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Looking back at the life room; revisiting  
Pevsner's *Academies of Art Past and Present*, to  
reconsider the illustrations and construct  
photographs representing the curriculum

PhD by

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Goldsmiths College London

The work presented here is the candidate's own

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Thesis Abstract

## Looking back at the life room; revisiting Pevsner's *Academies of Art Past and Present*, to reconsider the illustrations and construct photographs representing the curriculum

This project considers the relationship between the theory and practice of art as a historical narrative of conflict and contradiction, beginning over four hundred years ago in Renaissance Italy, with the emergence of the first art academies, concluding, in the British context, with a number of battles in art education after the Coldstream report of 1960. Nicholas Pevsner's *Academies of Art Past and Present* (CUP 1940) is the starting point of this research, a text which has proven of continual importance for enquiries into art education. Immediately relevant are feminist art history, (Nochlin 1973, Parker & Pollock 1983), and a number of American academics' accounts of art education in America. (Goldstein 1996, Singerman 1999, Elkins 2001).

Guided by Pevsner's *Academies*, my project develops through site visits to European Art Academies, where I photograph life drawing and anatomy rooms and collect historical imagery from archives. No longer the height of art theory, the life room is the historical object of this thesis, analysed as the remains of a previous

fine art system, and as a space of fantasy.

Juxtaposing original material gathered on site visits with their reproduction in Pevsner's book I offer a re-reading which considers the tradition of copying in the academy with that of the mechanisms of reproduction in modernity. My use of photography in the life room abuts one system with the other, while image maps follow each chapter using the convention of the image essay and Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*

My chapters prepare a context in which my photographs can be read as traces of a much older tradition of observation, representation and pedagogy. I consider the anatomy theatre in relation to the life room and questions of feminism, representation and the female body. I move on to the Bauhaus and the rejection of academic art and finally to of the Hornsey Sit-in of 1968 and the *Coldstream Report*, where the relationship of theory to practice, and to the 'academic' in art education is fiercely debated.

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All images by Naomi Salaman unless otherwise stated

## Introduction

This project looks back at the emergence of the art academy to reconsider questions of representation, gender and pedagogy in relation to art practice, art theory and art education. *Academies of Art Past and Present*, by Nikolaus Pevsner, has provided the main historical framework and guide for this thesis which develops out of research visits to art academies across Europe.<sup>1</sup> In his fourth chapter *Classic Revival, Mercantilism and Academies of Art*, Pevsner charts the growth and spread of the art academy as a pedagogic model, ‘institutions of the character first worked out in Florence and Rome then accomplished in Paris, and in the eighteenth century adopted everywhere.’<sup>2</sup> The art academy in Paris, established in 1648 became a very powerful precedent on which new art academies were based for hundreds of years. After the French Revolution, the art academy was renamed l’*école des beaux arts*, though the curriculum remained essentially the same. Both the academic and beaux arts traditions were based on a drawing course, the apex of which was drawing from the nude male model. The life room, where the nude model was drawn, is the historical object of

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<sup>1</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

<sup>2</sup> Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present*, p141

this thesis; analysed in terms of space, vision and gender, and visualised in a series of photographs taken on site.<sup>3</sup>

The presentation of this practice-based thesis consists of the written thesis containing illustrated chapters and six large, fold-out visual maps.<sup>4</sup> Although the subject of the thesis is well known and conventional within the discipline of art history, my approach to the subject matter, my process of research and my style of writing does not always conform to academic conventions. I offer a range of voices, from the travelogue, to the analytical, to an open process of thought transcribed and at times fragmented, closer to the associative power of images, and the thinking behind my visual practice. My writing and my visual work are distinct practices but are linked by a discursive permeability.

The first four ‘chapter maps’ produced for the thesis contribute visual connections and visual groups and overlaps that would be hard to describe in words. The final two maps present single images as comment. They ask the reader to switch modes, to be receptive to these elaborations about ‘looking’. The first map, which follows this Introduction, presents an image essay on the theme of copying in the art academy, detailing ideas and

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<sup>3</sup> Dennis Diderot and D’Alembert, *Encyclopédie Ou Dictionnaire Raisonné Des Sciences, Des Arts Et Des Metiers Par Un Société Des Gens De Lettres*, 2nd ed., vol. I (1763).Plates on Dessien

<sup>4</sup> Original colour photographic prints of art academy rooms I have taken on research visits will be exhibited for the viva.

observations that fed into the *Academies* project.<sup>5</sup> The map for Chapter 1 reproduces a map of Europe to show the sixty-four art academies that remain from the one hundred that Pevsner lists as functioning by 1790. I have superimposed onto this details of my own research visits and some of my images. The image maps for Chapter 2 and 3 follow the example of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* of the art historian Aby Warburg. These image maps cluster research images highlighting themes and developments from the chapters, using visual links and visual analogies. The final two maps are more minimal, showing a single image each. Chapter 4 shows the entrance to an art school in what was East Berlin, and the map for Chapter 5 shows the life painting studio of Sir William Coldstream, at the Slade School of Art London. Coldstream was Director of the Slade and also the Chairman of the Coldstream Committee which was responsible for modernising the art education system in this country.

## Context

‘.... We have to take account of the fact that art history as a discipline arose in relation to a *crisis* of transmission. This is well attested by Aby Warburg – the Warburg Institute was supposed to be the place where transmission (specifically of the classical tradition in the Renaissance) would be studied but also performed. This was necessitated by a crisis in transmission that Walter Benjamin attributed to a crisis of experience in modernity. Art

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<sup>5</sup> When I use the *Academies* project it refers to this PhD research, where as Pevsner’s *Academies* refers to his book.

History cannot be understood simply as a means of transmission, since it is precisely a symptom of its failure. Therefore art history no less blocks transmission than assures it, usually both at the same time. This paradox would be particularly acute when it comes to the transmission of the ‘avant-garde’ which surely is the art of the break, of the interruption of tradition. How do you transmit the interruption of tradition without reducing it to continuity?’<sup>6</sup>

As well as working as an artist, curating projects and writing, I have always taught in art schools and on photography courses.<sup>7</sup> An

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Newman, "Assessment," *Art History Versus Aesthetics*, ed. James Elkins (London and NY: Routledge, 2006).p210

<sup>7</sup> My work is mainly photography based; critiques and meditations on the medium and the technology in relation to the construction of the image, to rhetoric, representation, sexuality and vision have been the subject of my work. I have produced photographs, slide dissolve projections, photo books, stereoscopic photographic installations, stereoscopic drawings, still films, (a term I have used to describe durational films that show just one image) and a limited edition microfilm. I have curated exhibitions and edited art books. As artist and curator my work comes together in large projects of exhibition, publication and curation that investigate an area of debate and theory. The work I do aims to question institutions over time, across generations, in relation to the production of knowledge, authority and (image) technology. See Naomi Salaman and Ronnie Simpson, eds., *Postcards on Photography* (Cambridge: Cambridge Darkroom Gallery, 1998)., Naomi Salaman, ed., *What She Wants - Women Artists Look at Men* (London: Verso, 1994)., Anna Harding, ed., *Potential: Ongoing Archive* (Artimo and John Hansard Gallery, 2002)., <http://www.artomma.org/projectroom/n8/main.htm>, and <http://www.artomma.org/NEW/issue10/theory.html> These projects laid the ground work for the *Academies* project. *What She Wants; women artists look at men*, experimented with the gendered, erotic conventions of viewer and viewed by making space for women’s work on the male body. The research for this took me from contemporary issues to do with feminism, AIDS and pornography back to the art academy, and to the tradition of the male nude, from which women had always been excluded.

