see very little and I don’t think I can truly appreciate works of painted and drawn art, but it is pleasing to see harmonic colors and lines even if all I can see is a blurry shape here and there.”² While understanding that human experience is unique and differs for every individual, this Redditor’s post seems to reflect the experience of other Redditors in the r/Blind subreddit.

Through the use of technology, museums worldwide are developing ways to bring this type of narration to visually impaired people. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has partnered with Microsoft to use Copilot, the Microsoft AI Assistant, to enhance descriptions in the museum.³ Microsoft’s AI will allow the museum to produce accurate and detailed descriptions of over one million pieces in “a matter of hours,” a huge difference from the hour previously required to write descriptions for each artwork.⁴ Copilot was put through a series of inclusive design testing sessions with visually impaired individuals, and the suggestions from “people who rely on and benefit most from descriptions” sculpted the machine learning model. This partnership hopes to inspire an estimated 95,000 museums to further prioritize art accessibility.⁵



Figure 2. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889

The Rijksmuseum has long been considered a pioneer in its accessibility initiatives, including its open-source IP and programs that extend its collections to disabled individuals prevented from attending and enjoying museums. One of their most notable programs is With Other Senses, a tour for people who are blind or visually impaired.⁶ Focused on activating non-visual senses, the Rijksmuseum offers tours to help visitors understand artworks in the museum.

One tourgoer had the opportunity to use specially designed scent necklaces and a participant recounted that she “instantly felt transported” into the story behind the painting because of the scent.⁷ Another visitor recounted, “I clearly remember that silver piece of jewelry. Maybe because we both smelled it and were able to hold one in our hands.”⁸

It seems, therefore, that one of the best ways for visually impaired people to understand artwork is to utilize all of the senses, including touch. Tactile Images brings paintings and artworks to life through 3D renderings of images to deliver visual information to the brain through an “enhanced, completely accessible, kinesthetic” experience.⁹ Paired with braille and sensors that provide a customized, touch-activated narrative, the 3D artwork creates an interactive experience for visually impaired individuals.

To design such artworks, Tactile Images first imports a 2D image of a painting into their patented technology to digitally sculpt the painting into a 3D representation. Then, braille is integrated into the painting to convey important information about the painting, artist, or other notable features. Touch-activated sensors are placed throughout the painting to supplement the senses and foster a greater understanding of the painting.

“Technology enables the transformation of an artwork into an experience that removes the necessity of sight.”



Figure 3. An image from a visit on a With Other Senses tour highlighting the use of scent necklaces as a method of storytelling for visually impaired individuals

Combining the tactile and auditory, Tactile Images ensures that visually impaired individuals are able to use their senses to understand artworks without relying on secondhand interpretations, allowing them to enjoy “a genuine experience on par with that of a sighted individual.”¹⁰

Tactile Images’ partnership with Getty Images allows individuals to curate their own collection of images and receive their own version of these tactile artworks, extending art accessibility beyond museums and exhibitions. Through their simple three-step program, anyone can have access to a tactile exhibition simply by selecting images from Getty Images, meeting with the team at Tactile Images, and approving the plans.

Additionally, their partnership with The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired launched 100 weeks of tactile exhibitions at numerous institutions across the state, as well as many traveling exhibitions, that focus on “mainstreaming accessibility in cultural spaces.”¹¹

Tactile Images’ work in Nebraska “serves as a guide for other states to make their museums more inclusive, reflecting the diverse needs of all communities.”¹²

Technology enables the transformation of an artwork into an experience that removes the necessity of sight. By engaging the other senses and putting accessibility at the forefront of the museum experience, we are able to appreciate art as a connecting experience that brings humanity, no matter one’s disabilities, together.

The eye-catching title of the Microsoft article detailing the partnership between themselves and the Rijksmuseum is more than just a gimmick to reel in readers but instead the truth about art and accessibility: “Access to art is a human right.”¹³

Finding the Viewer: A Baroque Window to the Ancient Past

by Camille Blanco '26

Decorated marble sarcophagi, adorned with vivid mythological scenes or frightening battlescapes, have long been the interest of scholars and antiquarians. While art historians have dedicated much energy to studying the iconography on Roman sarcophagi, I believe that the inherent questions of viewership and ancient reception within these functional art forms have been undervalued.

In this paper, then, I reimagine the viewing spaces of the Portonaccio and Grande Ludovisi Battle sarcophagi through seventeenth-century Baroque Roman prints to think about how ancient Roman viewers engaged with them intellectually, physically, and visually. Looking at the relationship between art and its ancient viewer allows us to free these sarcophagi from the confines of the dead museum space and reactivate them once again.

