

PAINTING PHOTOGRAPHY PAINTING: TIME LINES AND MEDIUM SPECIFICITIES

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I begin with some definitions of “medium,” and some proposals about that old concept, medium-specificity, that flow from those definitions:

medium, n. (Oxford English Dictionary):

I. Something which is intermediate between two degrees, amounts, qualities, or classes; a middle state.

...

II. A person or thing which acts as an intermediary.

4. a. An intermediate agency, instrument, or channel; a means; *esp.* a means or channel of communication or expression...

b. Chiefly in medium of exchange: anything commonly agreed as a token of value and used in transactions in a trading system (as in medium of circulation, circulating medium)...

c. Any of the varieties of painting or drawing as determined by the material or technique used. Hence more widely: any raw material or mode of expression used in an artistic or creative activity.

d. A channel of mass communication, as newspapers, radio, television, etc.; Freq. in *pl.* as in media....

e. Any physical material (as tape, disk, paper, etc.) used for recording or reproducing data, images, or sound.

5. a. An intervening substance through which a force acts on objects at a distance or through which impressions are conveyed to the senses; any substance considered with regard to its properties as a vehicle of light or sound.

b. A pervading or enveloping substance; the substance in which an organism lives; *esp.* one in which microorganisms, cells, etc., are cultured. In extended use: one's environment, conditions of life, or usual social setting.

c. *Painting.* Any liquid substance (as oil, water, albumen, etc.) with which pigment is mixed for use in painting.¹

The first proposal to make on the basis of these definitions is that no medium is singular or autonomous: by definition mediums are go-betweens. The second proposal, which follows from the first, is that mediums exist only in relation to one another, within a matrix, and as means of communication, rather than as purely abstract, (self-) reflexive entities. The third proposal is that therefore mediums should *not* be considered in a reductive, but rather in a generative light, as suggested by the bio-logics of definition 5b. The fourth is something that we all know but that I would like to consider differently, and that is that painting, though last on this list of definitions, has historically been prime among such mediums, and prime among them in emphasizing the materiality of medium. Fifth and finally, mediums are not only their materialities, but also their histories—their histories of thought about medium and materiality. (This idea is inscribed though not directly stated in the O.E.D.’s definitions, for definitions are by definition historical, as the O.E.D. is so good at demonstrating, with its etymologies, its many supplements and several editions, its “historical thesaurus,” and its attention to obsolete words and senses of words. For instance, not included in the set of definitions given above, is another obsolete word, “menstruum,” once an alchemical synonym for “medium,” defined under its own heading in the O.E. D., not only as “the menses,” or “a nutritive or formative medium, a matrix,” but also as “a solvent...for dissolving metal in the attempt to convert base metals into gold (now *hist.*). Later also: a liquid used as a vehicle; a liquid medium.”)

So let me come now to the matter of the medium of painting, and ask some questions of it, first by looking at four instances of it from the last seventy years or so, in reverse chronological order, and then by attending to the several things that have been

argued, historically, about the medium of painting. I start with the most recent instance, a painting from 2008 by Ellen Gallagher called An Experiment of Unusual Opportunity (fig. 1), after the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiment conducted on black men by the U.S. Public Health Service between 1932 and 1972.² What it depicts is not that, however, but a strange, barely visible deep-sea creature floating in the underwater biosphere that the painting makes for it by means of ink, graphite, oil, varnish and sliced, stained and glued paper layered in lapidary fashion onto a canvas support. The question is, in what sense is this a painting, exactly? It is as much collage and low-relief sculpture as it is painting, made by the actions of the knife more than by the gestures of the brush. Yet its museum category is painting, if for no other reason than that it is mounted on painting's traditional two-dimensional support, canvas. And that it has oil and varnish in amongst its binding and finishing materials. And that it is colored and figural (which is to say imagistic), for figure there is, though that figure is barely and uneasily distinguished from its ground. And then it is large and ambitious in theme and facture. This is painting in what some (though not I) would call its post-medium condition, by a not-white, not-male artist of the post-Minimalist generation, whose work has moved in the contrary direction from that taken by white, male and other modernists from the beginning to the middle of the twentieth century—which is to say from abstraction back towards figuration rather than the other way around.³

