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THE **ART** OF QUOTATION

Forms and Themes of the Art Quote
1990–2010

λογος

Cover images:

Glenn Brown: *Filth,* 2004, oil on panel, 133 × 94.3 cm (Detail) © Courtesy the artist
and Gagosian. Photo Rob McKeever.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard: *Portrait Mlle Guimard* (recently discovered to be Marie-Anne-Eléonore
de Grave), 1769, Oil on canvas, 82 × 65 cm (Detail), Musée du Louvre, Paris, © bpk | RMN |
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A.1
Introduction

"My tutor said: 'If you make the quote obvious then there will be other things you can talk about'. So I had been doing references, but in a lot less direct way and yes, it was a key moment."

Tom Hunter, London, July 2010

"I go to museum shops rather than museums. It's interesting to see how images reappear and stay in a gift shop, a postcard of a painting is a bit like the currency of an image going backwards and forwards."

Ruth Claxton, Birmingham, August 2012

"I was trying to make figurative art that tried to take into account the world that we inhabit and the idea of appropriation which I thought was fairly inevitable."

Glenn Brown, London, August 2012

"One basic issue for us is that we actually don't only quote the artwork itself, but probably more what the artwork represents in this day and age."

Elmgreen & Dragset, Copenhagen, August 2014

"Of course, it can also be totally boring if you just mimic something else without adding or thinking about additional layers – really the interest is all in the contemplation and reaction to what the quotation/appropriation 'means' in the medium that you're working within."

Pippin Barr, via email, August 2014

"I'm probably generally against quoting other artists' work. First, it's basically an easy thing to do. Secondly, I prefer to realize my own ideas and I think that it's better when everybody works like that."

David Cerný, Prague, September 2014

"I believe that you decide whether you go out to create completely new works or whether you work with what already exists."

Claudia Angelmaier, Berlin, June 2014

As might be appropriate for a research on quotation, this introduction is prefixed with literal quotes by some of the artists who agreed to be interviewed for this dissertation. The opinions expressed in these statements draw upon various experiences made by working with artworks from the past in the contemporary age. The act of quoting can be seen as an inevitable, fruitful, inspiring, disturbing, or even obsessive gesture. Particularly in the period from 1990–2010, in which the digital accessibility of images has be-come a global presence, it seems that the phenomenon of artworks referring to other artworks has become more widespread than ever before.

In 2010, this research project started out with the basic question of how art movements supersede each other. Initially, two essays had sparked my interest in exploring this transitive process further; they discussed artworks that referenced iconic works of art but simultaneously contradicted them in a deliberately opposing and parodying way[1]. The examples men-

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[1] The mentioned essays were both published in exhibition catalogues. The first essay was by Adams, Brooke: The 1960s: Notes on Camelot, published in Ioakeimides, Chrestos (ed.): American Art in the 20th Century, Painting and Sculpture, 1913 – 1993, Munich 1993, p. 107–116. The second essay was written by Friese, Peter: "Ah! Donald Judd, my favourite!". Art on Art. Or: What Influence Has Minimal Art? In: Friese, Peter (ed.): Minimal, Maximal – Minimal Art and its influence on art of the 1990s, Bremen 1998, p. 54–58.

tioned in the first essay were, among others, James Rosenquist's "Spaghetti Paintings" from the 1960s, which ironically imitated the meandering lines of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. Furthermore, Claes Oldenburg's sculpture of a "Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks" (1969) was discussed, which trivialised Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" (1963–1967). Similarly, the other essay listed examples of Minimal Art being ridiculed by contemporary artists. For example, in 1991, British artist John Isaacs took a photograph of himself as a blind man with sunglasses and a cane in his hand, tapping on a cube in front of him ironically exclaiming "Ah, Donald Judd, my favourite!". The piece was intended to show that the seemingly simple aesthetics of Minimalism could even be comprehended by a blind person. In essence, both essays described these 'art about art' works as a means by contemporary artists to acknowledge influence but also to demarcate themselves from a previous art movement. This was expressed in the peculiar form of the art quote, which embodied at the same time the potential to destruct an older work of art by simultaneously creating a new one. In the mentioned works, the art quote was used for a very concrete transition from the past to the present, thereby positioning itself within art history by simultaneously parodying it.

At first, it seemed promising for the further research to find out how contemporary art from the 20th and 21st century referred to recent art historical movements, labels of schools or groups (such as the Young British Artists, the New Leipzig School, the Becher School in Düsseldorf, etc.). However, it gradually became apparent that, especially with regards to postmodern and contemporary art, the art quote was a phenomenon that stretched beyond time frames, genres, and geographical boundaries. Not surprisingly, I found more artworks created between 1990 and 2010 that referenced *any* older work of art than artworks referencing the above mentioned art movements. Overlook-

ing the current state of research in light of the hitherto collected artwork examples, it became strikingly clear that certain forms of representation appeared more frequently than others. For instance, art quotes that used the form of the tableau-vivant (the restaging of an artwork through live models) were much more frequent than other strategies of representation. I decided to collect all examples I could find and analyse if any other representational patterns could be identified in an empirical way.

This ultimately led to the first research questions, namely: what *forms* of art quotes exist and how a generally acceptable system of categorisation could be established that comprised the most representative forms of the art quote? With this framework in place, this research aims to identify these strategies of representation, determine their frequency of usage, and find out which functions they fulfil. Therefore, much of the theoretical work on identifying the individual strategies in this dissertation is based on the empirical findings of art quotes.

A.2
Database on Art Quotes
www.artquotes1990-2010.com

Over a period of three years, I have compiled artworks by artists made between 1990 and 2010 which directly quoted an art work from the past – regardless of the original's age, genre, or location. Thus, the resulting database currently comprises 250 artists with 354 artworks (265 single artworks and 89 series). Only contemporary artworks created between 1990–2010 (with some exceptions such as works from 1989/90 or 2010/11) and bearing a direct reference to a former artwork have been entered. By now, the database has become an encyclopaedia for anyone interested in researching contemporary artists quoting older works of art in the given research period[2]. Within the found examples of

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[2] In future, the database will be available online under http://www.artquotes1990-2010.com/ and equipped with a search function by which one can find, in alphabetical order, either the younger, quoting artist or the older, quoted artist. Additionally, it is also planned that the database will comprise an upload function in which users can submit their own suggestions for artists. In the visual arts I have found only two other databases that are similar to mine,

this database a particular focus has been placed upon artists from Non-American and Non-European origin. Many artists of Asian, African, Arabic, Australian, Indian, or South American nationality have been added in order to gain a global perspective on the phenomenon of quotation[3]. The database shows that most of the art quotes refer to a predominantly 'Western' or respectively 'Eurocentristic' art historical canon, and in much fewer cases the quotation goes the other way round – i.e. quoting a non-Western art canon. The artists entered in the database have, in large part, been found through the serendipity of accident – by leafing through exhibition catalogues, systematically going through art magazines, or simply by searching images and names on the internet. Therefore, the database makes no claims to be exhaustive. Rather, it represents a cross section of contemporary artists referring to artworks from the past.