exhibition of work called *Parenthesis*, completed before I began work on the *Academies* project, consisted of two large drawings from projected photographs I had taken of the lecture theatre at the Architectural Association, London.<sup>8</sup> One image showed a view from the back of the room from quite low down, where a procession

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*Postcards on Photography*, started from the contemporary conditions of Photography galleries in the UK in late 1990s, *closing down* as digital media became prominent. The desire for photography to be seen as art lessened the community of viewers and supporters of the specialist photography gallery. Research took me from contemporary observations via a focus on photorealism, back to the art academy and the pedagogy of copying. The *Nothing is Hidden* project precipitated the *Academies* project. I was commissioned to write a text on a work by Hermione Wiltshire, '1 Modi', photographs of libraries in Rome cut to the outline of famous erotic couplings by the sixteenth century painter Giuglio Romano. The history of Pornography, (see Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum, Pornography in Modern Culture* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1997)., and Bette Talvacchia in Lynne Hunt, ed., *The Invention of Pornography. Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1993).) took me into the museum and the archive to investigate the places where obscene objects were kept. I came across the institutional materialisation of a cultural splitting off, of the 'good' and the 'bad' representations of the body. Where there was a national or Royal collection of antiquities, there was most likely to be an a locked cabinet or private case, containing 'obscenity', collected and stored as objects of antiquity troublesome to ideas taste and decency emerging in eighteenth century Europe, and an academy of art which had access to the collection of casts and marbles, for study. These locked *spaces* – secret museums, became the subject of a series of photographs made with Hermione Wiltshire called 'Nothing is Hidden' 2000 taken at the National Museum in Naples and the British Museum. *Changed Press Marks of the Private Case*, 2001; a B/W microfilm also came out of this Naples research into the origins of pornography, see *Potential On Going Archive* above, or <http://www.art-omma.org/projectroom/n8/main.htm>

<sup>8</sup> *Parenthesis* was shown at Five Years Gallery, London November 1999

of chair backs led to the empty place of the lecturer. The other image showed the reverse shot, slightly looking down, towards rows of empty chairs and a projector at the far end of the room. A regular set-up for a lecture. In between the two opposing drawings was a hand made book containing my memories of seminars, talks and tutorials that had made an indelible impression on me, and a series of images of how I saw the interaction between teacher and pupil. These interactions had been with notable feminist theorists and artists; Mary Kelly, Griselda Pollock and Marie Yates, from whom I had learnt an enormous amount as a student. The work attempted to gain access to the space of that interaction of teaching and being taught; or public speaking and individual reception; and of the transmission of ideas from one generation to another.

*Parenthesis*, began an investigation which led to the *Academies* project, looking back to my own education in feminism, art, representation, politics and psychoanalysis, to the present condition in which these very terms are entrenched within art discourse, but no longer seem to offer the critical intervention they once did. 'How do you transmit the interruption of tradition without reducing it to continuity?'<sup>9</sup> My disappointment with the success of the tools I had so enthusiastically embraced in the mid 1980's has not led to my dropping commitments to feminism or critical art and cultural analysis, but has sent me back to investigate the model of

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<sup>9</sup> Newman, "Assessment."p210

the art academy as an institution which also began as an 'avant-garde' proposition and became a global pedagogic norm.

One thing that struck me as I made drawings of the lecture theatre was how almost all my art education had taken place in seminar rooms and lecture theatres, and that this mode of teaching and learning art was relatively new. By looking back to a previous mode of teaching art – that of drawing and copying - the aim of both written and visual aspects of this project are to investigate the almost forgotten history of the drawing room as well as focusing attention on the emergence of present pedagogical practices.

## Chapter 1: Collecting Remnants as a Methodology

Below I provide an essential summary of the emergence of the art academy taken from *Academies of Art Past and Present*, by Nikolaus Pevsner, and consider some of the images that he and others use in their account of the development of the institution. This background is important as I go on to consider the life room as the defining space of the art academy which this thesis sets out to investigate and document. I then describe the process and rationale behind my research visits, image gathering, and photographic work, locating methodological approaches and intellectual frameworks put to use in the subsequent chapters and chapter maps.

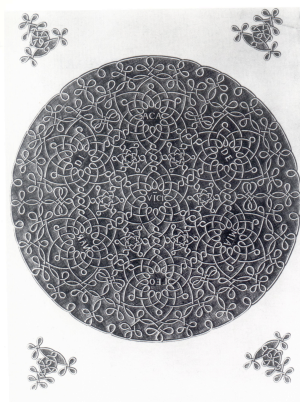


Figure 1. one of six engraving by Leonardo Da Vinci or one of his pupils, with the inscription, *Academia Leonardi Vin(c)i*

### 1.1 Emergence of the Institution

According to Pevsner the first known use of the term ‘academy’ in relation to art is found on six engravings which bear the inscription *Academia Leonardi Vinci*.<sup>10</sup> They have been dated around the end of the fifteenth century. Nothing has ever been found to verify the existence of such an academy as we might imagine one, but the figure of Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) as artist-theorist, is a transitional one. His was the first attempt to wrench art and artists out of the craft-guild matrix where they had grown and flourished since the early Middle Ages. The guild operated a slow and servile apprenticeship system in which a boy could learn everything from colour grinding to drawing and painting in a painter’s workshop, where he would live and sweep the floor for his keep. It was always a ‘he’. He would eventually earn his certificate from a local company of painters, and be able to take up commissions in the area. Leonardo suggested something different – for him the artist needed access to knowledge and theory first and know-how second. ‘Consequently a new and at the time utterly revolutionary syllabus is proposed. Perspective is the first subject to be taught. After this the student is to be introduced into the theory and practice of proportion, and then into drawing from his master’s drawings,

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<sup>10</sup> This account of the emergence of the art academy is mainly taken from Pevsner’s narrative.

drawing from relief, drawing from nature, and in the end to the practice of his art.’<sup>11</sup>

The trades and professions were highly regulated at this time and strictly divided into the mechanical as opposed to the liberal arts. Those members of society not working in church or state duties fell, in Christian culture, into work protecting man from “ignorance and debility”. The seven liberal arts, from greek antiquity were thought to comprise the whole of theoretical knowledge, used to combat ignorance, while skilled manual labour was needed ‘to diminish discomforts, to control the thorns and thistles that beset human nature,’ - the only means to fight man’s debility.<sup>12</sup>

Originally the Mechanical Arts were characterised by the common trait that all of them aimed at objectives that had to be attained if man was to survive in his fight with the elements of nature. They ranged from the carpenter’s skill in furnishing adequate shelter to the sailor’s ability to make port, from the farmer’s success in raising grain to the barber’s experience in dressing wounds, and so on.<sup>13</sup>

The guilds organised the mechanical arts, while the court and nobility were the principal sponsors of the liberal arts. Until well into the seventeenth century, the artist’s training and place in society was defined and controlled by the guild, through which all commissions were regulated and controlled. The local company would protect the interests of their painters, fighting off

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<sup>11</sup> Pevsner, Academies of Art, Past and Present. p35

<sup>12</sup> William S Heckscher, Rembrandt's 'Anatomy of Dr. Tulp' an Iconological Study (Washington Square NY: New York University Press, 1958). p59

<sup>13</sup> Heckscher, Rembrandt's 'Anatomy of Dr. Tulp' an Iconological Study. p59

competition from foreign artists or those less qualified with protectionist rules; matching artists to jobs. Artists were not free to work when and where they wanted, but they were free from financial insecurity, and free to develop their craft. To reclassify painting from the mechanical arts to the liberal arts was to shift the emphasis of the work from a hand craft to a literary pursuit. This change was argued for within the context of the emerging art academy, within the practice of Renaissance humanism, with reference to the texts of the ancients. Such a change however was not simply a matter of definition and status but also of social practice. The guild offered protection for highly skilled workers, the scholar/artist would need support from the court or nobility. Such a change would challenge the role of the guild and would involve far reaching social and political consequences for the relations between artist and patron, and between art and society.

