

# Interdisciplinarity and the Canon of Art History

by  
Selma Kraft

*Department of Fine Arts, Siena College*

**Abstract:** With the recent overthrow of the canon of art history, interest in works of art as aesthetic form is being replaced by interest in them as representations of meaning. Not only are methods and theories of disciplines other than art history being used in understanding art; art is being used as data for other disciplines. Must canon shifts lead to interdisciplinarity? Does interdisciplinarity inevitably lead to the end of distinct academic disciplines?

**I**N THE LAST DOZEN or so years, scholarly study of works of art, traditionally restricted to the discipline of art history, has become increasingly interdisciplinary. At the same time, there has been an escalating hue and cry over the state of crisis in which the discipline of art history finds itself. I intend to show that this crisis grows out of fundamental incompatibility between traditional art history as it developed and current interdisciplinary approaches to the study of art, and to raise some questions about the implications of this crisis for interdisciplinarity in reference to other disciplines.

The use of interdisciplinary approaches in art history culminates a long series of changes both in subjects studied and methodologies applied in the investigation of the history of art. By changed subject matter I mean both the addition of works of art not previously considered art-historically significant and a shift in attention to different aspects of works that are studied. By change in methodology I mean using different means than before to answer new kinds of questions that are raised. Changes in the content and methods of art history are directly influenced by implicit assumptions about which

works constitute the art-historical canon, i.e., are considered to be normative for and central to the study of art history, and about the reasons these works are thought to be art-historically significant. Such assumptions grow out of particular circumstances of time, place, class, gender, and experience of those who make them. As these circumstances have changed over the years, the subject matter of art history, the kinds of questions raised, and the methods used for answering them, have also changed.

The first person who took on the task of writing a history of art since ancient times was Giorgio Vasari, whose *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* first appeared in Florence in 1550 and then, in an enlarged second edition, in 1568 (1965). Vasari came to his maturity in Rome and Florence shortly after the deaths of Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, and while Michelangelo was still actively at work. It is no accident that Vasari, an artist trained and working in the orbit of artists who were all but worshipped as second only to God in their creativity and genius, took their art, the classical art of the High Renaissance, as the standard of excellence, the canonic norm by which he measured other art. Basing his understanding of the history of art on a model of human life as a process of development from infancy to youth to maturity, decay to old age and death, and subsequent rebirth, Vasari divided the art of the past into distinct separate developmental periods. He viewed the art of the High Renaissance as the culmination, the mature phase, of a period of rebirth of art that followed its decline during the Middle Ages. This conception of art history as an evolutionary and cyclical process of stylistic development became incorporated into the later discipline of art history. Vasari postulated no cause for stylistic change other than the idiosyncracies of individual artists. In his effort to “understand the sources and origins of various styles” he promised to “note with some care the methods, manners, styles, behaviors, and ideas of the painters and sculptors” (1965, p. 84). His method consisted of a series of aesthetic and moral value judgments interspersed with bits of anecdotal material and occasional references to purported facts about contracts, placement of works, patrons, etc. based on his own memory of them or hearsay. Vasari’s history of art consisted of a history of artists and what they did, a veritable “lives of the artists.”

Insofar as he made no attempt to distinguish between values and facts, Vasari’s approach was far from the more objective approach to the data that later characterized the discipline of art history. Nevertheless, his view of the history of art as an evolutionary series of stylistic phases, measured against the norm of High Renaissance art, determined the general outlines of what the methodology of art history would become. His acceptance of a body of

works of art, created by a small number of Italian male artists working for the most elite patronage of that time and place (both secular and religious), a body of works filled with recondite meanings about human beings in an ordered, rational, measurable world, had an enormous influence on what art historians would study. The body of works delineated by Vasari — centered on grand human themes, large, naturalistic, idealized, and meant to be seen from a privileged viewpoint — has continued (until the present crisis in the discipline) to be the canon against which all other art is measured.