Moving backwards in time, my second instance is Sigmar Polke's The Computer Moves In of 1983 (fig. 2), in the St. Louis Art Museum, made of a combination of photographic negative, line drawing, hand-painted raster-dot screen, and a spill of manganese (a metallic pigment at once ancient and modern) on pre-printed, partially

translucent fabric.⁴ A white, male, German artist, deceased in 2010, who came of age in the years of European Pop, Polke was known for his combining of materials and mediums—photographic, digital, textile, draughtsmanly, printerly and painterly—under the larger medium-umbrella of painting. But what does it mean to say that? The answer lies, still, within the institutional definition of painting, as well as in painting’s recent history. Which is to say that “painting” is still considered the primary medium in art museums and art schools, the one under whose heading large, ambitious work is made, and in which what we might call “material thought” of the first order is understood to take place—in which *facture* and *techne* are put to the service, not of craft alone or technique per se, but of some kind of thinking. Which also means that hybridity of this kind has now come to be seen as painting’s, rather than photography’s, province. (I might also point out that the use of fabric as a ground is consistent with the history of canvas, which is of course a textile, while the use of manganese cycles painting’s industrial-pigment present back to its cave-painting origins. The photographic computer image and the raster-dot matrix hover spectrally in between, both in the back and in the front of the rest, but do not serve as any kind of “binder”—a material or structural substrate that binds together—as they would in the digital universe: rather, they serve to underline the painting’s heterogeneity.)

I put the same question, what is painting now?, to a third instance which provides a more straightforward, singular answer: Helen Frankenthaler’s Flood of 1967 (fig. 3), in the Whitney Museum of American Art.⁵ Acrylic on canvas, color-field, so-called second-generation abstract expressionism by a white female American painter (who died one year after Polke did, in 2011), Flood defines the medium of painting, not just

according to traditional usage, as a two-dimensional rendering in colored pigment suspended in a binder (in this case acrylic polymer emulsion) on a canvas support, but as coloristic vividity and pure fluidity, what Luce Irigaray would call the (feminine) “mechanics of fluids,” a liquid pour that flows between chance and intention, and where one color in its fluid state runs into and influences the contiguous flow of another: indeed in this case the painting’s title refers back to the process of its making, and thus binds together image and abstraction, the figurative and the literal, reference and reflexivity, metaphor and metonymy, if not the visual (the painting) and the verbal (the painting’s title) as well.⁶

Of course, until her death Frankenthaler remained die-hard in her fidelity to what many time-lines would have defined as an outmoded way of conceiving her or any medium. Which brings me to my fourth and final instance—Robert Rauschenberg’s Rebus of 1955 (fig. 4), at MoMA, made of oil, synthetic polymer paint, pencil, crayon, pastel, cut and pasted, printed and painted papers and fabric on canvas stapled onto fabric—and back to the question of painting’s recent history and how it has changed what we think a medium is.⁷ White, male, American, Rauschenberg painted in a Pop way in the decade before Pop became the main game in town, when the kind of painting in which Frankenthaler specialized was still state of the medium-specific art. (Just to keep my time-lines and generations straight—or rather bent—I note in passing that Rauschenberg died in 2008, two years before Polke, and three years before Frankenthaler. What is clear from birthdates, however, is that Rauschenberg, born in 1925, and Frankenthaler, born in 1928, were of the same generation, while Polke, born in 1941, and Gallagher, born in 1965, hail from successive generations. I mention the

obvious because of its pertinence to the questions of filiation and development that are so endemic to teleological histories of mediums. Except that there is neither development nor filiation here, only sibling instances of different practices in a medium, arrayed over time.)

An early “combine,” which is to say “painting playing the game of sculpture,” as Rauschenberg’s colleague, friend and lover Jasper Johns put it, or a cross between painting, photography, print-making, drawing, collage and construction, Rebus stands as exemplary not only of Pop (or pre-Pop) medium-hybridity, but also of the moment when the photographic invaded the painterly and began to redefine painting and ultimately take over its position as the “cultural dominant” of the contemporary art world.⁸ This did *not* mean, in the account I want to give of it, that painting had died yet another death (the first two supposedly having been in the nineteen-twenties, and before that in the 19th century, when Manet, as Baudelaire put it, was merely the first in the decrepitude of his art), or even that its purity had become contaminated by a foreign element, but rather that its historical medium condition had morphed, that its (coloristic) liquidity had joined in a dance with other kinds of (often black-and-white) manu-facture, with the photographic leading the way.⁹ Rather than the death of painting, it was a moment in which painting singular no longer led the march, in which painterly purity was no longer to be conceived as such, at least by many practitioners, and tended instead to give way to the pluralism that is the medium condition of the photograph, despite institutional efforts to corral it into singularity.¹⁰