Figure 4. from page 15.





Figure 1. Unknown, *Portonaccio Sarcophagus*, c. 180-190 CE, marble, 2.39 m x 1.14m x 1.16 m

In 1931, a monumental sarcophagus was found on the Via Tiburtina (via delle Cave di Pietralata) near Portonaccio, Rome (Fig 1).² The Portonaccio Sarcophagus, as it was later named, dates to the late second century (approximately 180-190 CE), and shares many similarities with extant Antonine imperial monuments, including the Column of Marcus Aurelius, and other mass-produced and formulaic sarcophagi from this period.³ Though the wealth of iconographic detail on the Portonaccio Sarcophagus is overwhelming, its rich narrative stands testament to the exuberance of its figural relief that reveals both the military achievements of its patron and clear Roman attitudes towards the barbarians⁴ they encountered in war. Themes of *virtus* and *victoria* are all too clear on this sarcophagus, as only the base of the relief depicts barbarians in postures of resignation, pain, and mourning, while triumphant Romans occupy the other two decorative registers. It is a moment of total Roman superiority memorialized for all eternity.

By contrast, in the Grande Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus (Fig. 2), the facial features of the front panel's central figure stand out vividly from the frenzied battle scene around him. Though it is an outlier in the battle sarcophagus type—it was sculpted close to 100 years after the main group and represents a scene that “had long fallen out of fashion”⁵—scholars are enamored by its superb relief carvings and monumental size, a feature that was also notable when Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi purchased it for his antiquities collection after its discovery in Rome in 1621.



Figure 2. Unknown, *Grande Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus*, c. 250-260 CE, preconneus marble, 150cm high, Palazzo Altemps: Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome

Within this dense mass of intertwined Romans and barbarians, however, we clearly recognize that the central figure's victorious gesture marks him as the harbinger of this battle's unending victory and associates him with the values of power and the glories of Rome that he hoped to confer upon himself in the afterlife.⁶

As a whole, the narratives on both reliefs characterize distinctive Roman attitudes towards barbarians during the Crisis of the Third Century, a period when the Roman Empire nearly collapsed due to combined political, economic, social, and military pressures. The main message of these sarcophagi is to represent the protagonist's *virtus* in the face of barbarians, a concept that, as Yves Dauge recognizes, was applied to non-Romans in order to emphasize an ideology of superiority and the triumph of *Romanitas* above all.⁷ Yet, a fundamental question remains: Who was able to see these reliefs and under what circumstances?

Roman tombs were opened to visitors only four times a year: during the deceased's death-day, his or her birthday, the *Parentalia* (13-21 February) and the *Lemuria* (9, 11, and 13 May).⁸ During the *Parentalia*, a festival dedicated to the worship of the dead, deceased relatives were commemorated through domestic rituals meant to strengthen the links between the living and dead members of one's family. Ovid's *Fasti* (Book II) and Ausonius' *Parentalia* are perhaps the most comprehensive texts, in ancient Roman literature, that could aid in a recreation of the viewing experiences of Roman tombs.

Yet the main issue is that Ovid's work, as an investigation into the religious ceremonies, does not reflect all the possible perspectives or ranges of viewership that we would expect. Ausonius' collection comprises eulogies to the poet's dead relatives rather than a description of the Roman religious rites. While these texts can supplement, they alone cannot give us the full picture of these spaces. Thus, I propose we turn to the work of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century engravers, mainly those of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) and Pietro Santi Bartoli (1635-1700).



Figure 4. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta di altra parte della Camera Sepolcrale di L. Arrunzio*, engraving, 1756 from *Le antichità Romane*, Vol. II, Plate 10



Figure 3. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Camera Sepolcrale pochi passi distante da quella già descritta della Famiglia di L. Arrunzio nella stessa vigna*, engraving, 1756 from *Le antichità Romane*, Vol. II, Plate 16



Figure 5. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta in prospettiva che rappresenta la metà, allametà apposta corrispondente, della Camera sepolcrale de' Liberti e Servi e.c. della Famiglia di Augusto*, engraving, 1756 from *Le antichità Romane*, Vol. III, Plate 26

With the caveat that many Baroque engravers took artistic liberties in their depictions of Roman antiquity, these engravings demonstrate that Roman sarcophagi were placed against the walls of tombs, either underneath the rows of dovecote chambers that extended to the ceilings or alone in a large sepulchre. Perhaps the most famous representations of these tombs comes from the second and third volumes of Piranesi's *Le antichità Romane*. In these engravings (Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6) we encounter groups of men dressed in Baroque Italian costume walking amongst and observing ruinous tombs. In each of these engravings, Piranesi depicts sarcophagi pushed against the walls of the tombs, in the recesses of semicircular niches with spaces for urns or even in the middle of the tomb-space. Given the presence of urn-niches, it appears that Piranesi either depicts tombs in a transitional phase, when the practice of cremation had not yet been abandoned, or those that incorporate earlier cremation with later inhumation practices as a record of hundreds of years of family genealogy.



