

Psychoanalysis and the Image

Transdisciplinary Perspectives

Griselda Pollock



Psychoanalysis and the Image

New Interventions in Art History

Series editor: Dana Arnold, *University of Southampton*

New Interventions in Art History is a series of textbook mini-companions – published in connection with the Association of Art Historians – that aims to provide innovative approaches to, and new perspectives on, the study of art history. Each volume focuses on a specific area of the discipline of art history – here used in the broadest sense to include painting, sculpture, architecture, graphic arts, and film – and aims to identify the key factors that have shaped the artistic phenomenon under scrutiny. Particular attention is paid to the social and political context and the historiography of the artistic cultures or movements under review. In this way, the essays that comprise each volume cohere around the central theme while providing insights into the broader problematics of a given historical moment.

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Notes on Contributors

Mieke Bal is Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences Research Professor and Professor of Theory of Literature at the University of Amsterdam and founding director of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, Theory and Interpretation (ASCA) at the University of Amsterdam. Her most recent publications include *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (2002) and *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (1999). Among her many other books are *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd edition, 1997), *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* (1997), *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (1996), and *Reading 'Rembrandt': Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (1991 [1994]). She also edited a programmatic volume, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, published by Stanford University Press in 1999, which gives a good idea of the nature and practice of cultural analysis. The breadth of Mieke Bal's research contributions is also acknowledged by *Looking In: the Art of Viewing*, essay and afterword by Mieke Bal, with a commentary by Norman Bryson. Her areas of interest include literary theory, semiotics, visual art, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, feminist theory, French, the Hebrew Bible, the seventeenth century, and contemporary culture.

Karyn Ball is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. She edited a special issue of *Cultural Critique* on "Trauma and its Cultural After-effects" (Fall 2000). Her article "Unspeaking Differences, Obscene Pleasures: The Holocaust as an Object of Desire" appeared in the 2003 *Women in German Yearbook*, and an essay entitled "Global High Culture in the Era of Neo-Liberalism: The Case of Documenta11" has been published in *Research in Political Economy* (vol. 21, 2004). Current projects include *Traumatizing Theory*, an edited collection of essays that explore the conditions and limits of psychoanalysis as a theory of

culture and society, a special issue of *parallax* devoted to the concept of “visceral reason,” which concerns the adrenalized affective leftovers of histories of persecution, and a book entitled *The Entropics of Discourse: Climates of Loss in Contemporary Criticism* which will focus on the vicissitudes of politicized agendas in recent critical philosophy, cultural studies, and literary studies.

Adriana Cerne is a PhD doctoral candidate at the University of Leeds, researching feminist counter-cinema films and filmmaking from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Her work engages with art and its objects in an interdisciplinary way, which includes feminist theory, psychoanalysis, literary theory, and cultural analysis. She has written widely on subjects as diverse as hagiography and hysteria. She is currently researching seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings and the tradition, and relation, of the epistolary to literature and the polemics of women’s filmmaking, in order to explore the concept of the ‘everyday’ as an aesthetic encounter. She teaches Visual Culture and Theory at The London College of Communication. She has been published in the *Journal of European Studies* (June/Sept 2002).

Young-Paik Chun is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History & Theory at the University of Hong Ik (Seoul, Korea). She has been published in the journal *Art History* (June 2002) and the book *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts* (1996). Her Korean publications include “Art History and Psychoanalysis: Julia Kristeva’s Semiotic Reading of Painting,” “A Psychoanalytic Reading of Cézanne’s Large Bathers,” “British Formalist Criticism and the Modernist Art of Bloomsbury,” “Art History in an Expanded Field: Rosalind Krauss’s Theoretical Development in the Discourse of Art History,” and “Urban Space and British Art in the 20th Century: Art and Spatial Politics in London Since the Postwar Period.” She has also translated several books: G. Pollock, *Avant Garde Gambits 1888–1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (2001), H. Foster, *The Compulsive Beauty* (forthcoming), and R. Krauss, *Bachelors* (forthcoming).