At the beginning of this introduction, it must be said that the research period of 1990–2010 bears certain parallels with the act of quoting, copying, or repeating in general. Indeed, referring to older works of art is by no means solely a phenomenon of the contemporary age, but has become prevalent in most if not all cultural fields since 1990. References to older works are not only made in art but also in music, film, and more recently, video games. Interestingly, these fields have used the same method of systematically ordering the disparate material through

databases, which, in itself, might also be viewed as a common feature of contemporary research that relies increasingly on digital archives[4]. For example, in 1999 a German database on musical cover versions now registers over 26,800 songs that have been covered, quoted, or sampled[5]. During the 1990s databases on film[6] and video game remakes[7] have become popular on the internet. Taking advantage of the open nature of the web, most of these existing databases are fed through an online community that posts suggestions, participates in forum discussions, and exchanges information regarding the respective field of interest. All of these collections highlight a crucial need: the storage, maintenance, and adding of this data in encyclopaedic formats for future reference.

A.3
Interviews and Influences

Next to the database, another important source of information were the interviews I conducted with contemporary quoting artists. They are attached in Part E of this publication and include conversations held in four different cities. Seven of these interviews are published in this book including interviews with Tom Hunter, Glenn Brown, Ruth Claxton, Pippin Barr, Elmgreen & Dragset, Claudia Angelmaier and David Cerný. These artists have been selected because their work fits specific key strategies of representa-

the larger "Covers and Citations" http://search.it.online.fr/covers/ and the smaller "Parodies and Variations" http://parodiesandvariations.wordpress.com/2013/01/. They are both image collections without textual content, organised in alphabetical or chronological order and are aimed for private use rather than art historical research.

[3]   In this regard, much of the used research literature has been informed by the juncture of Globalisation and Eurocentrism. To mention just a few publications on the subject see the following: Belting, Hans / Birken, Jakob / Buddensieg, Andrea / Weibel, Peter (ed.): Global Studies: Mapping the Contemporary, Ostfildern Ruit 2011, Belting, Hans / Weibel, Peter (ed.): The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds, The MIT Press 2013, Elkins, James (ed.): Art and Globalization, Pennsylvania 2011, Zijlmans, Kitty / Van Damme, Wilfried: World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches, Amsterdam 2008, Hassan, Salah / Iftikhar Dadi: Unpacking Europe. Towards a Critical Reading, Bruges 2001, Haustein, Lydia: Global Icons. Globale Bildinszenierung und kulturelle Identität, Göttingen 2008.

[4]   See Manovich, Lee: The Database. In: Kocur, Zoya / Leung, Simon (eds.): Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985, Blackwell Publishing, Singapore 2009, p. 408–427.

[5]   http://www.coverinfo.de/start.php?lang=2&wert=12

[6]   http://www.sequelogue.com/or the Wikipedia A-Z List of Film Remakes: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_film_remakes.

[7]   http://www.gamesremake.eu/index.php/en/#. This site also offers a collection of links to other sites that collect video game remakes: http://www.gamesremake.eu/index.php/en/link-web.html

tion. In the interviews, they were asked about their evaluation of the practice of quoting in general as well as to elaborate on their specific works of art referring to older artworks. Most of these artists have repeatedly recurred on an artistic role model with a great amount of curiosity, appreciation, and creativity. Others have expressed their concern about the large number of artists referencing art historical works and the resulting 'production lines' of art quotes. Despite these differing opinions, all of these artists have deeply valued older works of art as a subject that offers great potential to provoke, inspire and create new works.

This touches upon former models of influence. For example, Harold Bloom argued in "The Anxiety of Influence"[8] that artists try to overcome their predecessors by purposefully demarcating themselves from their impact. In opposition to this hypothesis, Jonathan Lethem suggests that creative practitioners are influenced all the time and that the amalgamation of these effects is an inevitable characteristic of creative practice – as he quoted a statement by Mary Shelley in a foreword of "Frankenstein": "Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos"[9].

Obviously, there are many reasons why artists engage with the work by other artists. These reasons can be to study, criticize or pay tribute to a particular artist, to update or put an older artist's work in a contemporary context or to develop certain practical or aesthetic issues further. Quoting can also lead to overcome a role model such as artistic 'parricide', for example by discrediting an artwork and simultaneously showing that any created artwork has the potential for iconicity and may become 'art after art' in turn as well. This critical, retrospective view enables to broach the historical legitimacy of an artwork, its significance for a former art movement or its influence on the contemporary art production. Ultimately, the occupation with an older work of art allows for an experience that goes beyond the mere gesture of repetition, but enables the artists to retrace the thought process of a previous composition in depth. One apt statement by video artist Bill Viola might best describe this experience:

> "The old pictures were just a starting point. I was not interested in appropriation or restaging – I wanted to get inside these pictures … to embody them, inhabit them, to feel them breathe."[10]

However, as the large volume of collected quotes will show, quoting an artwork almost always means to use an image as a substitute for another cause. The quoted art work embodies the form of something new that the contemporary artist fills with his or her own, often radically different, statement. The awareness of these themes led to a second set of questions, namely, what the most common *themes* addressed in these new works were?

The examples in the database show how themes of today's day and age – be they of aesthetic, political, social or of other nature – are expressed by using artworks from the past as a means to convey certain messages. For instance, it is common practice to use iconic works of art to address political issues[11]. This is evident in the many references to recent politics, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (exemplified in Adi Nes's restaging of the Last Supper with the disciples as Israeli soldiers), the events following September 11, 2001 (David Cerný's dummy of the captured Saddam Hussein replacing Damien Hirst's shark in a tank[12], 2005), the Syrian war (Tammam Azzam's photoshop

8   Bloom, Harold: The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry. Oxford University Press US, 1997.

9   Lethem, Jonathan: The Ecstasy of Influence. A Plagiarism. Harper's Magazine, February 2007, p. 61. Available online at Harper's archive: http://harpers.org/archive/2007/02/the-ecstasy-of-influence/

10   Bill Viola quoted in Walsh, John (ed.): The Passions, Getty Publications, Los Angeles 2003, p. 199.

11   Scholar Holger Kube Ventura points out that politics in art is indeed the most defining characteristic of art in the 1990s. Kube Ventura, Holger: Politische Kunst Begriffe in den 1990er Jahren, Kassel 2001.

