



# Art and Presence

## Second Early Modern Symposium

10.00 – 17.30, Saturday 20 November 2010 (with registration from 9.30am)  
The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN

## ABSTRACTS

**Wendy Ikemoto (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

***Cole's Challenge: Presence and Absence in Landscape Painting***

This paper examines a set of companion landscapes by Thomas Cole. It contends that the *Departure* and *Return* pose a challenge to viewing, and that they make extraordinary use of the companion format to do so. Specifically, the pairing takes advantage of the absence between companion paintings: the play between what is made present in the paintings and what is absent between them becomes key to its significance. The paper reads Cole's challenge as a response to an early-19th century milieu of passive popular spectacle and entertainment, and as an effort to promote instead a more effortful approach to art.

**Jocelyn Anderson (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

***Presence in 'Views of Stowe'***

*Views of Stowe* is a set of engravings based on drawings by Jacques Rigaud. Begun in 1733, the engravings are an exceptional record of the gardens at Stowe (Buckinghamshire); however, perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the images is Rigaud's decision to depict the gardens filled with people. This paper focuses on the presence of those figures: who are they? Why are they there? Most importantly, how does their presence affect Stowe as a place?

**Andreas Gehlert (independent scholar)**

***Representation and Presence in Spanish Group Portraits: at Dinner, at Prayer, at Rest***

When looking at representations of the Spanish court in paintings of the Siglo de Oro, modern viewers tend to assume an Aristotelian unity of time and space. However, these pictures typically portray groups of people from different times and distant places united on canvas to convey an idea that goes beyond the mere presence in the scene.

The seemingly simple compositions of these group portraits frequently hide very complex layers of meaning, ranging from strong political to highly poetical messages. The paintings examined cover a period from 1596 to 1646 and will include a newly-discovered painting by Velázquez.

**Frederique Baumgartner (Harvard University)**

***Destroying Royal Presence? Hubert Robert, Saint-Denis, and the Musée des Monuments Français***

This paper compares two paintings by Hubert Robert. *Violation of the Royal Vaults* depicts the vandalism of the Kings' tombs in Saint-Denis (1793). *A Room of the Musée des Monuments Français* shows fragments of royal funerary monuments snatched from the vandals and exhibited in the Musée (1795).

Robert's paintings question the success of the vandalism of the tombs and of the Musée des Monuments Français in their shared attempt to destroy royal presence. Baumgartner argues that in Robert's view, the curatorial choices at the Musée were unsuccessful in destroying royal presence and in transforming the funerary monuments into aesthetic objects.

**Felicity Bodenstein (Université Paris IV Sorbonne)**

***Metaphors and Metonymies in the Romantic Experience of Classical Antiquity***

This presentation will consider accounts from romantic writers and critics relating their experience of the displays of classical antiquity in the Louvre. Taking the *Venus de Milo* as our main example, with texts by Heinrich Heine and Théophile Gautier, we will examine how they express the presence of the artwork in relation to its status as an historical object. Its resurrection through the archaeological process and its incompleteness transpire as important themes. In this analysis, the object appears as an ideal embodiment of the past that haunts the museum – precisely because of its exceptional aesthetic quality – placing the notion of presence beyond the idea of likeness or representation.

**Macarena Moralejo Ortega (Universidad de Valladolid y Academia de Espana en Roma)**

***'Ogni Pittore Dipinge Se': The Worship of the Artists in Federico Zuccari's Drawings***

The admiration, respect and sublimation of the notion of 'genius', as Giordano Bruno described at the end of the late sixteenth century, caused the interest of Federico Zuccari (1539-1609), as well as what he revealed in his art theory and in his most personal drawings. In this regard, he recognised the talent and multifaceted personality of several modern painting masters, such as Michelangelo, Raffaello, Polidoro da Caravaggio and his own brother, Taddeo Zuccari, through the portraits he made of them over the last years of his life.

The idea of perpetuating their memory also hid other more attractive incentives: to immortalise his own family lineage and present himself as the heir to the aesthetic tendencies espoused by the Masters of Renaissance. These preparatory drawings were intended to be part of an ambitious decorative program designed for one of the main rooms of the Palazzo Zuccari, that is, the residence built in the late sixteenth century at the heart of Rome for his family and as a training institution for young artists. However, the substantial costs of the construction and the lack of money definitely paralysed the decorative works.

Our aim is, firstly, to reconstruct the way in which these drawings were organised inside the residence, and secondly, to highlight the complex meaning that enclose through the writings of the artist and the contribution of one of his closest friends, the humanist Pierleone Casella. In addition, some of these drawings, preserved in different Italian and French Collections, must be compared with two portraits, probably painted by one of his followers.