And that brings me, finally, to the history of the discourse of medium-specificity, and to the earlier moment from which I originally derived my title, that of Painting

Photography Film, which I then converted into “painting-photography-painting.” Certain two-page spreads from the 1925 Bauhaus-book of that name by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy visually characterize what had already happened at that earlier time when reports of painting’s death had already been greatly exaggerated: which is to say that already then painting, rather than dying, had been put under the sign of the photograph (fig. 5).¹¹ Appearing in a book in which everything—painting, print, photograph, montage, construction, projection, cartoon, film, typography—was printed in the same black-and-white register of the inked half-tone, the photographic reproduction of a print after a painting by Moholy-Nagy sits next to a similar-looking, similarly reproduced photogram, the two compared as images of abstraction in two different mediums transformed by their means of reproduction into one.

And what of the photograph, in this equation? Exemplifying the slippery, necessarily partial multiplicity of medium-definitions, the photographic mode that dominates here is that, not of the camera-made, but of the cameraless image: a (negative) image which *has* facture and physicality, though its facture is by light and shadow while its physicality is as indexical and auto-referential as any abstract painting, drawing or print. For Moholy-Nagy’s point about the second term in his three-term paradigm, painting-photography-film, was that in order to move forward away from the historical condition of painting and towards that of film, photography must shed its pictorial, perspective-box, camera-obscura origins and embrace the self-reflexivity of the light-sensitive surface.¹² In every iteration of Painting Photography Film it is the photogram that graces its cover, suggesting not only its representation of the term photography, but also its dialectical status as the term that ties painting to film, points forward from one to

the other, and ultimately represents the “*aufhebung*” of the one *in* the other, in which the one is at once continued and preserved, transformed and overcome by and in the other.¹³ Thus finally, it is the reproduced photogram, standing for the photograph as the middle term, that articulates the relationality of each medium to the other, and their existence as points of intersection in a matrix.

It would be only fifteen years after the publication of Painting Photography Film that the most famous modernist definition of medium-specificity would see print, in the form of Clement Greenberg’s “Towards a Newer Laocoön” of 1940, which took up Maurice Denis’s neo-traditionist, abstractionist battle-cry of 1890, “We should remember that a picture...is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a particular pattern,” and inserted it into history as an Americanized piece of Hegelian dialectics.¹⁴ Greenberg’s definition of painting, as we all know, was explicitly reductive and purist, not to mention optical and disembodied: and according to that definition, painting more than any other modern medium was to cordon itself off from other mediums in a way that was drastically opposed to the Bauhaus logic of Moholy-Nagy’s argument, but fit to describe American work of the then-upcoming generation, whose line of filiation, as Greenberg had it, went back, not to another medium, but to French painting of the 1860s.

According to Greenberg, as we also know, the principal medium against which painting had set itself was literature. Be that as it may, it is to literature that we turn, in the French 1860s, to find the earlier premature announcement of the end of painting: in the genre of the artist-novel, which had been inaugurated by Balzac’s Le chef d’oeuvre inconnu of 1831/7, and in 1867 was updated by the Goncourt brothers in the novel Manette Salomon, at least in part inspired by a visit to Manet’s studio.¹⁵ Towards the end

of that novel about the decadence of painting in what was then the late-coming present, yet another definition of painting's medium-specificity emerges, for there its death-rattle is represented in terms of its first elements and most elemental constituents: air, water, earth and fire; blood, water, milk, light and gem; solid, liquid and gas; the processes of liquefaction and combustibility; the mineral bases of pigments and their alchemical possibilities; the often-poisonous ingredients of the painter's palette as they come out of the ground and are transmogrified into incandescence; those pigments' shuttling between pure matter and pure chroma, between brute materiality and ethereal opticality.

At the Louvre itself, in the *Salon Carré*, those four walls of masterpieces no longer seemed to him to shine. The *Salon* became somber, to the point that it no longer presented him with anything but a sort of mummification of colors beneath the paling and the yellowing of time...