Figure 6. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Iscrizioni de' Liberti e Servi della Famiglia di Augusto*, engraving, 1756 from *Le antichità Romane*, Vol. III, Plate 30

In his own publication of the tomb of Severus Alexander and Julia Mammea (Fig. 7), Bartoli depicts an arched sepulchre above the tomb's main hall where the emperor's sarcophagus is placed against the wall. Unfortunately, while Bartoli does not depict the full pictorial details of this space—including the wall frescoes, stucco decorations, or sarcophagus reliefs that were most definitely present—it is likely that the sarcophagus may have been placed “within recessed arcosolia” in the decorated stucco schemes of the newly reconfigured interior spaces of these tombs after the second century shift to inhumation.⁹ Other excavated tombs, such as the Isola Sacra necropolis and the Tomb of the Octavii on the Via Triumphalis (where the Portonaccio Sarcophagus was found in the early 20th century), support this theory as they have revealed sarcophagi in arcosolia as depicted in both Piranesi's and Bartoli's engravings.

A possible argument concludes that a combination of the ancient textual and early modern visual sources allows for a recreation of this imagined viewer space. During the celebration of the Parentalia commemoration rites, this multisensorial space of emotion and remembrance gave way to unique viewing experiences regardless of social status, for the bonds of Roman familial obligation (whether toward the deep past or the immediate future) was a vital, if not, expected behavior for the proper Roman.¹⁰ Within these tight spaces of elite tomb chambers—accessed by narrow *dromoi* and vestibules and illuminated only by the flickering flames of torches—viewers were invited to activate this liminal space between life and death through ritual and even the most rudimentary act of looking.

The sarcophagi did not function alone, however. Along with the complicated pictorial programme of the tomb's stuccoed paintings—a topic that warrants another study—every viewer in this space would reactivate the chaotic grandeur of these intricate battle scenes. To me, Fanny Dolansky puts it best: “The smell of fresh flowers and burning incense, the sounds of prayers commingled with plaintive cries and conversation, and the sight of people streaming towards funerary monuments all contributed to the sensory experiences of the commemorative rites.”¹¹

Figure 7. Pietro Santi Bartoli, *Engraving of the tomb of Severus Alexander and Julia Mammea* from *Gli antichi sepolcri*, Plate 80, engraving, 1697



Thus, it seems that the experience of these sarcophagi is not limited to the static, unimaginative spaces of modern museums. The materiality of death presented in these spaces of spectacle and remembrance redeems and reanimates the deceased in the face of destruction and oblivion.

In this period of dizzying turnovers of usurpers to the Roman throne, borders under pressure, inflationary spirals, disease, and war, perhaps Roman viewers turned back to these spaces with fervor to bring comfort in the face of the personal and social traumas of conflict. In these sarcophagi, elite viewers saw members of their family, immediate loved ones even, whose career and existence not only gave “self affirmation outside his family” but comfort and strength to their household or *collegia*.¹² In an otherwise silent space, the aura of victory rings through triumphant Romans and defeated barbarians, a threat that, to second and third century viewers, became progressively more tangible.

Imagining viewer spaces is, without a doubt, challenging. But, by incorporating a new lens with the works of Early Modern Italian antiquarians—through which we can attempt to recreate ancient viewer spaces—all works of ancient Roman art have the capacity to “find the viewer,” if we really try. In rediscovering these compelling visualizations of antiquity, which are inherent to a study of these works, they redefine the role of the viewer in the ancient world—one that demands our attention, admiration, and profound investigation, especially within the larger realm of art history. Besides dissonance in scholarly works and the fragmented nature of the archaeological record, there is no doubt that a recreation of the viewer spaces of these Roman battle sarcophagi makes them come alive.

A New Art Form, A Call to Reform: The Council of Trent and Post-Tridentine Art

Parsa Zaheri '27

In this article, I trace the history of the Council of Trent and examine exemplary paintings from before and after the Council, focusing particularly on how the artists' choices of subject matter and compositional arrangement relate to the ecumenical council's edicts on religious art. I ultimately propose that the period immediately following the Council of Trent should be considered a distinct artistic movement in its own right, the Post-Tridentine period, inserted in the well-established art historical chronology of the High Renaissance, Mannerist, and Baroque periods.