12   http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4688402.stm

projection of Klimt's 'The Kiss' on a war-damaged Syrian wall[13], 2013) or the development of the Arab Revolution in Egypt after the fall of President Morsi (see the uprising activities of the Mona Lisa Brigades[14], 2013, who used a stencilled image of the Mona Lisa bandaged with a blindfold as a symbol for civilians who were blinded as a result of the attacks).

Other art quotes touch upon social-economic themes, for instance, the living conditions of certain groups within society (Tom Hunter's photographs of squatters in London based on paintings by Johannes Vermeer or Francesco Vezzoli's paintings of supermodels and actresses portrayed as Renaissance Madonnas).

Furthermore, many artists pursue themes of identity when referring to older works of art (Cindy Sherman's "History Portraits", Yasumasa Morimura "Art History"), trans- and homosexuality (see bodies of work by Joel-Peter Witkin, Kent Monkmann), feminism (Jemima Stehli, Yoko Ono), racism and ethnicity (Yinka Shonibare, Kehinde Wiley, Yue Minjun, Pan Yue, and Yin Xin).

A large part of examples in the database use the reference to an older artwork to address aesthetic issues. They criticize a certain artistic concept (see the parodies by the Canadian art group General Idea who 'infect' Mondrian paintings with the colour green) or subvert traditional genres with new media (such as the digital recreations of still lives in the works by Ori Gersht, Matej Košir, and Sam Taylor-Wood[15]).

Interestingly, digital art has brought forth many unique forms of genres and applied them to the past, among them the large number of Artist's Games in Game Art[16] (evident for example in Miltos Manetas game websites referencing

the works by Lucio Fontana, Jackson Pollock, or Joseph Kosuth[17], Pippin Barr's video game simulation of Marina Abramović's "The Artist is Present"[18], Prize Budget for Boy's Pac-Mondrian video game[19], or Michael Mandiberg's digital version of the Bauhaus Vorkurs in his manual Digital Foundations[20]).

Many of these examples are intended to catch the viewer's attention through the art quote, make the analogy with the past, and identify relevant themes of today in the new work. The moment of recognising an iconic work of art directs the attention to a comparative view of old and new.

Given the range and variety of these themes that are expressed with the art quote, this research, in essence, analyses to the same degree and intensity not only the *forms* of art quotes but also the *themes* that they address. In this regard, it is equally important to state that a reference to older art does not fulfill an end in itself. Art quotes are not made for an exclusive circle of art connoisseurs to decipher hidden references; instead, they assume a critical positioning to problems of the contemporary age.

A.4
The Research Period 1990–2010

Lastly, the research period from 1990–2010 and its accessibility to art and digital images should be briefly characterised at this point. Not only does the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 constitute the political outset of this decade, but it marks the beginning of a continuously growing process of transformation in all respects – economically, socially, culturally, demographically, and especially technologically. Individuals

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[13] http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2013/feb/04/syria-klimt-kiss-tammam-azzam

[14] http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/graffiti-campaigns-bring-women-and-children-street-art

[15] See the latest exhibition on this particular topic by Firmenich, Andrea / Janssen, Johannes (eds.): Still bewegt. Videokunst und Alte Meister, Altana Kulturstiftung, Museum Sinclair-Haus, Bad Homburg v.d.H. 2013.

[16] See Clarke, Andy / Mitchell, Grethe (eds.): Videogames and Art, Intellect Ltd. 2007.

[17] http://www.manetas.com/art/websites/

[18] http://www.pippinbarr.com/games/theartistispresent/TheArtistIsPresent.html

[19] http://www.filefestival.org/site_2007/pop_trabalho.asp?id_trabalho=1871&cd_idioma=2&acao=visualizar&

[20] http://digital-foundations.net/

working from the 1990s onwards have been exposed, more than their predecessors, to the extended possibilities of accessing images and information through the internet and to working with a global network of institutions[21]. Image accessibility has also continuously grown through international web-based archives[22] making texts and images viewable online in high resolution images. The decades between 1990 and 2010 have also experienced a growing number of regular Art Biennials and Triennials on a worldwide scale[23]. Likewise, this time frame has been crucial for the branching out of internationally renowned art museums[24] and the booming industry of new museums and cultural tourism. Beyond this development, many private art collectors exhibited their artworks in private museums and made them accessible to the public[25]. This omnipresent influence is particularly emphasized in the past twenty years, in which the digital accessibility of images has become a global presence.

Despite these altered circumstances, using quotes in art has been an artistic medium fulfilling different functions. While the Dadaists used the art quote as a means of provocation[26], the

Pop Artists to overcome Abstract Expressionism[27], and the Appropriation Artists to address the theme of originality[28], the third and last research question remains to be answered: how do today's artists make use of the art quote? The collected examples seem to indicate that artists today use the art quote as a stylistic medium to address current issues rather than engaging directly with the quoted artworks themselves. Moreover, in comparison to the two essays mentioned at the outset, it appears as though artists today do not "wrestle" with an aesthetic tradition but openly use the "old" vocabulary for "new" themes.

A.5
Overview on Terminology

Many terms have been developed in order to describe the relationship between one artwork referencing another. Perhaps the most common term to determine this relationship is **interpictoriality** (also known as "interpicturiality" or "intericonicity"; or "intermediality"). According to a dictionary entry by Valeska von Rosen, interpictoriality can be defined as

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[21] For a characterization of the period of the 1990s as a case study in America see Oxoby, Marc: The 1990s. American Popular Culture Through History, Greenwood Press, Westport 2003, and, Sayre, Henry M.: 1990–2005. In the Clutches of Time. In: Jones, Amelia (ed.): A companion to contemporary art since 1945, Blackwell Publishing, Padstow 2006, p. 108–125.

[22] Such as ATHENA (1983–1991), GABRIEL (1997), Europeana (2008), and the Google Art Project (2011).

[23] To note just a few founding years of Biennials and Triennials in chronological order: 1990 Dak'Art Senegal, 1991 Lyon Biennial, 1992 Taipei Biennial, 1993 Sharjah Biennial, 1995 Gwangju Biennial, Johannesburg Biennial, 1996 Shanghai Biennial, Manifesta Rotterdam, 1997 Mercursor Biennial Brazil, 1998 Busan Biennial Korea, 1998 Berlin Biennial, 1999 Liverpool Biennial, Phototriennial Hamburg, 2001 Yokohama Triennial, 2003 Prague Biennial and 2007 Athens Biennial, Brussels Biennial and Art Dubai. In 2002, the first edition of Art Basel Miami Beach took place, followed a year later by the foundation of Frieze Art Fair in London.