He came to the point of no longer being able to conceive of light, or to see it, except in its intensity, in its flaming glory, in its diffusion, in blinding brilliance, in the electricity of storms, the flamboyance of theatrical apotheoses, the fireworks of sleet, the blazing white of magnesium. During the day he no longer tried to paint anything but dazzle. Following the example of certain colorists who, the maturity of their talent achieved, lose the strength of their talent in excess, Coriolus returned, in these last days, to his first manner, and little by little,... he descended ... into that hallucination of the great Turner who, at the end of his life, wounded by the darkness of paintings, discontented even with the daylight of his time, tried to release himself, in a canvas, with the dream of colors, into a virgin, primordial daylight, into The Light Before the Deluge (*sic*).

He searched everywhere for the stuff with which to strengthen his palette, heat up his colors, enflame and make them brilliant. In front of mineralogist's windows, attempting to steal from Nature, to ravish and carry off the multicolored fires of those petrifications and crystallizations of lightning, he stopped transfixed before the blue of azurite, the blue of chinese enamel, the feeble blues of oxidized copper, the celestial blue of lapis lazuli, all the way from royal blue to the blue of water. He sought after the whole gamut of red, from mercuries sulfuric, carmine and bloody, to the black-red of haemetite, and dreamed of *amatito*, the lost color of the sixteenth century, the cardinal color, the true purple of Rome. He sought after the peacock golds and greens of diluvian pudding-stones, the greens

of velvet, the changing, blue-tending greens of arsenic copper, the green of the lizard and of feldspar; the infinite variety of yellows, from canary yellow to the honeyed yellow of crystallized yellow arsenic and of florins; the fiery colors of pyritic copper, the colors of pink or violet stones which make one think of crystal flowers.

From minerals, he turned to shells, to the colorations which give birth to tenderness and to the ideal, to all the variations of pink in a porcelain fount, from dusky purple to dying rose, to mother-of-pearl drowning the prism in its milk. He sought after all the irisations and the opalizations of the rainbow, mirrored in old glass just come out of the earth, like pieces of buried sky. He visualized the azure of the sapphire, the blood of the ruby, the orient of the pearl, the water of the diamond. In order to paint, the painter believed he now had need of all that shone and all that burned in the Sky, in the Earth, and in the Sea.¹⁶

The end of painting's time, as this novel had it, also constitutes its primordial re-beginning: its deliquescence and dissolution, its descent into chaos, delivers the possibility of its re-Genesis, in the image of Turner's Morning after the Deluge (of 1843: fig. 6), with its Biblical topos of the clearing of the skies after the Flood, its self-reflexive rendering of painting itself as a matter of churned-up liquid, oily pigment, and colored, rainbow-hued light, not to mention its soap-bubble/spin-cycle form, and which in the novel serves to allegorize the history of painting as a cycle, rather than a forward-moving line. Here ends are not end-games, but re-beginnings.¹⁷ Thus in this novel (in which, along the way, a *paragone* is enacted between the capacities of painting and literature in the image and language of color), the Hegelian march towards the Romantic splintering of subject, sign and medium, and the *aufhebung* of all of the mediums in pure spirit, is combined with and countermanded by a different, circular (or perhaps spiral) model of *chronos*.

Before moving forward in time again, let me adduce two even earlier definitions of painting's medium-specificity. The one, dating from 1766, represents the origin of the

modern philosophical discourse of medium-specificity: namely, the older Laocoön, by Gotthold Lessing, to which Greenberg's newer Laocoön referred.¹⁸ I mention it to make three points. Setting the verbal and the visual semiotic systems against each other, in terms of a now-standard opposition between the temporal and spatial registers, Lessing's Laocoön rendered the differences between painting and sculpture moot by having a Hellenistic sculpture stand for the term "*malerei*." Moreover, what Lessing was really talking about was not the sculpture itself, but the 18th century version of a photographic reproduction—a two-dimensional, black-and-white, linear-syntax print.¹⁹ And finally, his medium-specificity had no time-line attached to it at all: there was no overcoming of one medium in another, or of an earlier sense of a medium in a later one, within the forward-moving arc of historical time, which was not yet conceptualized as such.