By the mid-1500s, the Protestant Reformation was well underway. Protestant leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin had established a name and theology for themselves. The creation of icons and artworks as aids in prayer had come under attack by certain Protestant leaders, especially Calvin. Adherents of Reformed Christianity, or Calvinists, were concerned that Catholics were unduly reliant on altarpieces and praying to the work of art itself instead of using the work to channel their prayers to God. Thus, to cleanse the Catholic Church of its supposed heretical worship of idols, the Calvinists began a campaign to destroy religious art



Figure 2. from page 9

throughout Europe, beginning with the destruction of altarpieces and progressing into the sheer devastation of churches and religious spaces with the destruction of crucifixes and chalices, shattering of stained glass, and stamping out of altarpieces and altartables alike. This iconoclastic movement proved to be incredibly systematic and thorough in destroying works of art, especially in England and the Netherlands.

By the 1540s, the Catholic Church had come to realize the grave threat Protestantism posed to religious and political stability in Europe. From 1545 to 1563, Catholic clergymen gathered in an ecumenical council, which became known as the Council of Trent, to fortify a theological response to the criticisms of the Reformation. The last of the twenty-five sessions responded to the Protestant condemnation of religious art, crucially reaffirming the acceptability and necessity of “the sacred use of images” as long as “all filthy lucre be abolished” and “all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust.”¹ In addition to calling for decorous and proper subject matter in art, they also called for a change in the composition of artworks. They stated, “there [should] be nothing seen [in sacred images] that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.”² In other words, the clergymen called for art that could be clearly understood and not “confusedly arranged” in order to ensure that the spiritual message being conveyed by the work was clear and understandable by the lay faithful. In all, the Council of Trent mandated two principles for art: that it should affirm its propriety as an aid in religious worship and be composed of acceptable subject matter and qualities.

While the characterization of Post-Tridentine art has posed a challenge for many art historians, the label “Post-Tridentine” generally applies to art made between 1563 and 1600 that adhered to the artistic decrees of the Council of Trent. To truly understand the impact of the Council, I compare one work of religious art created before its occurrence with another sacred work after the council’s edict.



Figure 1. Bronzino, *Descent of Christ into Limbo*, 1552. Oil on wood (altarpiece and step); carved and gilded wood (frame), 443 x 291 x 4 cm.

In 1552, Bronzino painted the *Descent of Christ into Limbo* (fig. 1) for the Basilica of Santa Croce, the primary Franciscan church of Florence. Placed adjacent to the church’s main doors, it depicts the “Harrowing of Hell,” the story of Christ’s triumphant descent into hell based on the First Epistle of Peter, where St. Peter writes, “In which also coming [Jesus Christ] preached to those spirits that were in prison.”³ The idea of “spirits that were in prison” became interpreted to mean an intermediate state of souls, souls who were not in Heaven because Heaven cannot be feasibly considered a “prison” and not in Hell because damnation is eternal and Christ had no reason to preach to those who had no way to redeem themselves. Although the exact location of Christ’s descent is debated, the primary interpretation is that Christ descended into Limbo to rescue and set free the unbaptized, righteous souls who had died prior to Christ’s descent into Limbo, such as the Old Testament Patriarchs and Prophets.

Bronzino’s painting is an exemplar of Mannerist art, exhibiting many of its controversial artistic features.



Figure 2. Michelangelo and Daniele da Volterra (repainted additions), *Last Judgment*, 1536-1541. Fresco, 14 m x 12 m

The composition is cluttered and filled with figures, creating a sense of confusion, ambiguity, and disorientation that is typical of Mannerist art. When Bronzino first exhibited the painting in Santa Croce in 1552, the work was heavily praised by the public for its sophistication. However, as the Council of Trent eventually influenced conceptions of art, the public reception to the work changed. By the 1580s, Bronzino's painting faced a great deal of criticism and backlash from the public, who were offended by the overwhelming nudity of the figures of the women, which seemed to fly in the face of the Council of Trent's stipulation that "all lasciviousness be avoided"⁴ in art. Thus, though Bronzino's *Descent of Christ into Limbo* is certainly not as overwhelmingly improper and indecent as earlier Mannerist works, the painting still exhibits features that were objectionable to a Post-Tridentine audience.