At the end of the fifteenth century in Florence, Lorenzo de Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent, lover of arts and sponsor of the Accademia Platonica, introduced a small school for artists independent of all guild rules and restrictions. He appointed the sculptor Giovanni di Bertoldo (1420-1491) to teach drawing from the Medici collection of sculpture and antique marbles in the garden at Piazza San Marco. This was a new kind of art education – involving no apprenticeship and no manual work. Instead students studied directly from art works. ‘It is not an exaggeration to call



Bertoldo's the first modern method.'<sup>14</sup> It is known that Michelangelo Buonaroti (1475-1564) was one of the students to enjoy this new system and he became the most celebrated artist of the age. 'It is Michelangelo's life above all that can serve to illustrate the new conception of the artist's social position'.<sup>15</sup> The garden school at San Marco was not an academy, but it broke with the guild, took place in the grounds of the nobility and was based on the study of the antique.

The word 'academy' is found in two engravings by Baccio Bandinelli, (1493-1563) one from Rome 1531, then Florence 1550. Bandinelli was a writer and poet, a member of the prestigious Accademia Fiorentina. There is no evidence that he ran any kind of school. The attribution in both cases, refers to a gathering of artists/scholars to study together. In the first, they are seated round a table, where a candle burns illuminating their activities. One is holding and examining a small nude statue, another three are drawing or writing while three younger men watch. On the shelf behind them are classical figurines, lit to produce strong shadows, some urns and a book. The second, though different in style, shows a similar scene, more populated and more littered with significant and stylised objects - skeletons, and classical statuary. Those gathered around the table are, in this instance not clearly drawing

at all. They could be writing or drawing. An elder, dressed in classical robes sitting to the left seems to be speaking and the others writing or listening.



Figure 2. Baccio Bandinelli's *Academy* in Rome, engraved by Agostino Veneziano 1531



Figure 3. Baccio Bandinelli's *Academy* in Florence, c. 1550 engraved by Enea Vico

<sup>14</sup> Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present*. p38

<sup>15</sup> Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present*. p32

Despite the workshop setting, neither print shows activities typical of the working day. Bandinelli was an intellectual artist 'pompous and arrogant' according to Pevsner, he was dedicated to an 'accademia particolare del disegno'. The word 'disegno' should 'not be confused with descriptive drawing'. Goldstein notes that disegno is often translated as drawing, but in terms of Cinquecento art theory, means something more fundamental and more abstract. In Giorgio Vasari's (1511-1574) words, "*Disegno* is an apparent expression and declaration of the *concetto* (or judgement), that is held in the mind and of that which, to say the same thing has been imagined in the intellect and fabricated in the *idea*."<sup>16</sup> In one sentence Vasari mentions idea, concept, intellect and mind to describe what had been thought of as a manual activity. Both engravings could be interpreted in relation to *disegno* as the scenes present drawing, thinking, writing and looking; activities both personal and internal, intellectual and conceptual, shown here as communal, and social as well. Those figures with pen in hand are looking down at their pads in thought. This is not a class where objects are drawn, copied naturalistically, far from it. Rather they are drawing from their imaginations. The link between thinking and

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<sup>16</sup> Carl Goldstein, Teaching Art, Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers. (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). p14, Giorgio Vasari, "Le Vite De' Piu Eccelenti Pittori, Scultori, Ed Architetti," trans. Carl Goldstein, ed. G Milanese (Florence: 1568), and Pevsner, Academies of Art, Past and Present. p46 n1

drawing is very clear. It develops Goldstein's point about drawing even further, to equate drawing to writing - both forms of thinking, both skilled and coded activities that feed off observation and the mental storehouse of thought, memory and knowledge. My reading of these scenes would point to the internal space of the workshop/room, and the internal place of the imagination represented by the thought process described here, where the light signifies inspiration (internal) and material prerequisite. This depiction of the thinking part of drawing elevates drawing from a mechanical craft to the more noble pursuit of creative writing (poetry) and the liberal arts.

The idea to form an academy of art came from Vasari, painter, and writer of the *Lives of Artists*. He arranged support from Duke Cosimo, along with that of Michelangelo. The Accademia del Disegno, was set up in Florence in 1563. It had two main aims - the first to establish itself as a leading, powerful and glamorous authority on art in order to celebrate its members, and to break off from the guild. Secondly the idea of the academy was to teach the young. The first of these was achieved quickly. When Michelangelo died in 1564, Vasari arranged for the academy to put on a spectacular display of painting and sculpture in the church of San Lorenzo. Then in 1571 there was a decree allowing members of the academy exemption from the guild. It seems that not much happened in the direction of teaching young artists - the academy

proposed the learning of geometry and anatomy, but this never really got under way and by 1575 there had been letters of complaint, and anxieties expressed that the educational nature of the instruction had been forgotten.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 4. Benvenuto Cellini, design for seal of Florentine Academy

There remains an interesting design for a seal for the academy by Benvenuto Cellini, (1500 – 1571) together with an explanatory text addressed to the academicians ‘voi Artifici nobilissimi’. A mythical figure, sphinx-like with light coming out of a crown on her head, trumpets from her arms, and a snake and lion by her feet. She stands in a diamond which cuts into a line of letters that form an alphabet, under each of which there is a tool. The explanation Cellini gives us, tells that this figure is Nature; nourishment to all, and inspiration to artists. The light from her head shines on the academy, resulting in its fame. The serpent and the lion represent Fortitude and Prudence, virtues promoted by the academy, and symbols of Florence and the Medici family.<sup>18</sup> Under the Roman alphabet are implements for the production of art and architecture. This placement of tools is at first a simple catalogue or index, and could be suggesting that the painter’s skills are manual. At the same time the relationship of letters to tools conjures up another comparison. The written word is made up of a variety of letters, worked on by the poet, just as the artwork is made by a ‘learned artist’ using a variety of instruments. Visual art is being presented here as a language, which is worked on by the artist, just as the poet works on natural language. These tools are not being laid out in order to show a taxonomy, but rather to

<sup>17</sup> Goldstein, Teaching Art, Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers.

<sup>18</sup> Goldstein, Teaching Art, Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers. p17

visualise an important current of Renaissance art theory - that painting and poetry are sister arts, famously alluded to in a quote from Horace, and endlessly referred to; '*ut pictura poesis*'.

Treatises on art and literature written between the middle of the sixteenth and middle of the eighteenth century nearly always remark on the close relationship between painting and poetry. The sister arts as they were generally called, .... differed, it was acknowledged, in means and manner of expression, but were considered almost identical in fundamental nature, in content and in purpose.<sup>19</sup>

Lee goes on to argue that the famous simile from Horace's *Arts Poetica*, '*ut pictura poesis*', (as is painting so is poetry), was more often than not turned around in Renaissance art theory, to be thought of as '*as is poetry so is painting*'. Likewise Aristotle's often quoted theory of imitation from *Poetics* was also turned to the use of painting, so that depiction of heroic acts became the highest form of visual art as it was in poetry. Lee suggests that Renaissance art theorists resorted to such condensations under the pressure they felt to find, in the ancient texts, some kind of theory of visual arts, such that had been found for poetry. As this was nowhere to be found, (had not survived or had never been written) the resulting art theory used the writing about poetry from the ancients and applied it to the art of painting.