[24] Such as the foundation of Tate St Ives (1993) and Tate Modern (2000), the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin (1997) or the official collaboration between the Museum of Modern Art and PS1 (2000) in New York.

[25] The following private collections with their opening years are just a few that have been made accessible to the public from 1990 onwards: Rubell Family Collection Miami 1993, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo 1995, Sammlung Marx at the Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin 1997, Fondation Beyeler Basel 1997, Harald Falckenberg Collection Hamburg Harburg 2001, François Pinault Collection at Palazzo Grassi Venice 2006, Eli Broad Contemporary Art Museum Los Angeles 2008, Dasha Zhukova's Garage Center for Contemporary Art 2008. In 2012, Swiss art collector Uli Sigg announced to have donated the major part of his Chinese Contemporary Art Collection to the M+ Museum in Hongkong which is planned to open in 2021.

[26] Schmidt, Ulrike Kristin: Kunstzitat und Provokation im 20. Jahrhundert, Weimar 2000.

[27] Weiss, Evelyn: Kunst in Kunst. Das Zitat in der Pop Art. In: Aachener Kunstblätter 40, 1971, p. 215–236.

[28] Rebbelmund, Romana: Appropriation Art. Die Kopie als Kunstform im 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main 1999.

„the relations between images and their methods of transformation from one image to another. It is an art term that depends on the literary critical category of intertextuality, which describes the relatedness of texts among each other." [29]

Von Rosen defines interpictoriality as an equivalent umbrella term for intertextuality within the arts, namely the relationship between one text and another, a concept going back to the linguist Julia Kristeva[30]. Intertextuality means that texts (necessarily) reference each other; a text can refer to only one specific text, the entirety of other texts or certain genres of text types. This concept has been applied to the visual arts by determining that an image may equally refer to a specific work of art history, the entirety of artworks in their institutional environment or to determined genres of artworks[31]. To make this parallelism between intertextuality and interpictoriality more apparent, art historian Margret A. Rose has used the term "interimage" oder "interpicture" and makes a further distinction of the term interpictoriality as describing "the *intra*pictorial relationship between images from a variety of sources within a visual work as well as the *inter*pictorial relationship of those images to other, external images." [32] In 2011, a conference concerning the subject of interpictoriality took place at the Ruhr University Bochum[33]. The essays encompass a broad understanding of interpictoriality, namely, that interpictoriality is not defined exclusively as art about art, but

equally so regarding appropriations of texts, music, fashion, and advertisement in art.

Based on the transferability of linguistic intertextuality to visual interpictoriality, art historical research has developed a gradation of terms concerning the intention of a referencing art work; these terms are often derived from similar terms in the field of linguistic studies. Scholar Julia Gelshorn has attempted to create a standardised definition of these hitherto often undifferentiated terms in the glossary of her dissertation[34]. Some of these examples include expressions such as adaptation, allusion, homage, parasitage, paraphrase, parody, pastiche, persiflage, travesty, variation, or version. All of these terms derive from the domain of linguistics (and the art 'quote' belongs to this very same etymological origin). However, since they already encompass certain degrees of assessment and judgements, these terms denominate the specific degrees of intention of a reference rather than the relatedness between images.

While the term interpictoriality stands as a general term for referencing, scholars have also tried to introduce new terms. The art historian Christoph Zuschlag has proposed the term **"meta-art"**:

„I understand the term meta-art as art about art in a doubled sense: on the one hand, art that refers explicitly to a certain work of art, a topos, or to the institutional environment of art history and, on the other hand, the meta-level of art that discusses art

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[29] Translated from German to English by the author: "…die Relationen zwischen Bildern sowie die Modi ihrer Transformation von Einem zum Anderen. Es handelt sich um einen Kunstbegriff, der in Anlehnung an die literaturwissenschaftliche Kategorie der Intertextualität, die die Bezogenheit von Texten zueinander beschreibt…". See Van Rosen, Valeska: Interpikturalität. In Pfisterer, Ulrich (ed.): Metzler Lexikon der Kunstwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe, Stuttgart 2003, p. 161–164.

[30] Kristeva, Julia: Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. New York: Columbia University Press, New York 1980.

[31] Zuschlag, Christoph**:** Meta-Kunst – Kunst über Kunst seit 1960", Habilitation Treatise University of Heidelberg 2001, p. 29.

[32] Rose, Margaret A.: Pictorial Irony, Parody, and Pastiche. Comic Interpictoriality in the Arts of the 19th and 20th Centuries, Bielefeld 2011, p. 1, note 1.

[33] The conference was conducted under the direction of Dr. Guido Isekenmeier and took place from the 4th–5th November 2011. Isekenmeier, Guido (ed.): Interpiktorialität. Theorie und Geschichte der Bild-Bild-Bezüge, Bielefeld 2013. For a conference summary see the publication by Gamer, Elisabeth-Christine: http://www.jltonline.de/index.php/cfp/article/view/354/999

[34] Gelshorn, Julia: Aneignung der Kunstgeschichte – Strategien der Wiederholung bei Gerhard Richter und Sigmar Polke, Dissertation Universität Bern, Bern 2003, p. 198 – 203.

within a pictorial discourse by reflecting itself. My thesis is that meta-art in this definition has only existed since about 1960. Meta-art is highly significant for the epoch since 1960 and is possibly the most important feature of this time."[35]

With the term meta-art, Zuschlag covers the relational dependencies between images. As he outlines further on, the compositum 'meta' stems from the realm of linguistics, sociology, mathematics, and philosophy and is characterised by implying a 'higher logical level' between the artwork and itself[36]. Zuschlag analyses his examples with this two-fold characteristic on the basis of a valid sample of artworks between 1950 and 1990 that reflects the political and aesthetic significance of these artworks. He thereby refers to Victor Stoichita's understanding of painting addressing painting in the use of the term "meta-painting"[37] which in turn is informed by writings of Julia Kristeva and Gérard Genette[38]. His selection of art quotes since 1960s heavily include a political awareness, thereby taking up themes of gender equality, identity and role play as well as socio-economic issues.

Another term to describe the relatedness of images is **"Eclecticism"**. In an accompanying conference anthology on the topic[39], only two essays address eclecticism within contemporary art. The author of one of these essays, art historian Anne-Marie Bonnet, regards the term eclecticism as an "attitude of selection and quotation by way of orientation directed to a cultural performance of the past."[40] She follows the deviation of the term as a feature deriving from postmodern architecture in which stylistic characteristics of different historical epochs are combined with each other. According to Bonnet, eclecticism is a combinatory process which can reach from a 'style of stylistic mixes' to a 'style without any style'[41]. Because the term eclecticism is too closely associated with architecture and the eclectic tendencies during the period of Historicism, it is the least commonly used term to describe references in the visual arts.