By the 1570s and 1580s, the news of the decrees of the Council of Trent had spread from Italy to countries throughout Europe, including Spain, where, in 1577, the artist El Greco painted the *Holy Trinity* (fig. 3), a work of art that encapsulates the Post-Tridentine spirit by synchronizing appropriate subject matter with proper composition.

The painting portrays the Holy Trinity, the Christian concept that God exists as a triune, a singular entity composed of three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. El Greco strips the painting of all unnecessary content and leaves the viewer with just the central subject matter. The painting depicts the trinity held up by angels on a cloud, with God the Father holding the crucified body of Christ and the Holy Spirit flying out from a burst of light above the Father and Son. The figures are not "painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust;"⁵ rather, the body of Christ is relatively well-covered by a white linen cloth and resembles the positioning of the deceased Christ on Michelangelo's *Pietà*. Similarly, the painting is not "confusedly arranged;"⁶ instead, the three figures form a stable and balanced pyramidal composition, frequently used during the High Renaissance, that frames and centers the subject matter.

Despite being held up as one of the most eminent and influential works of art today, Michelangelo's 1534-1541 fresco of the *Last Judgement* (fig. 2) on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel faced one of the greatest Post-Tridentine scandals and controversies.

There were a few issues people took with Michelangelo's depiction of the Last Judgment, including the complex and confusing poses, crowded composition, Jesus's lack of a beard, and the fact that nearly all of the figures, including Jesus and the saints, were completely nude. Pietro Arentino, an Italian author wrote to Michelangelo in a 1545 letter, "as a baptized Christian, I blush before the license, so forbidden to man's intellect, which you have used in expressing ideas connected with the highest aims and final ends to which our faith aspire... Your art would be at home in some voluptuous bagnio [public bathhouse or brothel], certainly not in the highest chapel of the world."⁷ The furor and uproar over Michelangelo's Last Judgement was so profound that the artist Daniele da Volterra was contracted to paint clothing over many of the nude figures in Michelangelo's fresco, which is how the figures remain today.



Figure 3. El Greco, *The Holy Trinity*, 1577-1579. Oil on canvas, 300 cm x 179 cm



Figure 4. Barocci, *Madonna del Popolo*, 1575-1579. Oil on canvas, 395 cm x 252 cm

Overall, the indignation and reforms to Michelangelo's Last Judgement show the reach of the artistic decrees of the Council of Trent and how Post-Tridentine art applied not only to new art being created after 1563 but also was a movement that retroactively looked back to previous prominent works of art and amended them to more closely align with the public sentiment after 1563.

In the immediate conclusion of the Council of Trent and the decades following it, European art underwent changes so profound that formerly esteemed masterpieces were denounced and lampooned. Despite the fact that art was only discussed in the last session of the Council of Trent in a few short paragraphs, those decrees about art forever changed the path of art history, simultaneously attempting to amend Mannerist art preceding it and setting the stage for Baroque art which followed it. While traditionally not thought of as its own art movement, public European art from 1560 to 1600 was so drastically different from both its predecessors and successors that it may be worth considering the Post-Tridentine spirit and atmosphere next time you see a work of Renaissance art from the latter half of the 16th century.

Varied Motivations for the Breakdown of Medium Specificity

Cara Ianuale '26



Figure 1. Gina Pane, Still from *Action Nourriture/Actualités télévisées/Feu*, 1971

"It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique in the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thus would each art be rendered "pure," and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence."¹

In "Modernist Painting," critic Clement Greenberg articulates an early concept of "medium specificity," more plainly defined as the distinction of traditional artistic categories like painting or sculpture that emphasizes the characteristics and unique qualities of each medium. Adherents of Greenberg's formalist critique advocated the removal of art from social, political, and cultural contexts. This modernist urge reached its peak in the mid-20th century.

Eventually, however, the decades following WWII bore the dissolution of medium specificity. Post-medium artists embraced almost every material imaginable—nature, light, gallery space, public space, the body, and even weapons, to name a few—following limitless formal, aesthetic, cultural, and political convictions.

To illuminate some of these motivations, I turn to three cornerstones of postwar art. I first consider how George Brecht's *Three Dances* performance embraces material banality to purge the distinction between art and life. I then examine how Gina Pane's performance *Television Fire News Nourishment* and Barbara Kruger's *We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture* more critically break from medium specificity using their own body and appropriated mass media imagery, respectively, to expose how the individual is shaped by institutional powers.