In the seventeenth century, Vasari's approach to the study of art through the lives of artists continued to be followed in Italy, as well as in Northern Europe.<sup>1</sup> In the eighteenth century two new approaches were born: art criticism (independent of judgments made in works on lives of artists) and aesthetic theory. The eighteenth century also saw a new approach to the writing of art history in the work of Johann J. Winckelmann (1755), who was the first to conceive of the history of art as something other than a sequence of anecdotes about artists. He accepted Vasari's notion of the progressive periodization of art, but instead of accounting for new artistic developments by the talents and perseverance of individual artists, Winckelmann viewed such developments as aspects of the general evolution of human thought. Because he envisioned style as the expression of the thought of a period, Winckelmann could write a history of art which was not an account of the lives of artists. Following Vasari's example, he divided art history into cycles, each of which he subdivided into developmental stages. While his scheme created a new kind of nexus between works of art, it was based on incorrect information. For Winckelmann, the perfection of art was to be found in a noble simplicity and ideal grandeur that he attributed to Greek art, but what he was looking at was Roman copies of Greek art. Since he found High Renaissance art to have parallel qualities to Greek art, the canonic works of art and their normative qualities were essentially the same for Winckelmann as for Vasari.

It was not until the late nineteenth century that scholars began the study of art history as a purportedly empirical, scientific investigation of the facts. Just as Vasari's study of art had developed in the sixteenth century against a background of High Renaissance art, the discipline of art history began in the late nineteenth century close on the heels of the Impressionist movement. The goal of Impressionist artists was to show things exactly as they are seen, free from any overlay of intellectual or emotional interpretation. Monet expressed both this goal and his frustration with its elusiveness in a letter to a friend (1922):

I am set on a series of different effects (haystacks), but at this time of year, the sun goes down so quickly that I cannot follow it.... I am working at a desperately slow pace, but the further I go, the more I see that I have to work a lot in order to manage to convey what I am seeking: "instantaneity," above all, the envelopment, the same light spread over everywhere.

The fact that the Impressionists were not able to achieve their aim in no way lessens the impact of their art for its observers. While these founders of the discipline of art history (to be discussed below) did not write about Impressionism, I propose that its acceptance amongst a growing number of critics and wealthy collectors during their own lifetimes had a profound influence on their notion of which aspects of art are significant. What mattered for these art historians was visual accuracy. Although they accepted Vasari's notion of High Renaissance art as canonic, what they found to be significant was the naturalism of its forms and not the idealization of its content. Concerned as they were with pure visibility, they extended the canon to incorporate Post-Renaissance art that manifested increased visual accuracy. Like Vasari's, this body of works was essentially limited to the art of males (now European and not only Italian), who at first served an elite patronage, and later became a self-proclaimed elite themselves.

Just as the subject matter for Impressionist artists was a mere excuse for showing how we see instead of making statements about the meaning of what we see (as exemplified in Monet's series of paintings of haystacks, waterlilies, Rouen Cathedral, etc.), the meanings of art became insignificant for these art historians. The concept of style for them became limited to the formal characteristics of art, i.e., the design elements of color, shape, line, texture, and space, insofar as they are separable from the meanings they express. Using Vasari's notion of art history as an evolutionary process and the Impressionist notion that the formal qualities of art are what count, they established art history as a discipline dedicated to the explication of the development of the stylistic forms of art. In the words of Arnold Hauser (1963):

That the formalistic point of view should come to be the predominant one in art history, so that from the turn of the century art history was taken to be primarily the history of forms, would have been inconceivable but for the rise of impressionism and the theory of "art for art's sake." (p. 221).