In comparison to eclecticism, the term **Appropriation** is more frequently used, especially in Anglo-American research literature[42]. It derives from the movement of Appropriation Art of the 1970s and 1980s, during which artists would attempt to copy an artwork as accurately as possible but sign it with their own name (see artists like Elaine Sturtevant,

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[35] Translated from German to English by the author: "Unter Meta-Kunst verstehe ich Kunst über Kunst im doppelten Sinne: zum einen Kunst, die sich explizit auf ein bestimmtes Werk, einen Topos oder das institutionelle Umfeld der Kunstgeschichte bezieht und die zum anderen auf einer Metaebene, in einem bildnerischen Diskurs, Kunst thematisiert, sich also selbst reflektiert. Meine These lautet, daß es Meta-Kunst im Sinne dieser Definition erst seit etwa 1960 gibt. Zugleich ist sie für die Epoche seit 1960 in hohem Maße signifikant, möglicherweise der wichtigste Ausweis der Epoche überhaupt." Zuschlag, Christoph: Meta-Kunst – Kunst über Kunst seit 1960, Habilitation Treatise University of Heidelberg 2001, p. 12.

[36] Zuschlag 2001, p. 11.

[37] Stoichita, Victor: The Self-Aware Image. An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997.

[38] Genette, Gérard: Palimpseste. Die Literatur auf zweiter Stufe [1982], Frankfurt am Main 1993.

[39] Lehmann, Doris H. / Petri, Grischka (eds.): Eklektizismus und eklektische Verfahren in der Kunst, Hildesheim 2012.

[40] Translated from German to English by the author: "[…] ein 'Auswahl- und Zitierverhalten im Zusammenhang mit einer an vergangenen Kulturleistungen orientierte Haltung." Bonnet, Anne-Marie: Eklektizismus in der Postmoderne – Notlösung oder kritische Strategie? In Lehmann, Doris H. / Petri, Grischka (eds.): Eklektizismus und eklektische Verfahren in der Kunst, Hildesheim 2012, p. 368. This quote refers to Michael Hellenthal's concept of eclecticism, see Hellenthal, Michael: Eklektizismus: zur Ambivalenz einer Geisteshaltung und eines künstlerischen Konzepts, Frankfurt am Main 1993. Further examples for the examination of the term eclecticism in conjunction with the visual arts can be found in Neuman, Gerd: Wie die Wolke, die dem Walfisch gleicht: Über Eklektizismus und vom Sinn des Bewahrens. In: Daidalos. Berlin Architectural Journal 8, 1983, p. 83–97.

[41] Bonnet, Anne-Marie: Eklektizismus in der Postmoderne – Notlösung oder kritische Strategie? In Lehmann, Doris H. / Petri, Grischka (eds.): Eklektizismus und eklektische Verfahren in der Kunst, Hildesheim 2012, p. 368.

[42] See also the anthology on Appropriation in the arts by Evans, David (ed.): Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art, London 2009.

Sherrie Levine, Mike Bidlo, Philip Taaffe etc.). In Appropriation Art "the copy is the original"[43], as Elaine Sturtevant stated. Appropriation implies making something else your own – meaning that little or no alteration has been made to the referred-to artwork[44]. This conceptual thinking was strongly influenced by post-structuralist writings, such as Jean Baudrillard's "Simulations and Simulacra"[45], Roland Barthes's "Death of the Author"[46] and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?"[47] arguing that the work of art and the creator should be regarded in an unrelated manner towards each other. The tradition of appropriation throughout modernism, its historicising tendencies, and the question of authorship and authenticity of the images have also been analysed and debated by leading critics such as Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp, and Craig Owens[48].

But the alterations in the examined art quotes are indeed considerable, which is why I have decided against the use of the term Appropriation. An iconic image is used to capture initial attention, yet frequently, the new artwork is composed of significant alterations that direct the viewer's attention to completely different subject matters. These alterations can reach from iconoclastic interventions to subtle alterations, but they always have a strong element of newness within them. Insofar, the term "appropriation" is more suited to express the ideas concerning authorship and originality addressed by the Appropriation artists than to describe the examples of the database, as these

aim to contrast an artwork with something else and emphasize the differences. Furthermore, the term 'Appropriation' is too closely associated with the aforementioned group of artists which is why a more generic term had to be found for the purpose of this dissertation.

A.6
Defining the Art Quote

As shown, the terminology for defining the relatedness of images varies widely. I have opted to use the term "Art Quote" and will outline the reasons for this choice in the following. In this regard though, it must also be said that this dissertation does not claim to define or re-define the above mentioned terms for all art that refers to other art. Essentially, this is an empirical study that identifies patterns of collected data in order to give an overview of forms and themes of the art quote.

After considering some of the proposed terms for art that refers to other art, the term art quote seemed the most usable because it implies a neutral directness of the reference. A quote, in essence, is an unaltered repetition of an earlier expression. It is embedded within a new context, and yet remains recognisable as derivative of a former context. Within the visual arts, quoting an artwork means repeating it partially or fully, much like a literary quote, which voices the original expression of an author in part or in whole[49]. However, the linguist and editor of "Interpiktorialität", Guido Isekenheimer,

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[43] Sturtevant, Elaine: Fake / Original. In: Deecke, Thomas (ed.): Originale echt – falsch. Nachahmung, Kopie, Zitat, Aneignung, Fälschung in der Gegenwartskunst, Bremen 1999, p. 155.

[44] Chilvers, Ian / Glaves-Smith, John (eds.): Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009. pp. 27–28.

[45] Baudrillard, Jean: Simulacra and Simulation [1981], University of Michigan Press, Michigan 1994.

[46] Barthes, Roland: Image-Music-Text, London 1977, p. 142–148.

[47] Foucault, Michel: What is an Author? [1969], published in Rabinow, Paul: The Foucault Reader, New York 1984, p. 101–120.

[48] Krauss, Rosalind: The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press 1985. Crimp, Douglas: Pictures, Owens, Craig: Representation, Appropriation, and Power. Both essays are published in Wallis, Brian: Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, New York 1984.

[49] Nelson Goodman and Jakob Steinbrenner equally occupy themselves with the applicability of textual quotes to visual quotes and come to differing results, namely that some kind of abstraction has to take place, either in the distinction of direct and indirect quotes (Goodman) or that the term 'Zitat' ('Quote') should be replaced entirely with the term 'Anspielung' ('Allusion'). See Goodman, Nelson: Ways of Worldmaking, Cambridge 1978, pp. 59.

rightfully points out that the term 'quote' derives from a textual concept that does not concern any features of materiality – indeed, a written or spoken literary quote only reproduces a message in words and not its character style or typeface print[50].