Fluxus artist George Brecht's utilization of bodily fluids as medium in his 1963 performance *Three Dances* materializes the Fluxus movement's radical demonstration of the fluctuation between art and life. Fluxus was a loosely-organized international collective that sought to overturn the established art world—founder George Maciunas' single page "Fluxus Manifesto" succinctly describes its ambitions as the creation of a revolutionary "living art" that completely purged existing social culture and was easily understood by the people.² In *Three Dances*, a pocket-sized cream-colored card (Fig. 2) titled "THREE DANCES" in black typed font features a short, numbered list of instructions for a single performer. Number one simply reads "Saliva," number two reads "Pause. Urination. Repeat." with each word on a successive line, and number three reads "Perspiration." The lines conclude with the season and year performed and the artist's name in smaller font. This short score radically recontextualizes easily repeatable, everyday actions and objects within the context of performance art. Even more radically, it allows saliva, urine, and sweat to become the medium.

In viewing the staging of such mundane bodily functions, the viewer becomes aware that they are also currently performing at least one of the three stages of *Three Dances*—they might be sweating in the tightly-packed audience or salivating as they sip a drink.

"It allows saliva, urine, and sweat to become the medium."

As both are now involved in the performance of a routine bodily function, the distance between the performer and audience shrinks; thus, art becomes de-skilled and long-established distinctions between high art and mundane life dissolve. This concept of flux, materialized by the shifting of fluids between different states, lies at the heart of the Fluxus (as the name aptly suggests). Rather than separate art and life, the performed secretion of bodily liquids unsanctimoniously desecrates elite conceptions of art, asserting the mutability of the categories.

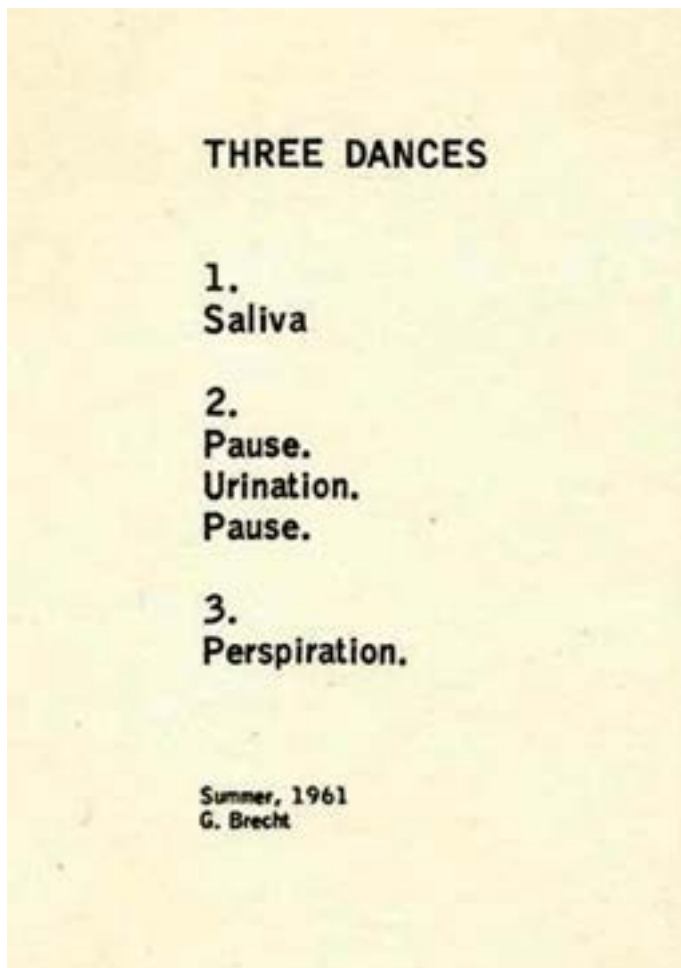


Figure 2. George Brecht, *Three Dances* (card score version) from *Water Yam*, 1963

Gina Pane's body becomes the medium of her 1971 taped performance *Television Fire News Nourishment* (Fig. 1), which makes visible the subject's desensitization to and complicity in social and political violence. Pane invites viewers to her apartment and makes them pay a percentage of their salaries at the door.

They then watch Pane force herself to digest and regurgitate raw meat and put out small fires with her bare hands while watching news reports of disturbing yet ubiquitous stories of mass violence, war, and destruction. Crucially (and this forms the backbone of Pane's commentary), despite their visceral repulsion, spectators do not once intervene. Pane's ritualistic, repetitious self-inflicted violence mirrors the gut-churning violence featured in the daily news cycle at the time, the persistent horror of which desensitizes those who are inundated and placed at a safe distance from their complicity as citizens in their nations' state-sanctioned or systemic acts. Her body becomes a stand-in for the whole, representing every overexposed news watcher; the act of vomiting symbolically exorcises the brutality shoved down her throat everyday by the news. Pane's viewers are forced to confront an up-close, in-person display of bodily violence that re-sensitizes them to what they have become accustomed to ignoring, thus drawing attention to their complicity in both her personal situation and worldwide events.

In Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970, Kathy O'Dell addresses Pane's performance of complicity as a prime example of the "masochistic contract," in which artist and audience explicitly or implicitly agree to engage in an event that elicits both pleasure and suffering, in neither of their best interests.³ She notes that Pane's mandated salary deposit literalizes the contractual nature of her masochistic performance. Like Brecht, Pane invokes bodily functions and responses in her performance; however, unlike Brecht, whose work more optimistically advocates a revolutionary democratization of art, leveling it with the realm of life, Pane does not offer a liberatory potential. Rather, she uses her own body as a critical site to reproduce political forces that shape the subject's (in)actions (or lack thereof).

To be a subject, Pane asserts, is to be subjected to larger powers. In having her body stand in for the whole, Pane attempts to viscerally reconnect the relationship between everyday actions and larger sociopolitical structures.

Finally, Barbara Kruger tackles the individual-institution relation through a decidedly less organic medium: her appropriation of advertisement and magazine imagery and text in her 1983 work *Untitled (We won't play nature to your culture)* (Fig. 3) addresses how mass media shapes the subject. Following the failures of sixties-era political and social movements and the coinciding neoconservative surge, artists embraced a new form of de-territorialized power in (what became known as) the postmodern movement. Diverging from the more nihilistic or neoconservative postmodernists, Kruger embarks on a more critical route. *We won't play* features a black-and-white close-up shot of a reclining woman's face, eyes closed with a narrow leaf placed on top of each eyelid. Running along the top and bottom of the composition in bolded, white sans-serif font is the phrase "We won't play nature / to your culture." By appropriating an image circulating in popular culture, the artist entices the viewer; the overlaid text then upsets the viewer's understanding of the image's conventional meanings and associations. The chosen phrase criticizes the gendered nature-culture (feminine-masculine) binary, introducing an oppositional voice that denaturalizes the viewer's assumption that readymade images transparently communicate. Furthermore, the ambiguous pronouns "we" and "your" directly invite the viewer into a criticism of this gendered binary.

Thus, Kruger forces the viewer to confront the notion that there are no natural subjects—instead, nature is a product of culture and, ultimately, both are shaped by media portrayals. Kruger's work is similar to Pane's in that they both critically seek to denaturalize what might be assumed to be typical human responses to the pervasive mass media and persistent exposure to violent news cycles, respectively. It differs widely from Brecht's, whose work enthuses the everyday, common, and banal; although Kruger also works with a common, relatively accessible medium, she more cynically critiques its role in forming the individual subject.



Figure 3. Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (We won't play nature to your culture)*, 1983

All three artists engage with radically unconventional mediums that span the bodily to the textual. Whether these three works succeeded in their intentions is beyond the scope of this article—it is arguable whether Brecht's directions to salivate constitute a revolution or a mere symbolic gesture towards one. Undeniably, however, such daring uses of medium ruptured traditional ideas of art, challenging societal and systemic forces that, for years, artists pushed out of their work. In the late twentieth century, amidst rapid technological development and globalization, artists began to reflect on the issues and complexities fueled by such dizzying global evolution, carrying the impulse to experiment with medium into works that utilize digital technology and other new tools.

"Post-medium artists embraced almost every material imaginable—nature, light, gallery space, public space, the body, and even weapons, to name a few."

Where Does Art Meet Dentistry?

Eden Ben-Shoshan '28

When one thinks of healthcare and related professional fields, artistry is rarely the first skill that comes to mind. Scientific and healthcare-based disciplines are often perceived as objective, structured, and empirical by nature while art is subjective, creative, and expressive. However, as distinct as the two subjects may be, art subtly permeates all levels of science.

Dentistry provides a prime example of this intersection. In fact, many dental schools recommend prospective students to take courses in sculpture and drawing before applying. The convergence of art and dentistry is most clearly seen within the field of prosthodontics, which is a specialized branch of dentistry that focuses on the restoration of teeth, gums, and other dental tissues through the creation of dental prostheses.

By interviewing Samuel Zwetchkenbaum, State Dental Director at the Rhode Island Department of Health and former prosthodontist, it became clear that dentistry requires both a deep understanding of the behaviors of teeth, gums, and oral structures combined with an intuitive grasp of shape, composition, and balance.