Since they were virtually unconcerned with meanings, they did not firmly situate works of art within a cultural milieu (as did Winckelmann). Instead, they viewed the process of stylistic development as an intrinsically determined process.<sup>2</sup>

In order to trace “the history of forms,” the “scientific” art historian needed a verifiable method of identifying stylistic differences as a basis for comparison and classification of works, artists, regional styles, period styles. This requirement was met by Giovanni Morelli (1892), who in the 1890’s developed a procedure for determining authorship of works of art by careful observation of small details. Based on the notion that each artist has idiosyncratic ways of portraying such details as earlobes or fingernails, much as each individual has his or her own identifiable handwriting, Morelli created a replicatable, “objective” technique for identifying styles of individual artists based on purely formal characteristics.

Morelli’s technique was useful for purposes of attribution, but it was Bernard Berenson who, at around the same time, began compiling lists of Italian paintings, classified by style of artist, workshop, and region. Berenson (1930) accepted Vasari’s notion of an evolutionary process of art history toward an ideal style. However, for Berenson, the normative style of painting was not to be found in the art of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. Instead, he found the criterion of visual accuracy better met by Venetian Renaissance painters through such formal devices as “giving the space they paint its real depth,” “giving solid objects the full effect of the round,” [making] “distant objects less and less distinct,” and “giving some appearance of reality to the atmosphere” (1930:17). Unlike Vasari, Berenson was not concerned with the personalities or lives of artists, rather only with tracing the formal stylistic changes that led to the culmination of Venetian Renaissance painting because, for him, “Art form is like a rolling platform, which immensely facilitates advance in its own direction” (1930, p. 247). It was Berenson who established the methodology of art history as stylistic analysis rather than as biography.

Slightly later, Heinrich Wölfflin began his work on classifying works of art into period styles. In his *Principles of Art History*, first published in 1915 (1950), he noted that in each epoch the artist is limited by certain “optical” possibilities, i.e., forms of vision, which determine the stylistic forms of works of art. Wölfflin viewed the process of stylistic change as a series of pendulum swings from one extreme to another rather than as a linear evolution. His canon included both Renaissance and Baroque art, which he characterized as opposite ways of seeing. Berenson and Wölfflin shared several ideas about art history that became the unquestioned assumptions of

the first, formalist phase of the discipline of art history: *viz*, the formal, aesthetic properties of works of art are what matter; art history is constituted by changes in these properties toward or away from a visual norm; these changes occur by virtue of an intrinsic, self-contained, independent process; works of art that exhibit these changes are those that are art-historically significant; art history is a study of these changes. These formalist scholars left a legacy embodied in the sacrosanct method of teaching art history in the classroom by the unvarying use of two slide projectors for making stylistic comparisons between two slides.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was an artistic watershed. Post-impressionist artists were precariously poised between seeking the optical accuracy pursued by Impressionist artists and the radical stylistic innovativeness advanced by the newly born *avant garde*. By the early years of the twentieth century, in the hands of such artists as Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Delaunay, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Malevich, et al. art had become abstract to the point of having no recognizable representational meaning at all. In Impressionism and other styles of naturalistic art, the meaning of a work, at least on the basic level of recognizing what was represented by the work, was readily accessible to any viewer. Meaning was not an issue. With the onslaught of art with no apparent meanings, viewers needed explanations, and the role of art critic as an intermediary between the artist and the artist's public, as an interpreter, became firmly established.

It was against this background that a different approach to the study of art appeared in the early decades of the twentieth century — one that made content prior to form. Its major spokesperson was Erwin Panofsky.<sup>3</sup> Though I believe it inevitable that Panofsky was influenced in his attitudes toward art by the art of those accepted by an influential intelligentsia as the great artists of his day, he did not investigate this art. Panofsky accepted High Renaissance art as the norm; works leading up to it or derivative from it were the ones that he studied. However, the kinds of questions he asked about this art were different from those asked by the formalist art historians who had come before him.