However, this difference between materiality in art and immateriality of words might not be the decisive argument in the search for an appropriate term. Moreover, the similarity of equally altered contexts seems more significant. Any literal quote, when appearing, for example, in a text, in a musical piece, or even on stage, is by the nature of quotation put in another, newer context. Here, it is the context *surrounding* the quote and not the quote itself that is changed. The same applies to the art quote in which often the original work of art is recognisably maintained, but re-made anew, for example with an altered figure, style, or setting. Within literal quotes (as with art historical quotes) the same method comes in use: keeping the original recognisable but setting it into a new context.

Despite the advantage of transposing this neutral directness of the term "quote" to artworks, it must be said that the term "art quote", or in German "Kunstzitat", has already been used in another context. In German literature studies, a handbook has been published collecting "Kunstzitate" but defining them as verbal quotes from literary sources in which a speaker talks about concrete art works in a literal quote[51]. Differing from this usage, the word "Bildzitat" ("Image Quote") is almost synonymous with the "Art Quote" or "Kunstzitat" in this research albeit "Bild" strongly emphasis the pictorial image and less so other artistic media[52]. In English, "quotation" is closely linked to the verbal quote yet also comes in use by art historian Mieke Bal as a comprehensive term for the "intersection of iconography and intertextuality"[53]. But the usage of the term "art quote" in this research emphasizes the literalness of artworks – not least in the direct adoption of the quoted artwork's title or artist's name in the art quote.

In light of the above, I would like to suggest my own definition of the art quote. The hitherto collected sample of examples shows that artworks referring to other artworks almost always fulfil the same functions. Every art quote refers to one or more artworks by repeating an image's motive, composition, or figures in part or whole. Unlike a copy or forgery of an artwork, the art quote comments on the quoted artwork and establishes a distanced view to it. In this respect, an art quote does not merely repeat an artwork's issues, but 'answers' them by commenting on these in one way or another. The art quote therefore always comprises two referential levels, an external one directed to the referenced artwork and an internal one addressing the main issue of the new element in contrast to the former. Both add up to a new entity in which the two levels can still be clearly distinguished from one another. Incorporating a reference to a significant artwork often means

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Steinbrenner, Jakob: Zeichen über Zeichen. Grundlagen einer Theorie der Metabezugnahme, Heidelberg 2004, p. 221.

[50] See Guido Isekenmeier's statement from the conference's call for papers "Doch trotz der grundlegenden Ähnlichkeit der Referenzialität von Texten und Bildern lässt sich im obigen Zitat nicht einfach 'Text' durch 'Bild' ersetzen, schon weil 'Zitat' ein textualistisches Konzept ist, das wesentlich auf der Idee beruht, dass eine Textstelle unter Absehung von ihrer Materialität gleichsam restlos wiedergegeben werden kann, indem ihre Buchstaben reproduziert werden (und nicht ihre Schriftart, ihr Satz, usw.)." http://www.jltonline.de/index.php/cfp/article/view/354/999

[51] Fliedl, Konstanze / Rauchenbacher, Marina / Wolf, Joanna: Handbuch der Kunstzitate. Malerei, Skulptur, Fotografie in der deutschsprachigen Literatur der Moderne, Berlin 2011. The authors of this handbook base their definition of the art quote on an earlier publication by Eilert, Heide: Das Kunstzitat in der erzählenden Dichtung: Studien zur Literatur um 1900, Stuttgart 1991.

[52] See the glossary on the term "Bildzitat" from the University of Tübingen http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/netzwerk/glossar/index.php?title=Bildzitat&printable=yes

[53] Bal, Mieke: Quoting Caravaggio. Contemporary Art, Preposterous History, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1999, p. 8.

C.V.5
Strategy of Combination using Tableaux Vivants and Tableaux Non-Vivants

The following examples comprise the strategy of substitution, including tableaux vivant quotes from different art works, merged into one photographic shot (Wang Qingsong) and tableaux non-vivant quotes using replicas of different sculptures in one piece that stand (Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster) or move and speak with each other (Elmgreen & Dragset).

The Chinese artist **Wang Qingsong [Illustration 36]** became famous for his large scale panoramic photographs, which he shot in film studios measuring approximately 1800 square metres. He staged Chinese models posing like figures from European old masters in a tableaux vivant style and used all the methods common for tableaux-vivant stagings such as props, costumes, lighting sets, and background elements. Emerging from Chinese Gaudy Art, Qingsong uses cheap and trashy elements in his photographs to devoid them of any material quality.

Two of his most well known photographs were created in 2003 and are entitled "China Mansion" (1,20 m × 12 m) and "Romantique" (1,20 m × 6,50 m)[459]. While the first shows a panoramic view of an interior setting, the latter takes place in an artificially constructed landscape. "China Mansion" was intended to stage, quite literally, China's Open Door Policy at the beginning of the 1990s, which meant welcoming foreign direct investors to China. In contrast, "Romantique" steps away from the domestic, 'down-to-earth' context of national economy, and symbolises Western and Eastern ideals of beauty in the paradisiacal form of a Chinese garden. Both photographs have in common that the Asian models, over sixty of them in every piece, are re-enacting well-known poses, mainly from French and Italian paintings. Like a Chinese hand scroll, the succession of posing models is meant to be read from left to right.

In "China Mansion" Qingsong himself plays the host at the far left, who, having tied a welcome banner around his chest, receives the "foreign guests of art history"[460] into his house. The scene is divided in five sections of the house, where the guests carry out certain commune actions: sleeping models (guests resting), half-dressed models (guests getting dressed), models surrounded around a table (guests having supper), models talking to each other (guests in conversation) and lastly, models relaxing and falling asleep (guests going to bed)[461].

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[459] A short video by Roberto Guerra and Kathy Brew shot in 2007 by The Joy Of Giving Inc. documents some of Wang Qingsong's works including footage of the shooting of "China Mansion" and "Romantique". http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLlCftCahtQ

[460] Wang Qingsong quoted in his statement "On two recent works". In Maggio, Meg / Wingfield, Jeremy: Wang Qingsong. Romantique, Beijing 2005, p. 7.