Bracha L. Ettinger is currently Research Professor of Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics at AHRC Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History and at Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. Her paintings have been exhibited extensively in museums of contemporary art including Pompidou Centre, Paris (1996), Israel Museum (1996), Stedelijk, Amsterdam (1997), Villa Medici, Rome (1999), with solo exhibitions at The Russian Museum, St Petersburg (1993), Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1993), and The

Drawing Centre, New York (2001); a large retrospective was curated by Paul van den Broek at the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels: *Bracha Ettinger Art Working 1985–1999* (2000). She has developed a distinctive contribution to post-Lacanian psychoanalytical theory with her concepts of Matrix and Metramorphosis which have been published in a series of papers and books since 1992 (e.g. “Matrix and Metramorphosis,” *Differences* 4:3, 1992; *The Matrixial Gaze*, 1994). She has published conversations with Levinas, Jabès, and Boltanski. A collection of her *écrits*, *Regard et Espace-de-Bord Matrixiels*, appeared in French in 2000, and in English in 2005 (as *Matrixial Borderspace*). A second volume on psychoanalysis and aesthetics, edited by Griselda Pollock and Anna Johnson, is scheduled to appear in 2006. A special issue of *Theory, Culture and Society* (21:1, 2004) focused on her work, including essays by Judith Butler and J.-F. Lyotard.

Izumi Nakajima is a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Language and Society at the Hitotsubashi University. She has worked extensively on Yayoi Kusama and women artists in postwar Japan. She studied Art History in Japan and did an MA in Feminism and the Visual Arts at the University of Leeds in 2003. She has written on contemporary art, and her research concerns the experience of expatriate Japanese women artists, cultural production in conditions of migrancy, and in relation to sexuality and gender.

Griselda Pollock is Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art and Director of the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History at the University of Leeds, working in/on Social History of Art, Cultural Studies, Feminist Studies in the Visual Arts, and Modern Jewish Studies. A series of strategic interventions into Art History and Cultural Theory, starting from *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (with Roszika Parker, 1981), through *Vision and Difference* (1988, reissued in 2004) to *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Perspectives* (1996) and *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (1999), have systematically challenged dominant phallogentric and Eurocentric models of art and cultural history while actively providing new methods for international and postcolonial feminist studies in the theory, practice, and analysis of the visual arts that breach the divisions between theory, practice, and history. She is currently working on trauma and cultural memory in a trilogy of books including a study of Charlotte Salomon called *Theatre of Memory*, and postmodern engagements with psychoanalysis and aesthetics in a book titled *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* (further information is on the website www.leeds.ac.uk/cath/pollock).

Series Editor's Preface

New Interventions in Art History was established to provide a forum for innovative approaches to and perspectives on the study of Art History in all its complexities. The series seeks to expand the boundaries of Art History through cross-disciplinary investigations of thematic and historical issues that are germane to our understanding of the visual. This collection of original writings more than adequately fulfills this brief by presenting a series of psychoanalytical speculations about the image, gaze, and scene of desire by a group of well-known authors in the field. It also provides a stimulating mix of Western and non-Western scholars, bringing new and fresh perspectives to an audience that wants the latest in research in this area of academic inquiry.

Psychoanalysis and the Image: Transdisciplinary Perspectives explores the ambiguous space between psychoanalysis and the image through a series of closely read studies of specific texts (painted, written, filmed, installed) ranging from the actual to the imaginary. The chapters combine to offer a transdisciplinary investigation where questions of history, theory, and analysis are at play. In this way the volume opens up questions of psychoanalysis, feminism, and cultural memory to lively and rigorous scrutiny which it is hoped will be a prompt for future research and debate. *Psychoanalysis and the Image* makes a very strong and welcome contribution to the *New Interventions in Art History* series.

Dana Arnold
London, 2005

Preface

I once wrote that unsolved difficulties reside in the “and” that appears so innocently to conjoin two concepts. In presenting a volume that shamelessly opens the ambiguous space between psychoanalysis *and* the image, we want to invite the reader to join in a series of closely read studies of specific texts – some painted, some written, some filmed, some installed, some imagined – that explore both psychoanalysis as we can read it through image-work, and image-work as we can decipher it through psychoanalytical concepts that were never theorized independently of the subject’s formation within the image – the imaginary and its varied *mise-en-scène*. Starting with a reading of a photograph of the space in which classic Freudian psychoanalysis was generated amidst a private museum of archaeological artefacts and images testifying to cultural memory and memories of other cultures, this book explores a range of different dimensions of the image in psychic life and psychoanalytical terms in reading images.

Reminding us of the significance of psychoanalysis in theorizing sexual difference, Mieke Bal tackles the relations of art, sexuality, and dreaming through a reading of Christopher Bollas and the work of Katherine Gilje and Joseph Grigely. Artist Bracha Ettinger theorizes with and from Marguerite Duras’s novel *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein* to propose a radical post-Lacanian feminist scenario for the formation or failure of feminine desire – rephrasing Freud’s infamous question “What does a woman want?” with its implied subclause, ‘from a man’ to read “What does a woman want – to become a woman – from a woman?” For many, the ethnic and geopolitical specificity of psychoanalysis’ genesis in late-nineteenth-century Vienna brands its discourse as so culturally specific to be limited in its relevance to the internationally expanded constituency of scholars and of artists we might be inclined to study.