Panofsky's contextualist critique required art historians to consider the world surrounding formalism's self-contained process of stylistic change. Formalists did, of course, allow that art reflects its culture somehow. Nevertheless, taking stylistic change to be autonomously generated, they did not investigate its context. In his analysis of meanings, Panofsky spoke of three levels of meaning: natural, referring to the work's visually recognizable subjects; iconographic, referring to the culturally determined symbolic meaning of, for example, a halo or cross; and intrinsic, or iconological, referring to

the “beliefs, assumptions, expectations, attitudes, and religious and cultural values” (Holly, 1984, p. 90) expressed in a work of art. To ascertain iconographic meanings Panofsky used a cross-disciplinary approach, using the literature of philosophy, religion, and mythology as sources of clues. To ascertain iconological meaning, Panofsky relied on deciphering of iconography along with stylistic analysis.

Although Panofsky concentrated on deciphering meaning, in the last analysis he believed that it was the style of the work that revealed its ultimate content. Referring to the connection between style and meaning in Greek art, for example, he noted, “Polygnotus could neither have wished to represent nor have been capable of representing a naturalistic landscape because this kind of representation would have contradicted the *immanentem Sinn* of fifth-century Greek art” (Holly, 1984, p. 90). Panofsky used materials from the world beyond art as a resource for interpreting the meanings of works and he used these meanings as symptoms for diagnosing the general character of the culture. While Panofsky also believed uncovering the intrinsic meanings of written works of the period to be useful in discovering the intrinsic meaning of a work of art, for him “the work of art is the hub..., the physical piece of evidence, the *locus classicus* from which we can elicit symbolic beliefs, habits, assumptions” (Holly, 1984, p. 171). The physical evidence is what a work looks like, its style.

Panofsky changed the practice of art history in several ways: by emphasizing interpretation over observation; by concentrating on works of art as separate intelligible phenomena rather than as links in a chain; and by using a cross-disciplinary approach of bringing insights from various fields to bear upon the elucidation of his subject matter. Though he spoke of form and content as integral, he split the historical study of art into two poles, one of form and the other of content. Those scholars who worked on formal distinctions continued to be interested in the *history* of art (the process of development from one style to another); those who worked on content were interested in works of art as signposts of cultural history. Panofsky’s insights transformed art-historical scholarship by changing the object of scholarly emphasis from the process of art history to the work of art. Scholars after Panofsky were increasingly engaged in hermeneutic decodings of works of art, in providing interpretations instead of discovering facts. The shift they made was in going beyond viewing works of art as aesthetic objects to be *looked at* for color, shape, line, texture, etc. Works of art became instead loci of meaning, symbols to be *understood*. Nevertheless, Panofsky neither challenged the traditional canon of art history nor did he displace stylistic analysis as central to the methodology of art history. While he did bring in-

sights from other fields of learning to bear on understanding works of art, he also held that their intrinsic meanings could not be penetrated without careful attention to their formal characteristics. Under Panofsky, art history remained a distinct academic field, with its own subject matter and its own methodology.

By the middle of the twentieth century, with the ever-increasing tempo of new stylistic movements resulting in art which visually has little in common with traditional Renaissance-to-Impressionist art, the security of the canon was jeopardized. Strangely enough, while a few dissident voices began to be heard, the canon held sway for another generation of art historians. The standard art history textbooks<sup>4</sup> all center on Western, white, male art done for an elite clientele from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, with chapters on earlier and later art presented as prelude to and aftermath of the main body of art-historical works. What enabled these authors to include the art of Postimpressionism and later was the notion of stylistic innovation occurring for its own sake instead of for the sake of moving toward an ideal style of art. H.W. Janson clearly states this position: "Originality, then, is what distinguishes art from craft. We may say, therefore, that it is the yardstick of artistic greatness or importance" (1977, p. 12). For these authors stylistic analysis remained the methodology of art history. Moreover, by the 1960's a work of art not only had to have original form in order to be art-historically significant; it had to *be* pure form. Color field painting and minimal art, looked upon as autonomous and unreferential, were the models.