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<sup>19</sup> Rensselaer W Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis. The Humanistic Theory of Painting*. (USA: WW Norton, 1967). p3

The seal by Cellini, and the two engravings by Bandinelli could be seen to aspire to the status of the humanist academies, placing art and artists within the learned and noble spheres of the scholar and poet. They could be read as labouring to illustrate the meaning of the term 'academy' in relation to the visual arts. But unlike the Bandinelli scenes, where drawing is dematerialised into an abstract potential, the Cellini seal presents a more materialist process of production, with the use of the alphabet/tool analogy. It is tempting to read this seal as a kind of basic assertion, that artists make things, they engage with materials and processes which require skill and are limited by physical realities. Here the hand tools/language analogy folds back on itself, revealing a contradictory field. Michelangelo, the putative academic artist can be quoted as occupying both poles of the argument; firstly stating, '*Si dipinge col cervello, non colla mano*', *one paints with the head, not the hand*.<sup>20</sup> And then again he suggests artists should concentrate on what they know best; '*di FARE e non di RAGIONARE*' *to make, not to speculate*.<sup>21</sup> As far as the definition of the artist's work - as intellectual or manual - this complex antagonism has persistently presented itself at all the junctures of change I cover in this thesis, from the emergence of the art

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<sup>20</sup> Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present*. p33

<sup>21</sup> Goldstein, *Teaching Art, Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*. p25

academy in the sixteenth century to refutation of the academic tradition by the Bauhaus in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the re-organisation of art education in the UK in the 1960s.

The second art academy to be established was in Rome in 1577, an initiative of Pope Gregory XIII, called the Accademia San Luca. The artist Federico Zuccaro (1540/2-1609) became the president in 1593, but then retired in 1595, leaving very little happening in the way of teaching except the placing of the nude model, and a law forbidding artists to draw from the nude model anywhere but at the academy. Not until nearly one hundred years later was the San Luca up and running again, by which time the Académie Royal de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris, (1648) had been founded by a group of classical painters organised around Charles Le Brun, (1619-1690) who became the first director. An Académie de France in Rome (1666) was set up and a system of scholarships arranged so as to concretise the classical Italian tradition for French art, and give talented young artists a chance to work with the originals. It was hoped that Nicholas Poussin, (1594-1665) French classical painter resident in Rome, would become the first director of the Académie de France, but he died before he could take up the position. The Académie de France was run jointly for a time with the San Luca and then, in 1676, the Académie de France took over both institutions. By the time Gian Pietro Bellori (1613-1696) was teaching at the San Luca, it was a French

institution in all but name. Bellori's writings are known in French as was his main contribution to academic art theory, that of the *beau idéal*.

The Académie Royal de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris gained Royal protection in 1655; an enlarged code was written up based on Zuccaro's Roman model; rooms were given in the Louvre, and the academy became managed and controlled by the court. One of the first decrees was to prohibit life drawing anywhere but in the academy, just as had been done in Rome at the San Luca. Up until that time the academy had had to sustain a power struggle with the guild. By 1663 there was a new law ordering all court painters to join the academy or lose their privileges. This together with the life drawing monopoly meant the end of the guild, and the beginning of another kind of systematic control of art and artists; 'The dictatorship was thus established'.<sup>22</sup>

Zuccaro's drawing course together with Charles Le Brun's first lecture course on the *Passions*; which itself was a kind of drawing manual showing the human and sometimes animal face in the throes of fleeting expressions, became the basic curriculum of the academy, where hard and fast rules about correct drawing and facial expression were sought. These rules persisted well into the

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<sup>22</sup> Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present*. p87/88

nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> It is worth pointing out that in the 1648 rules laid down by the academy, no mention is made of discourse or theory. Instead the planned activity of the school is summarised in terms of drawing from the model;

IV The Academy shall be open every day of the week, with the exception of Sundays and feast days in winter from 3 until five in the afternoon, and in summer from six till eight in the evening, in which period the young and students will be admitted to draw, and to take advantage of the lessons that shall be given. They shall pay every week the price usually paid to ensure the services of the model, who will be posed by the elder on duty that month. Whenever it pleases His majesty to undertake these expenses, after the manner of the grand duke of Florence, anyone shall be able to draw there without payment. ( Le Brun, Sarazin, & Testelin, 1648) <sup>24</sup>

Although the art academies had a philosophical outlook on the production and grandeur of art, and every intention of proving their status within the liberal arts, and of incorporating some of the wealth of art theory that was being written from the renaissance onwards, there is a lack of evidence to suggest that this happened in a systematic way, nothing that lasted much longer than a generation. In this sense the drawing course became, by default, a

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<sup>23</sup> Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions. The Origin and Influence Charles Le Brun's 'Conference Sur L'expression Generale Et Particuliere'*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Charles Le Brun, Jacques Sarazin and Henri Testelin, "Statutes and Regulations of the Académie Royal De Peinture Et De Sculpture, 1648," trans. Christopher Miller, *Art in Theory 1648-1815 an Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000).

universal pedagogic paradigm, that travelled over a wide geographical area and temporal span. The life room may seem like a reduced and degraded emblem of the potential aspirations of the academy, yet it was the most innovative and persistent suggestion of system and practice. It is remarkable to consider just how durable, authoritarian and enigmatic the apparatus of life drawing is and the system it utters. It is not until the turn of the nineteenth century that the life room system is challenged by the new ideas of the Bauhaus, and not until the middle of the twentieth century in the more modern art schools, that the life room became displaced as the procedure for teaching art. My final two chapters consider the displacement of the life room apparatus in two specific studies, exemplifying the modern moves from the life room; one an art school in the former East Berlin, and the other the Hornsey School of Art in North London.

## 1.2 Visiting the Academies

In the fourth chapter of *Academies of Art Past and Present*, Pevsner details over one hundred art academies following the Paris example that were flourishing by 1790; mostly over western Europe, one in North America and one in Mexico. I compared this information to present conditions, to find which of those one hundred schools still existed, then plotted the sixty four art schools that still function on

a map of Europe.<sup>25</sup> This map, attached at the end of the chapter is the geographical context for my study, showing the spread of the art academy model by the end of the eighteenth century, and its persistence into the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> I visited sixteen art academies on the map; that is schools set up before 1790 that still function now, and I have visited a further three art schools, not on Pevsners list, but strongly linked to the eighteenth century academy tradition. On research visits I collect historical imagery of the studios at work, and take photographs of the life rooms, anatomy rooms, and aspects of the fabric of the building. At the start of the project I visited the art schools closest to me that followed an academic tradition. That was The Ruskin in Oxford, the Slade in London, The Royal Academy in London, Glasgow School of art and Edinburgh College of Art. I then visited a range of European academies. My final visit was also local; a trip to the original building

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<sup>25</sup> Obviously Philadelphia and Mexico city are not on this map, (of Europe) though they still exist as Art Academies. I have not sought to record the historical lineage of the art schools visited – rather I have considered the town as a centre of gravity, and if an art academy existed there by 1790, and now there is an art school linked to that history, I consider it related. In most cases, for example in Italy and Germany the name of the school indicates that it is/was an art academy, in France meanwhile they were renamed after the revolution ‘*école des beaux arts*’.

<sup>26</sup> Though the model of the academy was still influential, many of the art schools that were set up in the nineteenth century, were different, they taught more than just drawing, they were not schools of fine art exclusively and are not of immediate concern to this study.

of the Hornsey School of art, North London, site of the famous occupation in 1968, where my thesis ends.

