

Foreword

This is a special issue of **Varia História**, the journal published under the auspices of the History Department of the Federal University of Minas Gerais. All the papers now assembled focus on research findings and innovative theorizing concerning different matters in the History of Art.

The authors deal with the chosen subject from different approaches, that is, theoretical, cultural, historical, never losing sight of the complex relationship between image and the intrinsic meaning of what is therein represented. According to Panofsky, it is mandatory to reach beyond the painting; one needs to overcome iconography and plunge into iconology, since the former is not only a means to art, but the very requisite of comprehensive understanding of the work of art. From this perspective, the papers now published analyze the formal aspects of the work of art, but also highlight its invisible components, that is, cultural and historical conditions that might contribute to better understanding its particular contents.

The purpose of this special issue is, precisely, to vent different and challenging approaches to the history of art. The papers emphasize the visible and the invisible references that the study of different artistic manifestations may unveil and reveal as their objective support. They give evidence to the ever expanding agenda of research subjects, both for the beginner and for renowned scholars. In their variety, they challenge the art historians to go further and deeper in their theoretical and research endeavors.

This field of knowledge is indeed highly diversified. The assembling of papers was not aimed at covering every branch of the history of art already established as a field of specialization. It did not follow any conventional conception of the academic discipline, since each paper deals with its subject matter without concern with its connection to any prevailing debate. Thus, each paper may be read as a novel challenge to the reader, who will be confronted with many possibilities of interpreting complex issues and objects referred to as expressions of art.

The history of art should not be linked mainly to debates concerning authorship. The major concern should be the meaning of the work of art, the unveiling of its cultural and intellectual background. This approach is related

to what might be dubbed as the *drill of one's eye*, that might be applied to any piece of art, be it part of the classic tradition or contemporary. In my view, this is the most important contribution of the papers here assembled. Each one evidences that the history of art progresses and affirms itself as a field of knowledge by dealing with interpretive debates, by analyzing tendencies and creative shocks; it has little to do with simple chronology, as already emphasized by the Italian art historian Maurizio Fagiolo.

It should also be pointed out the varied cultural background of the authors of the papers: they come from Brazil, Colombia, Canada, Italy, France and Portugal. The way they focus on and develop their respective subject matters help the reader to pursue the study from the perspective of either theory or history of art.

Fauzia Farneti, from Università degli Studi in Firenze, chose to study the baroque architecture in Tuscany during the seventeenth century. The main subject is the *quadraturismo* or the false architectural painting. Her approach is quite innovative and highlights the local conceptions of perspective in painting. Her findings are important both for expanding the knowledge of local art and for adding new elements in the study of the baroque in the Renaissance period.

Paula André, from the ISCTE in Lisbon, is concerned with the formal components in the process of artistic creation. According to her interpretation, they are universals and manifest themselves in the complex relationship linking each artist to his work.

Roberto Carvalho Magalhães, from the Università Internazionale dell'Arte in Firenze, also deals with the relationship between the artist and his work. But his approach connects two different fields of culture, that is, art proper and the study of museums. His essay leads to the debate concerning the complex mixture of history, culture and differences in artistic manifestations.

Alexandra Gago da Câmara, from the Universidade Aberta of Lisbon, has a very specific subject of study, that is, the collection of photographs of the traditional Portuguese ornamental tiles, made by Santos Simões, an expert in the this form of art. She aims at organizing an inventory according to the geographical distribution of the patterns, referring them to historical periods. This subject of research may have important developments in the study of the features of Portuguese architecture in Brazil.

Márcia Cristina Leão Bonnet, from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, focus on the relationship between specific forms of the Catholic faith – she selected the cult to Saint Francis as her case study – and the corresponding imagery that gives way to a wide array of artistic expressions, beginning in the medieval iconography reaching to the Brazilian painting tradition of the seventeenth century.

Luís Alberto Freire, from the Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil, depicts the life history of a baiano artist, Vitoriano dos Anjos Figueiroa, who

begins his career in Salvador, under the influence of Portuguese culture, and then, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, moves to Campinas, São Paulo, where he inaugurates a new phase in his production. One finds again in this paper the focus on the relationship between history and culture.

Jorge Galindo, from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, chose a very interesting and little known aspect in the research of the technical features of art, that is, the study of perspective as a discipline in the curriculum of Military Academies. His historical case is the Academia Real de Matemática, in Barcelona, where, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, military engineers were trained.

Dominique Raynaud, from Université Pierre Mendès-France of Grenoble, turns his attention to theoretical issues referred to semiotic and semantic features of architecture. According to him, the shape of an architectural conception has a meaning resulting from the various components of the design. To prove his thesis, the author compares different forms of realization of the idea of *ascencion* in architectural forms, beginning with the pyramids in ancient Egypt, following through the exercises with rays of light in gothic architecture, reaching to the image of power displayed in modern skyscrapers.

Maria Helena Flexor, from the Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil, uses a case study, that is, the work of Pedro Ferreira, sculptor, to call attention to the academic challenge to investing in further and deeper research in the history of art in Brazil.

Luis de Moura Sobral, from the Université de Montréal, Canada, describes the religious painting in its baroque version in a church in Salvador and the use of false architecture to build its ceiling. He aims at emphasizing the influence of Portuguese tradition in the religious art in Brazil, mentioning specially the work of Antônio Simões Ribeiro, who is dubbed as the founder of a painting tradition in Bahia.

José Alberto Gomes Machado, from the Universidade de Évora, Portugal, throws light on some important contemporary issues related to critical analysis in present-day history of art. Among them the author challenges the reader by stressing the need to discussing the possibility of a global history of art.

I believe that the papers now published offer the reader a wealth of approaches and interpretations which will stimulate further research and theorizing. They do not provide an integrated view of the history of art, but certainly indicate possibilities of progress towards what might be called an international program of research in the history of art, focusing on historical, cultural and technical aspects of this wide subject matter.

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