[461] My research has resulted the following assumptions on the poses that the models take in "China Mansion":
  – Gustave Courbet "Sleep", 1866, Petit Palais, Paris
  – Edouard Manet "Olympia", 1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
  – Edvard Munch "Puberty", 1894–1895, National Gallery, Oslo
  – Francisco de Goya "The Nude Maja", 1797–1800, Museo del Prado, Madrid
  – (?) Alexandre Cabanel "The Birth of Venus", 1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
  – Paul Gauguin "Manao tupapau. Spirit of the Dead", 1892, Albright Know Gallery, Buffalo
  – Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres "Grande Odalisque", 1814, Musée du Louvre, Paris
  – Rembrandt van Rijn, Woman looking from behind a curtain ("Young Woman in Bed"), 1646, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
  – Yves Klein's Performance Piece "Anthropometries of the Blue Epoch", 1960, Galerie Internationale de l'Art Contemporain, Paris
  – James Mc Neill Whistler "Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1" ("Whistler's Mother"), 1871, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
  – Jean-Baptiste Regnault "The Three Graces", 1797–1798, Musée du Louvre, Paris
  – Peter Paul Rubens "Venus in Fur Coat", 1630, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
  – Leonardo da Vinci "The Last Supper", 1495–1498, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan

For each section, Qingsong has selected typical paintings of art history that depict certain scenes, such as famous bed scenes (Edvard Munch's "Puberty", Francisco de Goya's "The Nude Maja", Ingres's "Grand Odalisque"), group scenes while sitting or eating (Jacques-Louis David's "Mars Being Disarmed by Venus", Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper") or scenes of single figures on the floor (Man Ray's "Violin", Egon Schiele's "Sitting Woman with legs drawn up"). On the far right of the photograph an armed guard stands like a terracotta soldier who prevents the guests from leaving without giving a gift to the mansion.

Similarly divided in sections, "Romantique", the counterpart of "China Mansion", reads like an encyclopaedia of the nude from the Early Renaissance to Postmodernism. At the far left, two female Chinese models pose as Adam and Eve from Masaccio's "Expulsion of the Garden Eden"[462]. They head over to a family with children re-enacting Manet's "The Luncheon on the Grass". In the background, a group is holding hands like Matisse's "The Dance" behind which a mirror-inverted bathing scene after Cézanne takes place. The central point of "Romantique" is a blond wigged Asian woman standing on a shell posing like Botticelli's "Birth of Venus".

– Jacques-Louis David "Mars Being Disarmed by Venus", 1824, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels
– Allen Jones "Table", 1969, Tate Gallery, London
– (?) Woman being pushed in a chair + Woman tying her shoes
– (?) Woman and Man on Couch
– François Boucher "Resting Maiden (probably portrait of Marie-Louise O'Murphy)", 1752, Alte Pinakothek, Munich
– Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres "The Bather of Valpinçon", 1806, Musée du Louvre, Paris
– Jean-Honoré Fragonard "Girl with a Dog", 1770, Alte Pinakothek, Munich
– Man Ray "Ingres's Violin", 1924, Getty Museum, Los Angeles
– Diego Velázquez "The Toilet of Venus (Rokeby Venus)", 1647–1651, National Gallery, London
– Egon Schiele "Sitting Woman with Legs Drawn Up", 1917, Narodni Gallery, Prague
– (?) Woman with turban leaning on table
– (?) Group of three women, one lying, the other two sitting
– (?) Woman and Child lying in bed

[462] My research has resulted in the following assumptions on the poses that the models take up in "Romantique":
– Masaccio "The Expulsion from the Garden Eden", 1425, Brancacci Chapel
– Eduard Manet "The Luncheon on the Grass", 1862–1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
– Henri Matisse "La Danse", 1909, Museum of Modern Art, New York
– Paul Cézanne: "The Bathers", 1898–1905, Philadelphia Museum of Art
– (?) Group of Three Women
– Eugene Duval "The Birth of Venus", 1862, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, Lille OR Henri Royer "Nymphe", 1893, Musée des Beaux Arts, Nancy OR Eugene Oudiné "Bathseba", 1859
– (?) More standing and sitting women around pond
– Franz Stuck "Susanna and the Elders", 1913, Private Collection
– Sitting black woman perhaps taken from Paul Gauguin "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?", 1897–1898, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
– (?) Lying Woman reaching for something in the fog
– (?) Group of two woman sitting, one standing up
– (?) Woman coming out of pond
– (?) Women in a group sitting at the back of the pond
– Sandro Botticelli "The Birth of Venus", 1485, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
– Sandro Botticelli "Primavera", 1482, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
– (?) School of Fontainebleau "Diana the Huntress (probably Diane de Poitiers)", 1550–1560, Musée du Louvre, Paris
– (?) Woman sitting with dog
– (?) Two women holding each other at their shoulders in the pond
– (?) Woman standing behind the pond with hat and fan
– (?) Woman holding a cloth with her teeth, woman with flowers standing beside her
– Buddha
– East/West family with baby
– Jean-François Millet, Three women bending = "The Gleaners", 1857, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
– Woman in Riksha, probably a self-reference by Wang Qingsong

ILLUSTRATION 36

Wang Qingsong
China Mansion, 2003
C-Print
1,20 m × 12 m

© Courtesy of the artist Wang Qingsong

TOM HUNTER

Hackney, London, July 28th 2010, 10 am

NH: Hi Tom, thanks very much for being available for an interview today. As you know I am researching contemporary artists from 1990 to 2010 who deal with art quotes. I'm interested in how artworks from the past can influence contemporary artists, so I've compiled a few interview questions that I would like to ask you. Maybe we can start with a more general question on your work and especially about quotation in a broader sense straight away: how and why did you first get the idea of quoting old master paintings? I've read a lot about the story of your tutor advising you to make direct references in the Vermeer series, but did you have similar ideas previously too or was this like a key moment for you?

TH: Well, in the project I did before, the "Persons Unknown" series based on the paintings of Vermeer, I was actually looking at the Golden Age of Dutch painting for quite a long time and I was making lots of references to their paintings and their style. But I wasn't actually making direct references, I was using the light and the feel of them, but not directly referencing the postures and poses. The compositions were quite similar and I was looking at the interior spaces with the natural Northern light coming through the windows. I was actually referencing the Golden Age of Dutch painting within my photography, but in a less direct way, although some people said that it reminded them of Dutch painting, but it was not made as such. So it was there already. When I was speaking to my tutor, he said "Why don't you make the quotes obvious for the viewer rather than making it too vague for the viewer to understand what you're talking about? Just make it more obvious and then you can make the connection between your work and the art historical work". I thought it would be too crass to make the reference directly, but he said, "If you make the quote obvious, then there's other things you can talk about". So I had been doing it, but in a less direct way and yes, it was a key moment.

Tom Hunter
The Art Of Squatting,
from the Persons Unknown Series, 1997
152,4 × 121,9 cm

© Tom Hunter

NH: Did you feel that a direct reference would potentially take away your part of the work too? Since you are dealing with two levels here, with your own work and the reference, I can imagine the doubts that a direct reference would be so strong it would dominate your part of the artwork?