The visits, prompted by my plan to photograph life rooms became important events in the research narrative of this project. They lead me from one area of investigation to another. Although not an academy visit, my first research visit was to see a well known painting of the Royal Academy Life Class by Johan Zoffany (1733-1810) housed at Windsor Castle, which resulted in a series of surprises and reconsiderations of the painting and its reproduction in the books by which it is known, discussed further in Chapter 2. From that followed a momentum to actually visit, to see the site, the art academy as original material, and a decision to move from historical details to an actual place in the present. An image found at the art academy in Verona, led me to consider an overlap between the history of the natural sciences and the art academy, and this precipitated my collection of ‘curved spaces of observation’ which I discuss in Chapter 2 and analyse in Chapter 3. This develops the link between the life room and the anatomy theatre. A trip to Berlin focuses on a modern ceramic frieze that came to my attention as a result of my route across the city from an archive in West Berlin to an art school in the former East. A restaged art event in 2005; *The Hornsey Project* at the original site of the Hornsey School of Art Occupation of 1968, in North London,



was the pretext for research into the *Coldstream Report of 1960*, discussed in Chapter 5.

The links and events that occurred during site visits were not random, though they could not have been planned. My findings could not have entered the research, in most cases, had I not actually been on site. Travelling to the sites became part of the working research method at the heart of my *Academies* project – moving from image, from the page of a book, from the idea, to the institutional, fabricated space; taking photographs and collecting images; and then taking those images back to my studio or research space, where I could look at them and pin them up next to each other. Following my curiosity on site visits has led me from collecting fragments to the bases of whole chapters and ultimately the formal structure of this thesis. The art schools became an original source of material to be deciphered in my writing and practice-based research.

An historian suggested that I consult archives digitally or look on websites for photographs of the buildings as I had so many schools to visit. In most cases this has not yielded any results, mainly because what I am looking at and looking for is in the fabric of the building, a space for life drawing – or documents of the history of these studios. This spatial and visual aspect of the institution is rather disregarded. It is not what most modern art schools present on their websites or digitise for their collections.

Life drawing is not compatible with notions of contemporary art. Yet strangely, many of the art schools I visited still had life drawing as a visible part of their curriculum on the ground, even if not on the website. The life room has persisted despite its obsolescence. It is the space of the living dead, in more ways than one, and this makes it both an appalling and an attractive object of study.

### 1.3 Looking Back at the Life Room

My decision to travel to art academies plotted on the map, and to document the life rooms came about through a reading of Carl Goldstein's *Teaching Art*.<sup>27</sup> From Goldstein's account I began to see life drawing in the art academy as complex and overdetermined, not quite how it might first appear, especially now, when the practice seems old fashioned, associated with evening art classes and not cutting edge theory in contemporary art. In *Teaching Art* I found Goldstein making a quiet, implicit parallel between the history and aspirations of the emerging art academy in the Renaissance and the theory-based art teaching of more recent times of the late twentieth century. He relates an episode from the 1590's, from the Accademia San Luca in Rome, the second academy of art to be established in Renaissance Italy.

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<sup>27</sup> Goldstein, *Teaching Art, Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*.

An artist called Frederico Zuccaro had recently been appointed director of the San Luca. He was determined that the academy should be true to its proposition to prepare artists with learned discourse, for which he planned theory lectures from artists, as well as a drawing course. The drawing course consisted of a series of exercises: copying master drawings, reliefs, the ABC of body parts, graduating up to drawing casts from Antiquity and finally drawing from the live nude model. This progression became an institutional model for the next three hundred and fifty years, and traces of it are still visible in the schools I have visited. The lecture series on the other hand, was less stable. Zuccaro had difficulty finding artists willing and able to lecture ‘intellectually as a painter and philosopher’, and in the end had to lecture himself, giving an interpretation of the meaning of *disegno*, full of lofty references to ancient and religious texts. As Goldstein recounts ‘After Zuccaro’s performance, scarcely an artist in the academy dared to speak. When the sculptors were pressured to prepare a lecture, one of them remarked that it was easier to make a pair of marble figures than a speech.’<sup>28</sup>

Goldstein describes a scenario that struck me as reminiscent of my own art education in London in the 1980s when there was considerable antagonism between studio based artists and theory-

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<sup>28</sup> Goldstein, *Teaching Art, Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*, p. 31-32

informed artists, who were often accused of speaking in a language nobody could understand.<sup>29</sup> To consider a parallel history of to this antagonism, at the very beginning of the institutionalisation of art education was an important optic through which to begin my research, partly because it connected to my own experience, and partly because it made that history more intriguing and accessible to contemporary questions about the relationship of theory to practice in art, from the Bauhaus to *The New Art History* to the present.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The Postmodern theory of the 1980s that had a strong influence on my own practice and education emerged from frameworks quite distinct from art history, and at times it made use of a technical language that cannot be penetrated without study. Based in post ’68 cultural critique of social hierarchy, using psychoanalysis, semiotics and feminism as central frameworks, it had a focus on the decyphering of common sense, and of *making strange*. The works of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Freud and Lacan, and the secondary literature on these, in relation to the image made up my ‘core bibliography’ (James Elkins, *Why Art Cannot Be Taught* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).. Mary Kelly and Victor Burgin, were important producers of art and texts in this area, both were teaching in London when I was a student and I was able to attend their lectures and seminars.

<sup>30</sup> A. L. Rees and Frances Borzello, eds., *The New Art History* (London: Camden Press, 1986).. Though antagonism remains between theory informed-practice and hands-on studio teaching, the conditions of higher education art courses in the UK have transformed radically over the last 20 years, and the tensions have changed considerably. The obvious economic and paper-based triumph of theory courses that have illustrious bibliographies and clear aims and objectives over studio-based ones that have less clear outcomes but require more space, more staff, good technicians and machinery, have made *theory* a popular resort in art institutions, never mind the ideological difference that they once represented.

The backward glance of my research, into the space of the life room, was prompted by this comic episode narrated by Goldstein rather than an initial interest in the visual/pedagogic apparatus of the life room itself. A contemporary reading of the life room is deferred until its formation, institutionalisation and persistence can be explored. A contemporary reading would too easily simplify the space and the practice – I say simplify, but actually it is not that simple – into a diagram of voyeurism and desire. The life room of an art academy has a similar structure to a peep show – a floor show or striptease, where traditionally men sit and watch and women perform ‘to be looked-at-ness’ sensuality. Turning to one extremely well known and important text, Laura Mulvey’s *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, may give us a compact example of how the pleasures of spectatorship have been

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Secondly I would argue that while being an artist interested in critical theory, basing their work in an intellectual framework outside of traditional art history may have been an unusual and at times subversive tactic in the 1970s and 1980s. That distance, and that friction has faded into a general cultural expectation. Recent art graduates are as likely to be familiar with frameworks of sociology, film studies, anthropology, feminism, psychoanalysis as that of art history. This could be seen as an inevitable result of the art education restructuring that took place here in 1960s, that I consider in the last chapters of this thesis. British state funded art education changed greatly in the mid sixties after *The First Report of the National Advisory Committee on Art Education*, (1960) chaired by William Coldstream. This change mirrored earlier moves in the USA where art education in the university was being restructured as ‘Visual Research’, see Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects. Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999).