Part of this requires a thorough understanding and fine attention to detail, specifically when it comes to color. Teeth are not simply solid white. They often have tints of yellow and red, as well as surface imperfections, translucencies, and texture.

According to the 7th edition of *Sturdevant's Art and Science of Operative Dentistry* (a later version of the textbook that Dr. Zwetchkenbaum used during his time in dental school) dental professionals use a dental shade guide to accurately match the patient's teeth color. This requires an understanding of the differences between hues, chroma, and value.

Commercial shade guides are typically labeled with a combination of letters and numbers to represent different colors. The numbers indicate chroma and value, while the letters represent the hues of reddish-brown, reddish-yellow, grey, and reddish-grey.¹ By applying these concepts, prosthodontists can create aesthetically pleasing and functional restorations that look natural and complement the overall facial structure.

When creating dental prosthetics, it is crucial to consider the shape and function of each tooth. There are four main types of teeth: incisors, canines, premolars, and molars. The shape and size of these teeth vary and can influence how the lips sit on one's face, one's facial height, one's jaw, and one's ability to chew comfortably.

In order to achieve the most natural results, the creation of prosthetic teeth rely on an understanding of space, balance, and unity. In order to ensure that the composition of the smile is balanced, prosthodontists need to guarantee that the restoration will fit harmoniously within the patient's oral environment and facial features. Evidently, proportion plays a key role in this process, helping create guidelines for the size and shape of the prosthetic teeth.

In terms of aesthetics, Dr. Zwetchkenbaum added that there are specific anatomical guidelines to follow, such as alignment of the canines with the center of the iris, providing enough lip support so that the teeth don't protrude too far, and slightly rotating the teeth to mimic the natural appearance of dentition as they emerge from the bone. The significance of shape is explored in depth by Jin-Ho Phark and Giuseppe Romeo in their 2017 article titled *Dental Anatomical Combinations: A Guide to Ultimate Dental Esthetics*. Phark and Romeo discuss the three most common tooth shapes (square, ovoid, and triangular) and how they can be combined to achieve even more lifelike tooth structure.²

Though, an even more subtle way of attaining the most lifelike replication is by including surface texture, delicate grooves, ridges, and imperfections. This meticulous attention to detail is similar to the approach taken by sculptors, who must carefully consider how light hits their work, throwing deep grooves into shadow and illuminating the planes of others.

Dr. Zwetchkenbaum even noted that the process of creating prosthetics is comparable to the lost wax technique, an ancient method used in sculpture and metal casting, which involves creating a model from wax that is melted (lost) during the casting process. While this allows for intricate and detailed castings in materials like bronze or gold, in prosthetic reconstruction, especially in maxillofacial prosthetics, Dr. Zwetchkenbaum's work involved using the wax model to create an accurate prosthetic mold often made of silicone, acrylics, or ceramics.

The future of dentistry and the creation of prosthetics is on the brink of a significant transformation with the advent of 3D printing and CAD/CAM technology. The creation of dentures, veneers, and crowns have traditionally involved a hands-on process, but these new technologies are streamlining the design and manufacturing process by improving precision, efficiency, and customization.

The continued integration of 3D printing, digital sculpting, and other cutting-edge technologies will require dental professionals in the future to be proficient in digital art and design techniques. This proficiency will be crucial for producing customized, precise restorations. Moreover, it also exemplifies the fusion between pragmatic sciences and artistic creativity.

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Finding the Viewer: A Baroque Window to the Ancient Past

1. *Note:* This is an abbreviated version of the final section of my graduate seminar research project, titled "Monumentum Memoriae: Finding the Viewer in Late Antique Roman Sarcophagi"; which examines two well-known sarcophagi that depict battle scenes between Romans and barbarians—the Portonaccio Sarcophagus (ca. 180–190 CE) and the Grande Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus (ca. 250–260 CE)—to argue that we can recover ancient Roman viewership through the ways in which these depictions of barbarians may have been received by their intended audiences. The final section, manifested in this paper, reimagines the viewing spaces of these sarcophagi through Baroque Roman engravings in order to think about how Roman viewers engaged with them intellectually, physically, and visually.
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4. For the purposes of this paper, which investigates the tense political period of the second and third centuries, I retain use of the word *barbarian*. I use it here to denote the original meaning that the ancient authors imbued in it: the non-Latin speaking peoples who inhabited the immediate hinterlands of the Roman Empire. Regardless, this word should be treated with sensitivity. I do not mean for this term to perpetuate an *us versus them* relationship, but to be an emblem that emphasizes Roman imperial concerns with these

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