Three chapters in this collection explore psychoanalytical possibilities in the reading of art made under differentiated psycho-linguistic and geopolitical positions. Young-Paik Chun engages with the paradoxes of Cézanne's melancholia and the affecting inhumanness of his portraits. Izumi Nakajima deploys social and historical readings of American and Japanese abstraction to the case of Japanese painter Yayoi Kusama to re-read her work as a negotiation of the dual patriarchies she endured as a postwar Japanese daughter. This movement or displacement from home as mother, language, and place also invites a psychoanalytical reading of the postcolonial textuality of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha by Karyn Ball.

A final text by Adriana Cerne resumes the underlying thematic of the daughter's place in the historical formations of psychoanalysis and feminism through a creative journey precipitated by the final seven minutes of Chantal Akerman's epistolary film, *News from Home*, that brings the book back to the "scene" of "Dora's" fascinated two hours before Raphael's *Madonna* in Dresden, which is the point of departure for Bracha Ettinger's theorization of a feminine dimension to image and gazing that she names *fascinace* in counterpoint to Lacan's deadly *fascinum*.

This book aims to demonstrate the continuing vitality of psychoanalytical speculations about the image, gaze, and scene of desire.¹ We equally insist on the intrinsic rapport, the poetic covenant between the image and psychoanalysis in the moment of reading. Our method is close reading, never losing the specificity of making nor the particularity of historical location. We aim to conjugate history, theory, and analysis in a transdisciplinary perspective.

Note

- 1 An extended version of this preface, elaborating these key concepts, is available on line and to download at www.leeds.ac.uk/cath/publications.

The Image in Psychoanalysis and the Archaeological Metaphor

Griselda Pollock

Seeing Psychoanalysis

In May 1938, a young Viennese photographer, Edmund Engelman, was commissioned to take pictures in Sigmund Freud's apartment at Berggasse 19, Vienna.¹ Shot secretly under surveillance by the Gestapo on the eve of the aging doctor's flight from the country, Engelman's photographs not only document the space in which Freud worked and his family lived. They *picture* the space of psychoanalysis, documenting the genesis of psychoanalysis in the perplexing presence of so many images.

The photographs of Freud's consulting room captures the *mise-en-scène* of Freud's psychoanalytical practice in 1938 (Figure 1.1). Rather than a medical space, we encounter a private, domestic sitting room only a little unusual in the population of so much art on walls, surfaces, and even the couch itself. Indeed, the consulting room and connected study look like the private museum of an avid and learned collector of antiquities. Walls, surfaces, and cabinets are filled to overflowing with antique objects, casts, and prints. Max Pollack's striking portrait of Freud (cover) at his desk presents not the quietly absorbed scholar at work, but a man almost transfixed by the incoming gaze of the antique statuettes that circle the space in which he will inscribe his reflections on human, psychic life. An earlier photograph pictures Freud seated in front of a cast of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* and other souvenirs of his cultural tourism that are



Figure 1.1 Edmund Engelman, *Berggasse 19*, view of the consulting room, 1938. Reproduced courtesy of Todd Engelman and Freud Museum, London.

markers of his personal and professional fascination with sculpted, drawn, and painted images (Figure 1.2). So to the question, “Why psychoanalysis and the image?,” we might reply that psychoanalysis emerged in the active presence and enigma of the image.

Now Vienna’s Freud Museum, the *Berggasse 19*’s empty shell houses only photographic replicas of the contents of a complex interior scheme of images, books and artifacts in which Freud’s passions and his professional and vacation journeys through art, archaeology, anthropology, and psychology were visually charted in a rebus of images.² Today, we can visit a reconstruction of the contents of that Viennese space in the home of the exiled doctor at 20 Maresfield Gardens, London where the ensemble functions as the historical installation within the Freud Museum – itself an archaeological display of the founding history of psychoanalysis itself.³

Many scholars have contemplated the significance of the archaeological image in Freud’s thought. In 1951, Bernfeld analysed aspects of Freud’s traumatic childhood losses in relation to the fantasies about death and incipient eroticism that overdetermined his fascination with the



Figure 1.2 Photograph of Sigmund Freud with a cast of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*, photograph, c.1905. Reproduced courtesy of Freud Museum, London.

resurrected past signified by the recovery of artifacts of ancient civilizations that defied death and disappearance.⁴ In 1989 Lynn Gamwell and Richard Wells organized an exhibition and published an accompanying volume, *Sigmund Freud and his Art*, which included articles on “the archaeological metaphor.”⁵ My concern here is neither with the archaeology of psychoanalysis itself nor with the meaning of the metaphor for Freud’s own psyche. The reference to archaeology demonstrates, I suggest, a profound engagement with both the function of the image in the structure of memory and the structure of mnemonic images in the formation of the subject.