Figure 5. Victor Burgin *Panopticism* from Zoo 1987

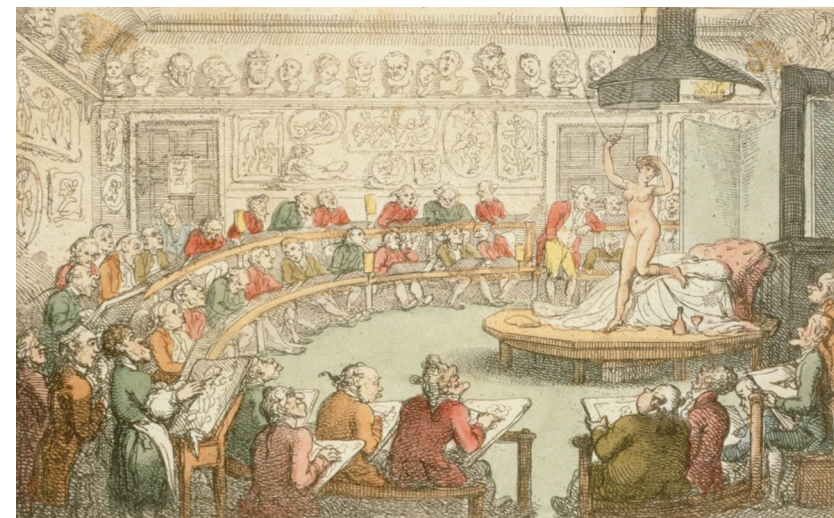


Figure 6. Thomas Rowlandson *Drawing from Life at the Royal Academy* (RA)

analysed in contemporary feminist theory and why this model, and its contemporary descendents, although acknowledged, has to be temporarily deferred.<sup>31</sup>

Mulvey considers the use of psychoanalysis as a political weapon against the pleasure effects of Hollywood narrative film, against the patriarchal symbolic. She argues that the spectator in classic narrative film is addressed as male, or rather has a subject position which identifies with the male actor and watches the female actor through his eyes. That the camera, editing and narrative of classic narrative film constructs the woman as 'to-be-looked-at-ness', within a patriarchal order, in which woman represents the threat of castration, and the lure of having covered over that gap. Images of woman constructed in conventional Hollywood narrative film have both threat and allure, the combination which in part makes up the thrill and visual pleasure of classic cinema. While Mulvey argues that the cinema is a special case in the formation of woman as spectacle, because its very machinery produces the image, unlike seeing a live event, it is still possible to consider the structure of cinematic spectatorship as based on the peep show. At the cinema we are all watching a peep show. In a darkened room our projected fantasies and the images provided can mix and mingle. The structure of the life room, has

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<sup>31</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (1975).

become internal to the production and consumption of culture, the spectacle, the dominant machine of representation, organised along lines of sexual difference and desire.

Mulvey's text set in motion an important theoretical investigation of film structure and visuality from a feminist perspective. For feminist artists and theorists, questions about the limits of figurative/narrative representation have been fierce. Is it possible to get out of the peep show machine and still make images, or stories? Or is the task to critically analyse, to reveal its mechanisms? Can the image making machine be used to make new and unpredictable events that play with the accepted structure?<sup>32</sup>

To repeat, I did not approach the *Academies* project with the intention of investigating the life room structure in relation to questions of feminism and representation, though these are central to my practice. The project began as an investigation into the history of the relationship of theory to practice in art, and the history of the art academy led me to the life room. As I was collecting images and reading, it became clear to me that the life room of the academy was significant for reasons I could not immediately understand. Many contemporary accounts of the history of sexuality and representation read as if the objectification

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<sup>32</sup> Feminist theorists to a certain extent start with such questions. See Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, "Textual Strategies; the Politics of Art Making," *Screen* 21 (1980)., for an overview of art practices in 1970's.

of women's bodies in modernity has its origins in the history of painting, and therefore in the life room.

In one category of European oil painting women were the principal, ever recurring subject. That category is the nude. In the nude of European painting we can discover some of the criteria and conventions by which women have been judged as sights.<sup>33</sup>

*Ways of Seeing* is exemplary in its misinformation, not withstanding a popular first book for young artists and students. I could have quoted from many such examples. My research quickly established that the life room of the art academy, the basis of the tradition of the nude in European painting, was organised around a male model and not a female one. From the emergence of the institution to the end of the nineteenth century it was the male model that was the pedagogic priority. Female models were in use, but mainly in private artists studios and not in the public sphere of the art academy. A far greater number of male nudes than female nudes were drawn and painted by European artists from the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth century. Though these might not be much known or exhibited, the archives of the academies and the store houses of the national collections would bear this out, because study of the male nude was the basis of art education and the currency of its progression and achievement. A contemporary reading of the life

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<sup>33</sup> John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb and Richard Hollis, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972). p47

room structure as 'peep show' is deferred therefore, while research is pursued to develop this discontinuity in meaning.

The life room of the art academy was invented with the male model as object. The end of the era of male nude, to a certain extent overlaps the chronology of the academy set out by Pevsner from the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century during which time the male nude was the unquestioned pedagogic norm. Though the nineteenth century was a time of great change, this aspect of fine art training did not change that much until well into the twentieth century.

To consider this change as a rupture, in a Foucauldian sense I would have looked at the institutional archives of one of the academies that I went to and analysed the discourse of the male model, the dwindling importance of history painting and rise of the bourgeois art market, and correlated this to pedagogic practices. Instead, I gathered a general picture from the schools I visited, dates when female models were first employed and images showing the life class in progress, all of which confirmed that male models were the pedagogic standard, and sometimes the pedagogic imperative until the end of the nineteenth century, up until which time women were uncommon inside the art academy as models and even more uncommon as art students.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> There are exceptions to this. In Copenhagen a separate women's art school existed within the academy from the mid nineteenth century, and



While the male model was the standard pedagogic imperative, women were not admitted to study from the live model. This is interesting both for the history of women artists, and for the history of the male nude.<sup>35</sup> One well known description/depiction of the condition of exclusion for women artists is the *Life Class at the Royal Academy*, London by Johan Zoffany, (1772) which becomes the focus of consideration in the second chapter. This painting can be seen as an unintended document for early feminist art history. Here we see the odd predicament of being female and being an artist at that time – the two women members of the Academy, (not students, but Academicians, the first and last until the twentieth century), are represented as cameo portraits on the wall as it was not suitable for them to be in the presence of the nude male models in the life room.<sup>36</sup>

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there women could study the female nude. Similarly in Philadelphia, when Thomas Eakins was there.

<sup>35</sup> See N. Salaman, *Regarding Male Objects* in Salaman, ed., *What She Wants - Women Artists Look at Men.*

<sup>36</sup> See Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *Art and Sexual Politics*, eds. Hess and Barker (Collier Books, 1973)., and Griselda Pollock and Rozika Parker, *Old Mistresses. Women, Art and Ideology* (London: RKP, 1981)., both important feminist art history texts that consider this painting see Chapter 2 of this thesis



Figure 7. Johan Zoffany, *The Life Class at the Royal Academy*. 1772 Windsor Castle

#### 1.4 What is the life room?

If a contemporary reading of the life room is to be deferred, if the life room is not a place where someone takes off their clothes and everyone else sits round and stares, then what is it? If it not about male voyeurism and female objectification, then what?

From the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century only men or boys were admitted as students and only the male nude was studied at the art academy, so the life room was uncomplicatedly single-sexed. This, of course does not make it free of sexuality, desire, inequality or exploitation, but it smoothes out the immediate reading of a space of sexual difference and

heterosexual desire, visual pleasure and exhibitionism.<sup>37</sup> If we look again at the Thomas Rowlandson (1756 –1827) water colour of the life room, we can see a parody of the academy. While it looks fairly straight forward from a modern perspective, if a little jovial, its eighteenth century context of comedy is resting on its out-of-order parts, its sending-up and inverting of the constituent elements and conventions, not describing them as they were.