By the 1970's what had been of peripheral concern to the art historian had begun to move to the center, and what had been central was beginning to move to the periphery. The canon of art history was being overturned (except perhaps for a remaining core of traditional diehards) so that the works studied by art historians were changing, the aspects of the works that were studied were changing, and the traditional art-historical methodology for studying those subjects was beginning to be replaced by the methodologies of other disciplines.

There are a number of circumstances that account for the overturning of the canon. First, movements for the liberation and equality of women, blacks, American Indians, gays and lesbians, etc., have called into question the very notion of a general period style (a concept fundamental to the traditional art-historical canon and to Panofsky's belief that the *visual style* of a culture can be discovered by determining the underlying meanings of its works of art). It has become evident that what art historians in the past took to be period styles reflective of general cultures in fact have been styles for and reflective of atypically powerful, wealthy, or vocal minorities. Further,



growing awareness of the interconnectedness of all people on our globe through multinational corporations, ecological disasters, drug trafficking, etc. have made it all but impossible to continue to believe that “Western civilization” is normative. In addition, in recent years, various large exhibitions, such as those on Chinese painting, the art of the Mamluks, the Mughals, excavations in China, Alexander the Great, American furniture, quilts, African art, photography, etc. have made it apparent that the canonic body of art works constitutes a narrow, special selection of the visual creativity of humanity. Another factor is the kind of Postmodernist art that is being produced since the 1970’s. Artists working in this mode, instead of being conscious links in the chain of stylistic innovation as were their modernist predecessors, deliberately ignore the styles of the immediate past and replicate the styles of earlier periods. What they are reproducing stylistically appears not to be based on a generally accepted norm of style, but instead is idiosyncratic to the individual artist. Thus, the very art that now is most touted by critics, galleries, and the artworld in general neither conforms to the canonic, traditional notion of art nor does it fit the subsequent notion that the value of art is commensurate with its degree of stylistic innovation,

While there are those who still hold fast to the traditional canon, there is at present no generally accepted canon among art historians. The notion that one special group of works exemplifies the normative stylistic characteristics for all of art is no longer convincing. The traditional elitist categories of fine art have expanded to include popular and folk art, primitive and Third-World art, the art of women, commercial art, crafts, minor arts, and, in fact, anything someone claims to be art.

With the expansion of categories of visual works that are now studied as art, what is studied about the works has also changed. Viewed across differences of ethnicity, race, gender, and class, works of art are seen in what has been dubbed “the new art history” (Rees and Borzello, 1986) as social documents rather than as purely aesthetic objects. It is what they tell us rather than what they look like that is now deemed to be important. Viewed in the framework of awareness of the particularity and limitations of specific points of view, the meanings of works of art are no longer thought of as self-evident. Instead, they are considered to be texts, structures of signification, whose meanings depend on the kind of interpretation that is brought to bear. What meaning a work of art can be said to represent, how it represents it, why it represents it, and its impact have become the important considerations for those who investigate art.

Different theories extrinsic to the discipline of art history have been brought to bear on these new kinds of issues. How works of art have mean-

ing is explained by semiotic theory. Explanations of what works of art mean and why they mean what they mean are to be found in the class struggles and economics of Marxism, in the repressed instincts of psychoanalysis, in the power relationships of political theory, in the institutions of sociological theory, in the structures of anthropological theory, and in deconstruction. Feminist theory has been a prime basis for revealing and explaining the impact of the meanings of art on the reproduction of norms of power, gender, and sexuality. These theoretical approaches overlap, and it is rare to find any used in isolation. Basically, however, there are two general approaches. One comes out of the social sciences; it considers the conditions under which works of art are produced and used. The uncovering of political, cultural, social, economic conditions under which art was made and detailed research into subjects ranging from patronage, the art public, the art market, workshop practices, to attitudes toward homosexuality belong to this approach. The other approach — critical, semiotic, deconstructive — has its source in literary theory and philosophy. It is more directly concerned with the forms of discourse, structures of signification, that works of art are deemed to be.