Likewise the other of my earlier definitions of painting's medium-specificity, the earliest and the last that I adduce: Roger de Piles' Dialogue sur le coloris, first published in 1673. De Piles's "dialogue" advocates for the Titian-Rubens side of the color-line/painting-drawing "quarrel," and in so doing defines "*coloris*," or the art of coloring as the "difference" of painting, in opposition to "*dessin*," or design, which he termed the "genre" or genus of the pictorial arts. Relational, cosmetic, feminine, this conception of painting would be embraced again, as a key part of the romantic/modern formula, by Baudelaire, both in his writing on Delacroix beginning in 1846, and in his Peintre de la vie moderne, of 1863. But at the end of the seventeenth century it was no such thing, for it was attached to no time-line. It was, rather, constitutive of the genus-species dualism of pictorial art. And the *coloris* model offered what I would argue is a still-useful

understanding of medium-specificity as “difference” rather than autonomy, purity, ontological essence or “hunted back” self-reflexivity.²⁰

(As an aside, let me just remark that that model applies rather well to Frankenthaler’s early work, though with a difference, as is clear from her Europa of 1957—fig. 7—with its reference back to the Titian-Rubens topos of the Rape of Europa. Oil on unprimed canvas, this painting enacts the destruction of painting as it was imagined by Balzac in Le chef do’oeuvre inconnu, in the image of old Europe and its painterly lineage: seduction transformed into violation, illusionistic figuration into the devastation—and yet at the same time the recollection—of figure, the fleshy attractions of colorism into a raw smear of pink, painterly gesture made over into an ejaculatory chaos of flung paint and staining oil, unbound. Still referential—Frankenthaler’s painting is good evidence for the inevitability of allusion at the heart of the anti-figurative project—Europa performs the oblitative American move from figuration to abstraction in coloristic terms, as violence performed by and on and through the body of a woman. What it does not do is imagine that move as reduction, or for that matter disembodied opticality: for the end of painting here is bodied forth, quite literally, as a violent new beginning, the birth-throes of a new generation emerging from the rapine of the old.)

I come back to three of my contemporary painters—contemporary in that they were all practicing at the same time until very recently—in order to see where all of this gets us in terms of the medium of painting, which, if we think of Frankenthaler, Polke and even Gallagher as working contemporaneously, is: a field of plural possibilities, defined according to praxis—according to the different practices of different artists, rather than the essentializing demands of the ontological enterprise of the philosopher, or

the teleological, dialectical model of the historian. In a heterodox, heterochronic moment in which what has come to its end is not painting, but the logic of the end-game. And in which the medium of painting is not one.

So I finish where I started, with my three contemporary painters. First, Helen Frankenthaler: whose Warming Trend of 2002 can stand as a marker of the endpoint of the trajectory of her oeuvre over the course of some fifty years (fig. 8). Moving from liquidity as a property of pigment matter in the early work, to atmospherics as a property of the opticality of color in the late paintings, Frankenthaler's definition of the medium-specificity (and time-line) of painting lies in its largely unchanging capacity for the allusiveness of colored materiality. Second, Sigmar Polke: whose Untitled (Square 2) of 2003, with its mixture of the rasterized and the poured, the abstract and the figural gesture, and of paint mediums—gold, oil and acrylic paint—can stand for the late moment of his decades-spanning work (fig. 9). From the irreverence of “Capitalist Realism” to the emphatic hybridity of his later efforts, Polke's definition of the medium-specificity (and time-line) of painting lies in the fundamental heterogeneity of painterly surface and effect, mixed with the generativity of other mediums and media, photography prime among them. Third, Ellen Gallagher: whose Bird in Hand, of 2006, can stand for the state-of-the-art point of her flourishing career (fig. 10). From the incipience of topicality in the pared-down Minimalism of her penmanship-paper grid in the earliest of work to the multi-medium flowering of figure from that same ground as epitomized in Bird in Hand, Gallagher's definition of the medium-specificity (and time-line) of painting lies in the birth of figurative possibility from the materiality of work in this medium within a matrix of other mediums. These, then, are three bodies of work in painting,

differently conceived, which, though they began at different times, ended up as contemporaneous definitions of the many potentialities of a medium at once singular (painting) and plural (painting becoming everything else).