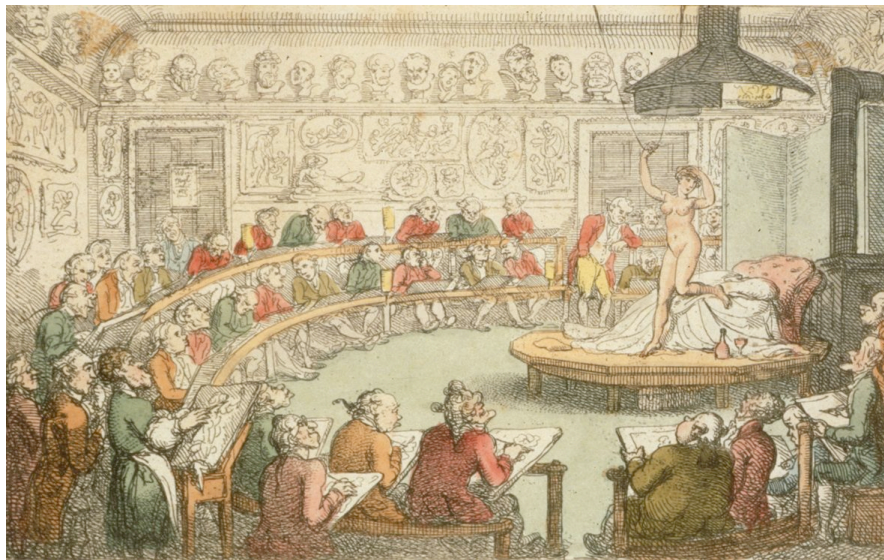


Figure 6. Thomas Rowlandson Drawing from Life at the Royal Academy (RA)

<sup>37</sup> There is a homo erotic reading to be made of these images, but not one that I have pursued, except for a reading of an anatomy class in chapter three. This is because there may be homoerotic or homosocial undertones to the all-male life classes I have collected in the study, but I would not argue that this is a more heightened context than many other all-male clubs and groups that functioned at the same time. Yes, this is nudity, but like in the army, it was highly regulated.

The female model presented high-minded artists at the Royal Academy with several problems. First, there was no established precedent for the use of the female model in European academies, there was no theoretical basis for instruction. Secondly, unlike male classical statuary which had been perennially classified and quantified, female physical perfection, as embodied in statues such as the Venus de Medici was far more subjectively considered. Finally the low status of female models was gravely at odds with the aura which surrounded their mythological counterparts. Male models, chosen principally for their musculature and physique, were often pugilists or soldiers. As such they were respected as individuals whose athletic appearance echoed the classical heroes with whom they were compared. Female models by way of contrast, were regarded with curiosity and suspicion, especially as many were also prostitutes.<sup>38</sup>

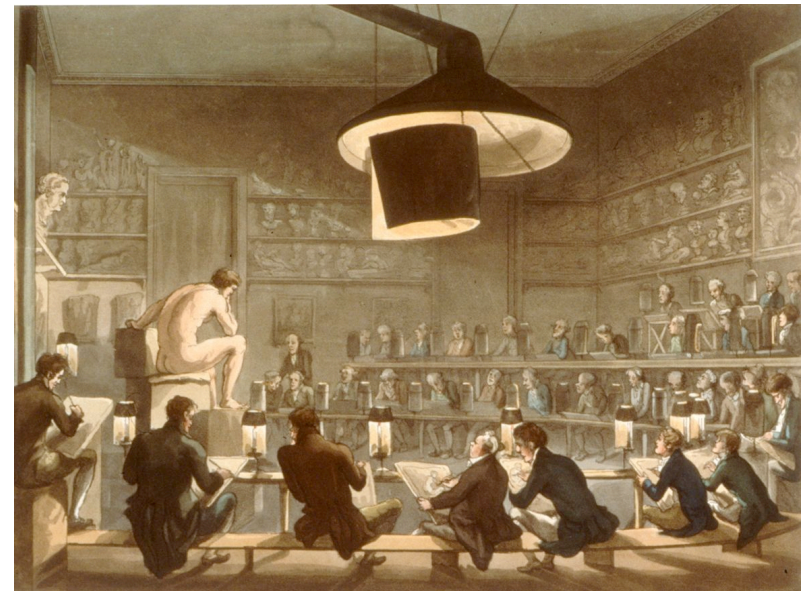


Figure 8. Thomas Rowlandson and Pugin, A life class at the RA, 1811

<sup>38</sup> Illaria Bignamini and Martin Postle, "The Artists Model; Its Role in British Art from Lely to Etty," (University of Nottingham and English Heritage, 1991), vol. p19



Another image, also by Rowlandson, of the same space shows a more regular, more disciplined version of the activity (fig.8). And this image is much more typical of those I have been finding across my research visits. What we see in this drawing goes some way to put in place a picture of the institutionalised idea of life drawing that dominated the schools from the Paris academy onward. Though comic to our eyes, the semi-military order that covers the space, the space between the students and between them and the model, brings to mind the Foucauldian metaphor of the panopticon, literally in the architectonic laid out here. The students are being ‘disciplined’ in the act of looking and drawing after the Antique. Their acts of looking are monitored by their acts of drawing which can be checked at any point. Their drawing would reveal any stray thought or view unless they ‘self’ regulate. In the place of the jailor, sits a nude model – the embodiment of the Gaze of Antiquity - which can look back at the student from any crevice or plain of the body.<sup>39</sup>

Drawing was the only activity offered by the art academy until well into the nineteenth century. Life drawing took place at a regular time and place, often in the evenings, in a room with the

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<sup>39</sup> Here I am moving from Bentham’s *Panopticon*, as discussed by Foucault, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of the Prison*. (London: Penguin, 1977). to *Eye and the Gaze*, Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth, 1977).

windows closed or shuttered. A gas lamp was used to maintain constant light and heat. The students were arranged around the model in an arc or circle, on specially constructed wooden seating to accommodate sketching board and lamp. The model would be positioned by the professor in relation to a famous Greek marble. It was not that different from the drawing class in the cast collection, except that there was a live model replicating an antique sculpture for the duration. These poses were a repertoire for reference in the construction of compositions, for history paintings.

‘...even as the artist positioned himself in front of the living model, the body had *a priori* been envisioned as an antique sculpture or an engraving from a Renaissance master. The referent thus remained the world of art, which mediated between the artist and the world of real bodies.’<sup>40</sup>



Figure 9. Charles Nicholas Cochin the Younger, *The programme of French art instruction in the eighteenth century, 1763* (Pevsner)

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<sup>40</sup> see Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble a Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997). p186



There is a strange elision in representations of the academy drawing classes. If you consider the images here by Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger (1715-1970) (fig 9), and Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700-1777) (fig10), both based on the Paris Academy, and Augustin Terwesten (1649-1771) (fig 11), from the Berlin Academy the style of drawing is uniformly applied across the quick and the dead. They all three show students life drawing amongst the cast collection, or near to whole casts and statues, though the difference between the statues and the live nude models is difficult to detect.



Figure 11. Engraving after pen and ink drawing by Augustin Terwesten, (Specht)



Figure 10. Charles Joseph Natoire, *The Life Class at the Academy* 1746



These images do not make a point of distinguishing between dead cast and living breathing model. Knowledge of the Antique, acquired through drawing and measuring casts and antique marbles, copying drawings, and working from the live male model became the academic art training. Though backward looking, rule bound and immersed in the archaic, it has proven to be almost indelible in fine art training, and begs the question, what happened to the other part of the training, the enthusiasm for the texts of ancient philosophy and the emergence of art theory? My approach to the life room is formed here, with this question: what happened? Some kind of crime was committed that killed off the life of investigation and interest in the translation of the texts and sculptures of antiquity that were being found and worked on in the Renaissance. The art academy that resulted is based on a pedagogy of tremendous resistance to the pulse of life.

It is not quite right to say the life model stands in for the cast, in the same way as the cast stands for the original marble, though it would be perfectly possible to arrange a class without the live model, and in fact the younger students and women were confined to work only from casts. The fact that the model is living is important, the class had to entomb him, those drawing had to see past him, literally into the distant past. Life drawing in the academy is a deadly practice, the life room is the *still* life room, with its



Figure 12. Sculpture studio, Accademia di belle Arti, Napoli. (2004)

associations of death and the accumulation of wealth. Here the death is hushed up, smothered by an overly assured-aesthetic, while the wealth could be thought of as the canon - access to a selective past repertoire, also dead but kept for reference in a solid state of marble or plaster of Paris.