There is a difference between Panofsky's use of other disciplines to elucidate meaning and these scholars' use of other disciplines to understand the generation of art or to interpret meaning. For Panofsky the task was to interpret the inherent meanings of certain works of art that were precise reflectors of the general attitudes, beliefs, and values of their culture. While in his effort to understand iconographic symbols he used insights based on interpretation of verbal texts from areas studied in other disciplines, in his analysis of intrinsic, iconological meanings, he continued to rely on stylistic analysis. For Panofsky, as for certain conservative scholars of Italian Renaissance art, "Consideration of style is what makes art history different from the history of anything else" (Hood, 1987, p. 175). However, for many of the present generation of scholars style is not the consideration and art history is not the discipline. According to Richard Brilliant, Chairman of the Society of Fellows in the Humanities, "Many of the most stimulating writers on matters relating to art history are philosophers, psychologists, historians of English and French literature, semioticians, anthropologists, social psychologists and *even* critics" (1985, p. 2). These scholars go beyond using information from other disciplines to explain art works. By using works of art as evidence for proving the validity of the assumptions on which those disciplines are based, art becomes data for other disciplines. While traditional art historians applying the older methodology of historical empiricism are still numerous enough to be labeled "the mainstream" (Kuspit, 1987:120),

the number of publications of the so-called new art historians seems to be increasing at a geometric rate. [Notes <sup>5</sup> and <sup>6</sup> provide an overview of the rich variety of results of the new scholarship.]

These changes in the discipline of art history are being duly noted in books<sup>7</sup> and articles<sup>8</sup>. The entire Winter 1982 issue of *Art Journal* was devoted to "The Crisis in the Discipline." At the most recent conference of the College Art Association, held in New York in February 1990, in addition to numerous examples of the practice of and references to the new, interdisciplinary art history, two sessions were specifically directed to art history's new direction: "Current Research: Significant Directions in the 1980's," chaired by Jeanne Siegel, and "Anticipating Art History's Needs: The Role of Art Research Institutions in Interdisciplinary Study," chaired by Paula A. Baxter. There is widespread enthusiasm among art historians about the revitalization of the field, but there is also discomfort over the loss of traditional foundations and fear of the unknown future. In his introduction to the special "Crisis" issue of *Art Journal*, Donald Preziosi (1982) noted:

We are in fact in the midst of changes which have already precipitated the end of art history — and the "art" of art history — as we have known it... We have begun not only to deconstruct received art historical theories and practices... but also to sketch the outlines of a discipline of art study that moves beyond the various art histories in which we have all been trained, (p. 325)

William Hood, in one of the *Art Bulletin* "State of Research" articles (1987) takes a similar point of view:

Many American art historians seem at times indifferent or even hostile to the ancient rigors of style criticism, textual analysis, and other less-than-glamorous foundation stones of our discipline. This is entirely understandable for a number of reasons, but it does not lessen the danger that art historians may lose their identity if they lose sight of what makes art history unique. (p. 185)

Barbara Maria Stafford notes that "one might raise...with regard to the study of art history as a whole" whether it is "a discipline, with its own method and precise subject, or a field of studies, which involves many and varied forms in all their heterogeneity and, thus, exists as a repertoire of as yet ununified interests" (1988, p. 8).

Is the situation in the discipline of art history generalizable to other disciplines? When the canon of art history was overturned, not only the actual works of art that are studied changed; the aspects of the works of art studied changed, and the methodology of studying them changed. The study of the history of art became interdisciplinary, and at the same time art history lost its disciplinary identity. It no longer was a field of study exercising self-determination over its own subjects and methods. Used as data in other fields, art works were no longer chosen for study because of their stylistic significance (determined diachronically) or their cultural significance (determined synchronically). Instead, the works to be studied were determined by which hypotheses of which disciplines were at issue.