¹ These definitions of “medium,” as well as the following definitions of “menstruum,” are derived from the Third (online) Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, as updated in 2001. The first edition of what was then called A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles was conceived by the Philological Society of London in 1857, work commenced on it in 1879, with a complete ten-volume set finally published in 1928, and a complete Second Edition in 1989. The Third Edition is in process. The website for the online O.E.D. announces its distinction from other dictionaries as an historical repository of “over 1000 years of English.” On the O.E.D. and its history, see Simon Winchester, The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

² See my “Ellen Gallagher: Mythopoetics and Materials,” in Carol Armstrong, Ellen Gallagher, Robin D.G. Kelley, Richard Shiff and Ulrich Wilmess, Ellen Gallagher: AxME, London: Tate Publishing, 2013; and Ellen Gallagher, Jill Medvedow, Robert Storr and Greg Tate, Ellen Gallagher, Boston: D.A.P./ICA Boston, 2001.

³ See Rosalind Krauss, A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition, London: Thames and Hudson, 2000.

⁴ See Dave Hickey, John R. Lane and Charles Wylie, Sigmar Polke: History of Everything, Paintings and Drawings 1998-2003, Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art Publications, 2003; Gloria Moure and Sigmar Polke, Sigmar Polke: Paintings, Photographs, and Films, Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2003; Hans Belting, Rudi Fuchs, Charles Haxthausen and Sigmar Polke, Sigmar Polke: The Three Lies of Painting, Ostfildern and Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, First Edition editions, 1997; and Maria Morris Hambourg, Sigmar Polke and Paul Schimmel, Sigmar Polke Photoworks: The Vanishing Picture, New York: Scalo Publishers, 1996.

⁵ See John Elderfield, Painted on 21st Street: Helen Frankenthaler from 1950 to 1959, New York: Harry N. Abrams and Gagosian Gallery, 2013; Helen Frankenthaler and Karen Wilkin, Frankenthaler at Eighty, New York: Knoedler and Co., 2009; and John Elderfield, Frankenthaler, New York: Harry N. Abrams (with The Museum of Modern Art), 1989.

⁶ My conception of the “mechanics of fluids”—indeed the phrase itself—is derived from Luce Irigaray’s Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un, Paris: Edition de Minuit, 1977 (translated by Catherine Porter, as This Sex Which Is Not One, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Indeed, “The ‘Mechanics’ of Fluids” is the title of the sixth chapter of this book, pp. 106-118.

⁷ See James Lawrence and John Richardson, Robert Rauschenberg, New York and London: Prestel, 2011; Carolyn Lanchner and Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Rauschenberg, New York: Museum of Modern Art, MoMA Artist Series, 2010; and Trisha Brown, Ruth Fine and Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective, New York: Harry N. Abrams (with the Guggenheim Museum), 1997.

⁸ See Roman Jakobson, “The Dominant,” in Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pmorska, eds., Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press, 2002 (originally published by MIT Press, 1971), pp. 82-82 (1935). Jakobson explains that while the “dominant” applies to the organizing principle of a single work of art, it can also stand for the “acme of the aesthetic criteria of the time”—pg. 82.

⁹ “...vous, vous n’êtes que le premier dans la decrepitude de votre art...”—Charles Baudelaire, “A Edouard Manet,” 11 mai 1865, in Charles Baudelaire, Lettres 1841-1866, Paris: Société du Mercure de France, pg. 436. The next declaration of the end of painting famously came in and around 1921, with the Russian constructivist moment, Aleksandr Rodchenko’s reductivist triptych, Pure Red Color, Pure Blue Color, Pure Yellow Color, and his attendant remark that painting was “all over.” See Magdalena Dabrowski, Leah Dickerman, Peter Galassi, Aleksandr Lavrent’ev, and Varvara Aleksandrovna Rodchenko, Aleksandr Rodchenko, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998. The third death of painting just as famously began in the 1960s, with Minimalist pronouncements by Donald Judd and others of that view, as accepted and argued against in such recent books and exhibitions as Craig G. Staff, After Modern Painting: The History of a Contemporary Practice, London: Philip Wilson Publishers, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2013, and the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition “What is Painting?” of 2007.

¹⁰ Among others, Douglas Crimp addresses the discursive hybridity of the photograph as fundamental to its historicity, in On the Museum’s Ruins, Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1993, in which he links “The Museum’s Old, the Library’s New Subject” (pp. 66-83) to both “The End of Painting” (pp. 84-107) and “The End of Sculpture” (pp. 149-198).