**Allison Goudie (independent scholar)**

***The Enduring Presence of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples: The Life and Afterlife of a Wax Portrait Bust***

Reproduced in black and white, and cropped to hide its plinth, a wax bust of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples (c.1800) has the uncanny effect of confronting its present-day viewer with what appears to be a photograph of someone who died before photography's discovery. The paper will take this trompe-l'oeil experience as a starting point for exploring wax portraiture's ability to defy geographical and temporal absence. Inherently indexical – the bust of Maria Carolina was created by means of a cast of the Queen's face – such portraits remain thoroughly charged with the presence of the original sitter even after any trompe-l'oeil effect has worn off; they are effectively negatives of their sitters' own flesh. The idea of the wax portrait as actual corporeal body is either portraiture at its limits, or perhaps at its very essence. If the bust is Maria Carolina, then are we in fact looking at a photo of her?

**Aris Sarafianos (University of Ioannina)**

***Manual, Visceral and Magic Visions: Hard Imitation and the Vitality of Illustrating the Womb***

This paper explores the rise of anatomical realism in 18<sup>th</sup> century medical illustration, cast-making and aesthetic discourse. The original drawings, casts and writings of Jan van Rymsdyk, William Hunter and Charles Nicholas Jenty will reveal that hyper-naturalism emerges as a discursive technology intended to maximize self-reflexive and experimental engagement with reality as well as new sensory experiences – immediacy, 'energy' and 'vitality'. Such 'facsimile imitations' will be compared with parallel developments in France, most prominently Diderot's fascination with the 'magic' and 'force' of reality-effects and the complex corporeal experience of contractile action he associated with them. Finally, through the much overlooked writings of Jan van Rymsdyk, the plebeian nature of hard imitations will be addressed.

**Sjoukje van der Meulen (University of Illinois, Chicago): *Natural, Mediated, and Witnessed Presence in the Work of Pierre Huyghe***

The relationship between presence and representation is complicated in the current age of advanced media conditions, in which, as Rosalind Krauss puts it, 'reality retreats behind the mirage-like screen of the media'. Pierre Huyghe is one artist who has consistently focused on the tensions between presence and representation within the postwar context of the arts and the media. Considering the sophistication of Huyghe's work with regard to the riddle of presence in the context of contemporary means of representation, this paper argues that the artist's work asks for being interpreted through up to date presence theories within the field of media studies.

**Gyöngyvér Horváth (UEA, Norwich/ MOME Budapest): *Visual Anachronisms and the Principle of Presentia***

When Carlo Crivelli placed the scene of Annunciation (1486, London, National Gallery) in the Renaissance town of Ascoli, dressed the humbled Mary in the latest fashion and included the intervening Saint Emidius, the patron saint of the city, he radically changed the religious narrative. With this anachronistic rendering of the story, Crivelli created the atmosphere of presentness in order to encourage active participation in the biblical event. As Gyöngyvér Horváth argues here, apart from the obvious civic representation, in the fifteenth century Italian painting the theological principle of presentia, the principle of the living faith justified the use of such anachronisms.

**Jane Eade (University of Sussex): *Touching God in Flemish Still Lives***

This paper examines a small but surprising corpus of seventeenth-century Flemish still-life paintings that depict the Eucharist within a garland of flowers. Wreathed in fruit and flowers, the striking depiction of the body of Christ as a still-life – a white disc projected from the darkness at the centre – plays on the power of the senses to conjure a sense of presence as something both immanent in the world and yet transcending it. The superior illusionism of the paintings has parallels with Early Modern devotions such as the Forty Hours and the techniques of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola in their attempt, through sustained visualisation, to direct the senses to a specific, contemplative, end.

However, while playing on vision as a form of exchange, the verisimilitude of the paintings simultaneously reinforced the power of painting to deceive. Supremely conscious of themselves as works of art, these images suggests a relationship between seeing and knowing that had become increasingly contingent upon the standpoint of a particular viewer. This paper explores this paradox, and the ambiguity of the sense of presence that results.

**Alejandra Osorio (Wellesley College): *The King is Everywhere: Royal Simulacra, Political Rule and Imperial Geography of Power in the Spanish Habsburg Empire***

The Spanish king never visited all his dominions in body. He was nonetheless 'present' in ceremonies performed throughout his empire. Philip IV witnessed his own proclamation in 1621 seated on a luxurious chair in viceregal Lima's plaza mayor. The king was present in material objects such as coat of arms, royal decrees and, above all, his royal portrait. Questioning the notion that the Spanish king was 'absent' from the great majority of his dominions, Alejandra Osorio examines the political implications of his presence in kingly ceremonies in his empire and their role in the creation of an imperial geography of urban power.