Does the subject matter and methodology of each discipline rest on a canon? Are there privileged events in history, writings in literature, institutions in the social sciences, experiments in science that are the norms against which their subjects and methods are measured? Does the disciplinary canon determine the kinds of questions that are raised? If so, and if these canons change, does what is asked about what subject matter and how it can be answered also change? Is the social history of the family still a part of history (traditionally defined as the “great deeds of great men”)? Does a study of slave narratives belong to the discipline of literature? Do such works lend themselves to the same kind of exegesis as traditional literature? Are such works literature? Do the traditional methods of biology explain menstruation, or is a more subjective approach required? Could such an approach still be considered scientific? How much of the approach of other disciplines can a discipline borrow without losing its identity as an independent, self-contained entity? Does the content determine the form? Does the form determine the content? When we accept the challenges of new topics to be investigated or of new ways to investigate old topics, will the old disciplinary paradigms suffice? If the traditional disciplines no longer exist, can we legitimately speak about interdisciplinarity? Are we on the threshold of an adisciplinary approach to learning and teaching?

## Notes for Further Reading

1. Some prominent examples are: Carel Van Mander (1604), *Het Schilderboek*, Alkmaar; Gian Pietro Bellori (1672), *Le vite de' pittori scultori ed architetti moderni*, Roma; Roger de Piles (1699), *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*, Paris.
2. For further explication of the origins of the formalist approach to art history, see: Michael Podro (1972), *The Manifold in perception: Theories of Art* from Kant to Hildebrand. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3. Panofsky's theory of art is found within his body of writings. Major works in English include: (1953) *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; (1968) *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, ed. J.J.S. Peake, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press; (1955) *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday; (1960) *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell; (1939) *Studies in Iconology: Humanist Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Those most widely used are: Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey (1975), *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, sixth edition, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; H.W. Janson (1977), *History of Art*, 2nd edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; Frederick Hartt (1976), *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
5. Explaining the conditions of art's production and interpreting its meanings often overlap, but I list the following important examples of the new art-historical scholarship as instances of the explanatory approach. Where it is not clear from the title, I indicate the work's subject in brackets ([]) after the title.
 

Svetlana Alpers (1983), *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* [social, cultural basis of aesthetic attitude favoring observation over narration], Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Michael Baxandall (1980), *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* [production and use of art], New Haven: Yale University Press; T.J. Clark (1984), *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Monet and His Followers* [shifting population and class struggle], New York: Alfred A. Knopf; Janet Cox-Rearick (1984), *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X and the Two Cosimos* [effects of patronage on imagery], Princeton: Princeton University Press; Thomas E. Crow (1985), *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* [impact of social, moral, political concerns via the new genre of public art criticism], New Haven and London: Yale University Press; S. Edgerton (1985), *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Mary Mathews Gedo (1980), *Picasso: Art as Autobiography* [psychoanalysis], Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Elizabeth Johns (1983), *Thomas Eakins, The Heroism of Modern Life* [individual topics, e.g., history of surgery, development of rowing as a competitive sport], Princeton: Princeton University Press; J. Michael Montias (1982), *Artists and Artisans in Delft, a Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; J. Saslow (1986), *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; M. Wackemagel (1983), *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshops and Art Market*, transl. A. Luchs, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
6. While recent feminist works generally attend to the social, psychological conditions under which art is made, they tend to use this kind of information to deconstruct meanings. For this reason, the following list includes examples of

feminist new art history with examples of works using a semiotic/deconstructive approach.