¹¹ See Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Malerei Fotografie Film (Bauhaus Bücher: 1925), Berlin: Mann, 1997; translated (by Janet Seligman) into Painting Photography Film, London: Lund Humphries, 1979. On Moholy-Nagy, see Max Hollein and Ingrid Pfeiffer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, New York and London: Prestel, 2009. On the Bauhaus generally, see Magdalena Drost and the Bauhaus Archiv, Bauhaus 1919-1933, Köln: Taschen, 2006.

¹² On pages 72-72 of Malerei Fotografie Film, a photogram by Moholy-Nagy sits next to a black-and-white reproduction of one of Moholy-Nagy’s own abstract paintings, the latter of which is labeled “malerei.” Earlier, in the prefatory text to the book, entitled “Von der Pigmentmalerei bis zum Reflectorisch Geworfenen Lichtspiel” (pp. 9-43), Moholy-Nagy argues for a telos that marches from the biological basis of pigment-based images to the technologically expanded sensorium of photography and then the most up-to-date, futuristic medium, film (better yet, simultaneous film, or “Polykino), along the way remarking on the necessity that photography itself move away from painting-based perspectival framing to the “new vision” proper to itself, best epitomized, in his view, in the cameraless photogram. That painting is to be “overcome” by photography is implicit in the black-and-white, photographic reproduction of “Konstruktion ‘K’” on page 73. On Moholy-Nagy and the photogram, see Renata Heyne, Hattula Moholy-Nagy, László Moholy-Nagy, and Hans Molderings, László Moholy-Nagy: The Photograms: Catalogue Raisonné, Ostfildern and Berlin: Hatje Cantz, First Edition, 2010; and Noam M. Elcott, Into the Dark Chamber: Avant-Garde Photograms and the Cinematic Imaginary, Princeton University Ph.D. dissertation, 2008. On the earlier history of the photogram in relation to other related mediums, see my “Cameraless: From Natural Illustrations and Nature Prints to Manual and Photogenic Drawings and Other Botanographs,” in Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, eds., Oceanflowers: Impressions from Nature, Princeton and New York: Princeton University Press and The Drawing Center, 2004.

¹³ Crucial to the Hegelian dialectics of historical progress, the nineteenth-century philosophical concept of “*aufhebung*” (alternatively translated as “sublation” or “overcoming”) also continues to underwrite twentieth-century time-lines, including the avant-garde logic of forward motion, negation of the past and the consequent obsolescence of earlier cultural forms: see G.F.W. Hegel, The Philosophy of History (J. Sibree, trans.), Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Dover Philosophical Classics, 1956; as well as Hegel’s

Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art (T.M. Knox, trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2 volumes. See also Hayden V. White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973.

¹⁴ “*Se rappeler qu’un tableau - avant d’être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue, ou une quelconque anecdote – est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées.*”—Maurice Denis, “Definition du néo-traditionnisme,” Art et critique, no. 65, August 23, 1890, pp. 556-58, translated as “Definition of Neo-Traditionalism,” in Charles Harrison et al, eds., Art in Theory 1815-1900, London: Blackwell, 1998, pg. 863; and Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoön,” originally published in Partisan Review in 1940, reprinted in John O’Brian, ed., Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. 1: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944, pp. 23-38.

¹⁵ The artist-novel constitutes a sub-genre in nineteenth-century French literature, sitting between and functioning both as fictional story and work of art criticism: starting with Honoré de Balzac’s novelette, it would culminate with Emile Zola’s L’Oeuvre of 1886, as much a reply to the earlier works in the sub-genre as a *roman à clef* concerning the artists of his time. On this subject, see my Manet Manette, London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 49-68.