TH: Yes, it was definitely a move into the unknown, as it were. Lots of photographers are afraid of making direct references, because there's always the fear of imitation. It's great to reference other people's work, but you don't want to imitate other people's work. So there is a very fine line and because I never directly referenced before, I was very worried about going

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Tom Hunter
The Glass of Wine,
from the Persons Unknown Series, 1997
152,4 × 121,9 cm

© Tom Hunter

into imitation, and obviously you can never be as good as the old masters. So yes, it was a jump into the unknown, but that's what you have to do as an artist, to take a risk and not be scared of it. It was a leap of faith.

NH: I imagine it must be quite a challenge to reference a painter, who, over the centuries has become such a milestone in art history. Additionally, there is always the issue of historical "fame" of a well known artwork with which the viewer today is confronted. Do you feel that this can potentially become a problem for your work when you choose artworks that have already become such icons in their own right?

TH: It works both ways. The benefit is that everyone knows the artwork and you can rely on a certain database, everyone understands or has at least a vague idea of it. Obviously, the down side of it is that it is so well known that

people can become quite dismissive and say that you can never make a great piece of art work like Leonardo da Vinci or Vermeer. You can never live up to what they have achieved. But at the same time, everyone knows what you're talking about, so it's really a double edged sword, sometimes it works in your favour and sometimes it doesn't. But I also think my naïvity was quite helpful at the time. I wasn't so knowledgeable about the great masters. I knew them, but I wasn't so in awe of them, I had quite an indifferent respect for them. I wasn't that informed about them, it almost comes from a kind of punk music attitude rating it as "just another picture". It wasn't until later that I thought about the consequences of how great they were. But at the time it was "just another picture in a museum". So I was quite distanced about it and quite naïve also which helped. I think it's become actually much harder to do it now that I have studied them and all the connotations, I've become more knowledgeable and wary and I can see lots of problems coming up now. But at the time I was quite "naïvely ignorant", which is a great thing to have, because I think some of the greatest artworks come from naïvity. Especially with music, it always seems as though the best albums are the first albums and then it all becomes a bit over considered.

NH: I am curious to know how you start your artworks. Do you have a database of your friends or of possible paintings to quote in your head and of how your models could take up certain positions from your role model? What comes first, the reference and then your photograph? I know that you take a long time arranging the scenery and everything else, so maybe you can tell me a bit more about that.

TH: Indeed, it is like a database of things around me. As I am living in this area, I am seeing things or hearing things, seeing beautiful places, hearing stories, reading the local paper, so picking up on the atmosphere of life around me really, like tales of daily life or extraordinary scenes. Then you see people who look simply interesting or whom you would think are very characteristic for a certain type of person. Then I have

a lot of art historical books scattered around the house so flicking through things, I go to museums and galleries where something catches my eye and something reminds me of something I heard about, like a young girl leaving her flat or whatever, in my neighbourhood in London. Then you start putting two and two together.

NH: So is it first the narrative and then the picture?

TH: Or the other way round. Sometimes you see an amazing picture or you read a story which you think is just like a picture in the National Gallery you saw years ago, for example.

NH: And then you build up the photography. A lot of your photographs reference pictures from the National Gallery. Is it important for you to see the original paintings or do you also work with reproductions in terms of detecting certain details and getting a feeling for the scale and atmosphere of the painting?

TH: When I started the Vermeer series I had only seen one Vermeer until then. It wasn't so important to see the original, in fact it was interesting to work with the reproduction which has become a commodity, a commercialised and mass-produced image. It's probably the same with the image of the Mona Lisa – everyone knows it, but not everyone has actually seen it. Does that matter? Well, I'm sure if you do stand in front of it some people will get more of a feeling for it (if they make it through the queue) [laughs…]. But very rarely do you get the opportunity to have a great artwork in your bedroom to pick up on the finer details. Unfortunately, we're not like the great popes or the kings in Imperial Europe who had works of art on their bedroom walls to look at and now we live in this commercialised, commodity driven world, but the images are there. However, I'm not sure that makes so much of a difference. I've been to see some of the Vermeers which was a wonderful experience and I do love going to the National Gallery because it's free and you don't feel obliged to see the whole museum and you can actually pop in just to see one painting

Tom Hunter
Woman Reading a Possession Order,
from the Persons Unknown Series, 1997
152,4 × 121,9 cm

© Tom Hunter

for fifteen minutes. It's a lovely experience to be able to do that. It's not like in the museums in Berlin, Florence or Madrid where you spend all that money and time queuing.

NH: In fact, I've been meaning to tell you that the Vermeer model for "Woman Reading a Possession Order" hangs in the Staatliche Gemäldegalerie in Dresden, close to my home town Leipzig.

TH: Really? I've never actually seen it.

NH: Well, you're invited to come!

TH: Will do, definitely.

NH: Great. I've noticed that your work has very pictorial qualities, you've also stated once that the tripod is like an easel to you. May I ask what triggered you to use photography over painting

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Tom Hunter
Tom Hunter in front of The Ghetto,
Street Model 1994

© Tom Hunter

Tom Hunter
Detail from The Ghetto,
Street Model, 1994

© Tom Hunter

and sculpture and do you maybe also reference sculpture and collages or is it basically just paintings that you prefer referencing?

TH: I was commissioned to do a rendition of "The Three Graces". I didn't actually do it, because the commission came too late and for all sorts of other reasons. However, I do look at sculptures, but I really love the two dimensional effect of painted images, the flat rendition of light onto a surface. I'm fascinated by the way perspective, composition and colours change everything.

NH: Perhaps also because the flat surface is more closely linked to photography than sculpture?

TH: Yes, although I did make a three dimensional photographic sculpture of the street I lived in.

NH: I know, I've seen it at the Museum of London.

TH: Just there under the table there is a model of a Double Decker Bus and I've done quite a few of them. But primarily I think there's something quite beautiful about the flat object. And also the history of it, I find it more interesting than the history of sculpture. I'm not an expert

so maybe it's much more interesting than I realize. But I'm thinking of the great cave paintings and the scratches on the walls, basically thousands of years of history of this rendition onto the flat surface which I find really interesting. It seems that the artist has a much more comfortable relationship between the flat surface and his environment than sculpture, which appears to be almost monumental. Whereas the size of the canvas can be very personal, so it becomes a portrait of one's own life out of a particular time. For me, it's about the cultural history which all comes together on the flat surface.

NH: We were speaking about how your tutor had advised you on making the reference directly and I was wondering if now, in retrospect, you have perhaps indulged more into the theory of quoting, for instance concerning quoting as a characteristic element of postmodernism. Do you analyse your own quotes?

TH: You can't help but do that. I teach at university and obviously I do go to conferences, so you become more aware of what's going on around you and you see other artists work. And when the post modern terminology is quoted, you