The archaeological metaphor opens onto the study of the image in the visual and literary arts, and finally onto the creative/poetic process viewed through the prism of psychoanalytical investigations into the patterns of human subjectivity conceived as an “archaeological” structure: a palimpsest of time and meaning, history, memory, and oblivion. It is by means of

the archaeological metaphor that the reductive use of psycho-biography of the artist/producer can be avoided in favor of attention to the relay between structures within cultural representation and socio-historically formed structures of sexed subjectivity.⁶ The engagement with psychoanalytical theory in current studies in the visual arts differs, therefore, from Bernfeld's and other Freudian scholars' interest in particular psychologies or personal histories. In this volume, the studies of the psychoanalytically conceptualized image through the prism of its theorization of varied psychic processes and subjective positions will not be iconographic, teasing out a hidden, neurotic content. It is, following Freud, addressed to structural questions of psychic processes, such as the dream, the primal scene, melancholia, and difference, how we know of them, and how they inflect and inscribe themselves in creative practices in literature, art, and cinema.

We seek to understand processes of fascination, sublimation, delusion, pleasure, desire, anxiety, and, above all, creativity as well as looking at/reading images – be these sculptural, two-dimensional, dreamt, spoken, or written. The image in psychoanalysis is more than visual representation, even if imaginary visualization is in a privileged but challenging relation to the psychic formation and role of the image. *Imago* – the Latin term – feeds into general psychoanalytical concepts of the parental Others who haunt each psyche as well as into the specific Lacanian theory of the Imaginary and the mirror phase. Freud himself thought his project through the metaphor of scenes: the primal scene, the sight of castration, and the scene of the dream. The image is a holding place of meaning, already structured by psychological processes, servicing them as the carrier of affects, phantasies, and displaced meanings. The image can be imaginary. It can inhabit an object, a thing, a picture created visually or in literature. It is never pure, purely visual, or even perceptual. *Imago* was the title of the psychoanalytical journal founded by Freud in 1912 as a journal of applied psychoanalysis, opening onto anthropology, archaeology, literature, and aesthetics.⁷ Journeying around the consulting room as it is revealed to us by Engelman's camera in 1938, I will work, in the rest of this introduction, towards a close reading of one of the artifacts, a bas-relief of a walking woman whose presence at the end of the couch hinges this space to Freud's early writings on the aesthetic/poetic process in a text considered to be the "turning point in Freud's attitude towards art."⁸

Engelman's photographs (Figure 1.1) make visible the acoustic space of Freud's scientific fieldwork at the intersection of the speaking subject and the mute object, historical relic or, as I shall suggest, the bearer of cultural

memory. The photographs offer insight into the range of transcultural visualities that lined this modernist, analytic theater. If we were to compare Freud's workspace with, for instance, that of the French poet Apollinaire around 1915, we might find a similar dependence on other cultures that confirm Freud's symptomatic place in the history of European Modernisms, and hence histories of the image and alterity in modernist cultures.

Culturally and personally determined choices of furniture and fittings created the material environment for a mental journey in which the present of the reclining analysand is suspended, and then fractured, by the surfacing of buried memories or mnemonic fragments from childhood that are no longer accessible in full to the adult consciousness that they, none the less, overdetermine. Freud's analytical theater, full of objects and casts, stand for the shattered, incomplete and repressed histories, no longer available in their original unity or vitality. Instead, each item is marked by both oblivion and anamnesis, exemplifying in material form the shards of memory and fantasies that analytical sessions will conjure up in the transference/presence/present of the analyst with whose partnership, some hermeneutic sense of these discontinuous fragments may be reweaved into a tissue of shifting, subjective meaning.

In that space of induced reverie and daydream, the adult is invited to fall back into an active relationship with what Freud considered the subject's infantile "prehistory" and to excavate his/her subjectivity in its sedimented layers that are also interleaved temporal strata, resurfacing across the immediate plane of language and the "speaking," fantasizing body. A cavalcade of verbally induced memory images is invited to pass before the analysand's mental eye and the analyst's listening ear in order to offer each piece as an element of the puzzle of human subjectivity that psychoanalysis aims to explore through clinical observation and metapsychological theorization.