¹⁶ “*Au Louvre meme, dans le Salon carré, ces quatre murs de chefs-doeuvre ne lui semblaient plus rayonner. Le Salon s’assombrissait, et arrivait à ne plus lui montrer qu’une sorte de momification des couleurs sous la patine et le jaunissement du temps...*

“*La lumière, il était arrivé à ne plus la concevoir, la voir, que dans l’intensité, la gloire flamboyante, la diffusion, l’aveuglement de rayonnement, les électricités de l’orage, le flamboiement des apothèmes de theater, le feu d’artifice du grésil, le blan incendie du magnesium. Du jour, il n’essayait plus de peindre que l’éblouissement. A l’exemple de certains colorists qui, la maturité de leur talent franchie, perdent dans l’excès la dominante de leur talent, Coriolis...était revenue, dans ces derniers temps, à sa première manière, et peu à peu...il descendait un peu de cette hallucination du grand Turner qui, sur la fin de sa vie, blesse par l’ombre des tableaux, mécontent de la lumière peinte jusqu’à lui, mécontent meme du jour de son temps, essayait de s’élever, dans une toile, avec le rêve des couleurs, à un jour vierge et primordial, à la Lumière avant le Déluge.*

“*Il cherchait partout de quoi monter sa palette, chauffer ses tons, les enflammer, les briller. Devant les vitrines de mineralogy, essayant de voler la Nature, de ravir et d’emporter les feux multicolores de ces pétrifications et de ces cristallisations d’éclairs, il s’arrêtait à ces bleus défaillants des cuivres oxides, au bleu celeste de la lazulite allant du bleu de roi au bleu de l’eau. Il suivait tout la gamme du rouge, des mercures sulfurés, carmins et saignants, jusqu’au rouge noir de l’hématite, et rêvait à l’amatito, la couleur perdue du seizième siècle, la couleur cardinal, la vraie pourpre de Rome. Il suivait les ors et les verts queue de paon des poudingues diluviens, les verts de velours, les verts changeants et bleuissants des cuivres arséniatés, le vert de lézard du feldspath; l’infinie variété des jaunes, du jaune serin au jaune miellé des orpiments cristallisés et des fluorines; les couleurs embraces des cuivres pyriteux, lers couleurs de pierres roses ou violettes, qui font pense à des fleurs de cristal.*

“*Des minéraux, il passait aux coquilles, aux colorations meres de la tendress et de l’idéal du ton, à toutes ces variations du rose dans une fonte de porcelain, depuis la pourpre tén’Ωebreuse jusqu’au rose mourant, à la nacre noyant le prisme dans son lait. Il allait à toutes les irisations, aux opalisations d’arc-en-ciel, miroitantes sur le verre antique sorti de terre comme avec du ciel enterré. Il se mettait dans les yeux l’azur du saphir, le sang du rbuis, l’orient de la perle, leau du diamant. Pour peindre, le peintre croyait avoir maintenant besoin de tout ce qui brille, de tout ce qui brûle dans le Ciel, dans la Terre, dans la Mer.*”—Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Manette Salomon, Paris: Libraire Internationale, 1868, tome 2, pp. 293-96.

¹⁷ See my “Endings are Beginnings, A Mechanics of Fluids, and/or The Work of Painting in the Age of Photo-Mechanical Production,” in Avigail Moss and Kerstin Stakemeier, eds., Painting: The Implicit Horizon, Maastricht, The Netherlands: Jan Van Eyck Academie, 2012, pp. 77-94; reprinted in Eva Maria Stadler, ed., Why Painting Now?, Vienna: The Creative Agency of the City of Vienna, 2013.

¹⁸ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laokoon: oder, Über die Grenzen der Malerie und Poesie (1766), Ditzingen: Reclam Verlag, Perfect Paperbacks, 2012.

¹⁹ The point that Lessing's Laocoön was not the sculpture itself but two-dimensional print-reproductions of it is nicely made with the four differently reproduced details of the face of the Laocoön on the cover of William Ivins, Prints and Visual Communication (1953), Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969 (third edition, paperback).

²⁰ Defining "*coloris*" as the "difference and consequently the part that makes a painter what he is" ("*sa difference; & par consequent la partie qui fait le Peintre*"), as opposed to the "*genre*" of all the visual arts (which he assigns to "*Dessein*"), De Piles goes on to describe it as "*le beau fard*," or "beautiful make-up," as well: Roger de Piles, Dialogue sur le coloris, Paris: Nicolas Langlois, 1699, pp. 23-24, 59. The idea of "*le beau fard*" would be picked up by Charles Baudelaire in his eleventh chapter of "Le peintre de la vie moderne" (1863) in his "*Eloge du maquillage*": see Charles Baudelaire, Écrits esthétiques, Paris: Union générale d'Éditions, 1984—pp. 394-397. On De Piles, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, La couleur éloquente: Rhétorique et peinture à l'âge classique, Paris: Flammarion, 1989.