Norman Bryson (1984), *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bryson (1986), *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Bryson (1981), *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ann Bermingham (1984), *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Albert Cook (1985), *Changing the Signs: The Fifteenth-Century Breakthrough*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press; Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds. (1982), *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, New York: Harper and Row; Whitney Chadwick (1990), *Women, Art, and Society*, London: Thames and Hudson; Rosalind E. Krauss (1985), *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; David M. Lubin (1985), *Act of Portrayal, Eakins, Sargent, James*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1981), *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, New York: Pantheon Books; Ronald Paulson (1982), *Literary Landscape: Turner and Constable*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Lisa Tickner (1984), "Sexuality and/in Representation: Five British Artists," in *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality*, New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Brian Wallis, ed. (1984), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, New York and Boston: Godine; Marina Warner (1985), *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*, New York: Macmillan.

7. Some examples are: Hans Belting (1987), *The End of Art History?*, trans. Christopher S. Wood, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Donald Preziosi (1989), *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; A.L. Rees and F. Borzello (1986), *The New Art History*, London, Camden Press.
8. A seminal article in this category is: Svetlana Alpers (1977), "Is Art History?" *Daedalus*, 106(3), 1-13. Several years later *The Art Bulletin* began a series of articles under the rubric, "The State of Research." This series (in chronological order) includes: Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway (1986), "Ancient Art," 63(1), 7-23; Larry Silver (1986), "Northern Art of the Renaissance Era," 63(4), 518-526; Donald Kuspit (1987), "Conflicting Logics: Twentieth-Century Studies at the Crossroads," 69(1), 117-132; William Hood (1987), "Italian Renaissance Art," 69(2) 174-186; Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews (1987), "The Feminist Critique of Art History," 69(3), 326-57; Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey (1987), "Italian Painting of the Seventeenth Century," 69(4), 494-509; Barbara Stafford (1988), "The Eighteenth Century: Towards an Interdisciplinary Model," 70(1), 6-24; Richard Shiff (1988), "Art History and the Nineteenth Century: Realism and Resistance," 70(1), 25-48; Jack Spector (1988), "The State of Psychoanalytic Research in Art History," 70(1), 49-76.

**Biographical Note:** Selma Kraft is a professor in the Fine Arts Department and coordinator of Interdisciplinary Studies at Siena College, Loudonville, New York. Combining her interests in art history, aesthetics, feminism, and revising a core curriculum she finds inappropriately elitist and chauvinistic, she is currently working on an inclusionary theory of art.

## References

- Berenson, B. (1930). *The Italian painters of the Renaissance*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brilliant, R. (1985). What has happened in art history. *Humanities*, 6(1), 2-4.
- Hauser, A. (1963). *The philosophy of art history*. Cleveland: The World Publishing Co.
- Holly, M.A. (1984). *Panofsky and the foundations of art history*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Hood, W. (1987). The state of research in Italian Renaissance art, *The Art Bulletin*, 69(2), 174-86.
- Janson, H.W. (1977). *History of art*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kuspit, D. (1987). Conflicting Logics: Twentieth-Century studies at the crossroads. *The Art Bulletin*, 69(1), 117-32.
- Monet, C. (1922). Letter to Gustave Geffroy. In L. Nochlin, (Ed.). (1966:34), *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904, sources and documents*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Morelli, G. (1892). *Italian painters* (C. J. Foulkes, Trans.). London.
- Preziosi, D. (1982). Constru(ct)ing the origins of art. *Art Journal*, 42(4), 320-7.
- Rees, A.L., & Borzello, F. (1986). *The new art history*. London: Camden Press, Ltd.
- Stafford, B.M. (1988). The Eighteenth-Century: towards an interdisciplinary approach. *The Art Bulletin*, 70(1), 6-24.
- Vasari, G. (1965). *Lives of the artists* (G. Bull, Trans.). New York: Penguin Books.
- Winckelmann, J.J. (1755). *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*. Dresden (excerpted in *A documentary history of art*. Vol. II (1958), (E.G. Holt, Ed.). Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 335-50.
- Wölfflin, H. (1950). *Principles of art history* (M.D. Hottinger, Trans.). (1950). New York: Dover Publications.