Although contemporaneous with Proust's autobiographical reflections on childhood and time, and coeval with the major philosopher of time and memory, Henri Bergson, the Freudian model suggested by this image-filled space is radically different.⁹ It is more tragic and obscured than the Proustian recovery of voluntary and involuntary memory. The terms prehistory, sedimented layers, and temporal strata evoke what has been frequently noted as "the archaeological metaphor" that is deeply embedded in Freudian psychoanalysis.¹⁰ For Freud, however, memory was never, as for Proust, a recoverable world of sensation laced with emotion. It is

already a mnemic trace that functions psychically rather than synaesthetically, whose substance is marked only by a psychic representative – a coded displacement or translation. A memory image structures for the subject the remnant of unfinished emotional business that hinges the subject and human culture forever between an incomplete past and a never fully experienced present. This suggests, therefore, that subjectivity can only be grasped chrono-topologically and in a profound relation between what is absent(ed) – the lost moment of formative sensation and emotion – and what is imaged/imagined as its trace in the psychic representational systems generated in response to the initial welter of impressions and intensities.¹¹ The representational act of art is both a further staging and what Sarah Kofman defines as an originary repetition.

George Dimock has argued that furnishings, pictures, and objects signify as an unconscious or dream text of the collector, Sigmund Freud.¹² They invite a reading of Freud's mind that is also the Freudian psyche: split between consciousness and unconsciousness, between what is imagined and what is absent, but traced in the charged image that holds before the psychic "eye" the relay of repressed affects and meanings that it is the job of psychoanalysis to retrace anamnesically. The subject is arrested by images that serve as a rebus-like representation of thoughts and affects that cannot be directly known but must be deciphered, just as was the hieroglyphic language of the Egyptians by Champollion in 1822. Never purely personal, although singular to their author in visual articulation, the space-text of the consulting room requires a structural analysis that may produce an understanding of the patterns of relations, substitutions, and relays in which the image plays such a part in psychoanalysis. These reflections take us to the heart of both the Freudian paradox of a subject formed in memory and of modernity itself defined by the partner it created: the ancient, archaic, or foundational past.

So, we might ask: Why did the modern, atheist neuro-psychologist, promoting his new science in a medical practice, live intellectually and affectively in a world populated by such fragmentary image-bearers of its antithesis, namely, mytho-poetical, cultic, and religious thinking? Why so much pagan art in the place of modern science? Not for Freud Gauguin's Oceania or Picasso's Africa. Rather, the pagan cultures of the ancient world – Egypt, China, Greece, India, Etruria, and Rome – spoke to and of his desire and his childhood dreams framed in a still potent Jewish heritage within a Germano-Christian culture.¹³ Psychoanalysis emerges, therefore, in a musealized space, reflecting back to us the modernist

consciousness that needs, invests in, and mis-remembers the many pasts and prehistories the museum holds in its keeping before the gaze of the present through images it has recovered and redisplayed.

The luminously simple modernist architecture and décor of the suburban house in Maresfield Gardens locates the famous couch covered with the rich colors of a Persian carpet directly beneath a print of André Brouillet's painting of *Leçon du Mardi, Salpêtrière* in which the nineteenth-century neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot lectures to an assembled medical, and all-male, audience while his assistant holds the fainting body of a woman patient in mute, hysterical collapse echoed across the room by the enlarged image of an anguished arching hysterical female body (Figure 1.3). In the Vienna setting, however, this print hung on the wall opposite Freud's chair, in *his* line of vision, and next to a print of the Roman Forum that had strong links with a memory of Freud's father, Jacob Freud. Both acknowledge and resist filial descent. "Un visuel," as Freud described Charcot in 1893, a man of "an artistically gifted temperament," who allowed himself to be absorbed by a long observation of visual appearances



Figure 1.3 Photograph of Freud's Consulting Room, 20 Maresfield Gardens, London. Reproduced courtesy of Freud Museum, London.



Figure 1.4 Print after André Brouillet, *Leçon du Mardi, Salpêtrière*, 1888. Reproduced courtesy of Freud Museum, London.

until their superficial chaos yielded intelligible order, is represented in a medical setting, lecturing in the presence of his “possessed” but silent and mentally absented object of medical demonstration.¹⁴

Charcot’s gendered scenario is structurally opposed to the scene of Freudian analysis over which it appears to preside (Figure 1.4). Berggasse 19 is as private as it is dialogic: we note the chair at the head of the sofa for the analyst himself, represented in his absence by a place in a trans-subjective structural exchange Freud would theorize as transference. There is no image of Freud at work with an analysand. Indeed, it would make no sense to represent the process of psychoanalysis by an imaging of the doctor at work.

In the original Viennese setting, above the couch hung a colour gouache by Ernst Koerner from 1907 of the vast cliff temple built by Rameses II at Abu Simmel, massively signifying both a fascination with the past of human civilizations and with the Egyptian cult of death against which