### 1.5 Visuality

Visiting art academies and scouring the literature to collect remnants of an older art teaching model serves the dual motions of the practice base of this practice based thesis. Photography and digital imagery are employed here in a number of ways which

exemplify the polysemic nature of the two dimensional image, well theorised in the literature from Roland Barthes to Victor Burgin and Molly Nesbit.<sup>41</sup> Polysemy is a botanical term meaning a pod with many seeds and this, literally applied to the image makes the frame the pod and the contents liable to many interpretations. More than this, the term implies that the image can never be said to have one inherent meaning, but rather the potential to contribute to a range of meanings and associations relating to the constituency and context of its position and audience – on a gallery wall, in a news photograph, in a personal photo album, and so on. My thesis makes use of this fluidity of meaning using the photographs generated and the images collected in three ways: as a formal series of life rooms; as a visual archive or collection of historical imagery that is used as illustrations to points made in the chapters; and as image-maps, photo-essays that accompany the written chapters and fold out of the thesis. As such one image could appear quite a number of times throughout the thesis, for different reasons, and with a different emphasis or reading.

The life room is slowly disappearing from the art school. My photographs witness the place and the trace of an older art pedagogy, one that I am in some way heir to. The photographs I

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<sup>41</sup> Molly Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums* (New haven: Yale University Press, 1992)., Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (Flamingo, 1977)., Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

make of the life room follow a tradition of interior photography from Eugene Atget to Candida Höfer, forming a series or survey - a consistent view into an empty room used to teach drawing. These spaces are historical, though not many are purpose built – they conform to the prototype pedagogical space of the institution as it functioned in the eighteenth century, and they are layered with historical and ideological residue. The collection of life rooms, though made on different locations, shows the regularity of the space, the typology of an obsolete apparatus that I have called ‘an art theory machine from a previous era’. I approach them, visually, as if they were the ‘scene of a crime’ that has to be recorded as a routine part of the investigation.

The shots I take on a medium format camera with colour negative film and a super-wide lens. They are empty of students, offering a relatively quiet, backdrop-of-a-place, where people practice drawing. The image is intentionally drained of figuration or dramatic composition, although easels sometimes stand in for figures, and window light does, on occasion, produce atmosphere. Where possible, I arrange the camera so that the uprights seem vertical and in parallel and the lens is positioned as close as possible to the middle of the space, square-on to the far wall of the view. This observance, this attempt to produce an objective or neutral image of an interior space is followed in traditional interior photography in order to minimise the intrusion of odd optical-

lenticular effects that occur when a flat, lens-based image is produced inside a regular cuboid. The control and minimisation of distortion and the production of a seemingly neutral view is one the triumphs and declared intentions of modernist straight photography.<sup>42</sup> It is a labour to produce an accurate image in this way, especially with a super-wide lens like the one I have been using. The images produced are greeted by a sense-perception of ease if the view is unhampered and clear, or of discomfort if any trace of lining up the lens, or other distortion is visible.<sup>43</sup> This sense-perception is partly ideological and cultural laid down by our familiarity with art history and media spectacle, but it is also physiological – as our eyes-ears-balance and co-ordination system is very finely tuned to questions of horizontal level, unevenness and uprightness. Representations of space are taken in through our eyes as physical co-ordinates, that have somatic affects, they are not just formal illusions.

The tradition of interior documentary photography that I have applied to the making of the life room images achieves its goal

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<sup>42</sup> See for instance *Photography in the Modern Era*. Christopher Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art ; Aperture, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> This tradition is referred to as the 'naval shot' by soviet artist Rodchenko, and his attempts to challenge the persistence of bourgeois ideology in naturalistic 'point of view' representations from portraiture to architecture are well know to histories of avantgarde modernism. Again see Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940.

of depicting three dimensional space by minimising the gap between a crude lens based image and an ideal Renaissance single point perspectival projection. The idea put forward by Thierry de Duve that the camera mechanises this tradition, becoming an automatic renaissance perspective machine – is clearly the supposition of someone who looks at carefully composed photographs, rather than someone who looks through a lens.<sup>44</sup> Lenses fragment and distort naturally, 'automatically' and are only useful to the discipline of naturalistic interior photography when very carefully managed.<sup>45</sup> As such, the attempt at objectivity in architectural photography is very far removed from similar claims for social documentary photography, which has tended to offer itself as uncomplicated recordings of what really happened. In cases of social documentary, the perfection of a shot technically can actually detract from its credibility. Visibility of the limits of lens and film are often highly valued proof of authenticity, such as grainy black and white, blur, shake and hasty composition. Social documentary posits an exterior, pre-existing totality into which it penetrates and records. Interior documentary photography on the other hand, posits an ideal projected space which it tries but always fails to achieve with an example sampled from brute actuality.

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<sup>44</sup> Thierry de Duve Jeff Wall, Jeff Wall (London: Phaidon, 1997),p26

<sup>45</sup> Dan Graham's *50 London Art Galleries photographed in Renaissance Perspective*. 1998

My photographs of life rooms are both a record, an indexical trace of the space as it is now, and an imaginary portal to the history and ideology of the institution of the academy. This subservience to an ideal of single point perspective is an overlap in ideologies between interior photography and academic pedagogy: an overlap which does not cover documentary photography in general. While formal interior shots are catalogued and routinely used as documents in the writing of (architectural and design) history, I have pointed out some of the ways in which they are formal constructions, not natural images. In this sense the formal interior shot is linked both to the tradition of paintings set in interior spaces and to the re-emergence of perspective in the Renaissance, but also to the more contemporary constructed image from Jeff Wall to James Casebere and Thomas Demand. These artists use the space in front of the lens for composition and invention. The frame is offered as if 'though a window', though capturing reality is not at issue.<sup>46</sup>

The life room photographs are informed by dual and initially opposing traditions in photography: interior documentary photography and constructed imagery. If the 'crime scene' is their rhetorical pose, and my deeper research motivation, this can also be

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<sup>46</sup> It is Alberti who first makes reference to composing the painting as if as image seen 'through an open window'. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. C Grayson and Martin Kemp (London: 1991).

a way of thinking which undoes the binary between the factual photograph and the constructed image. The factual image requires a considerable amount of arranging visually – (light, lens, point of view), in order to make it a legible recording. The constructed image relies on traditional conventions and signs taken from the world in order to fabricate.

When I take my camera into the life room of an art academy, I feel aware of the clash of technologies and systems of representation, I feel like I am doing a performance in my sleep about technology and forgetting, the camera recording what is in front of the lens without a thought, while I stand in the drawing room fiddling with a machine. I wish I could say, as Jeff Wall does, that I am motivated by making 'beautiful pictures', but that is not the case.<sup>47</sup> I have grown up to be wary of beautiful images, my feminism and my antipathy to consumerism has made me quarrel with such qualities. I would not say I strive to make unbeautiful images, or even ugly images, nothing so affecting. Rather, as I said earlier I want a drained image, impersonal, swept clean, as Benjamin said of Atget's empty street scenes, ready to be filled up by the enormity of what is missing.<sup>48</sup> The way I have used a camera for the

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<sup>47</sup> Jeff Wall is quoted as saying this on a number of occasions, most recently in an interview with John Roberts, Jeff Wall and John Roberts, "Jeff Wall Interview," *Oxford Art Journal* 30.1 (2007).

<sup>48</sup> A Small History of Photography in Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street*, trans. Edmond Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1979).

life rooms, has for these reasons assumed an 'aesthetics of dullness'.<sup>49</sup>

The reproduction of the life room as a neutral institutional space is the starting point for my written critique. As such, my series of photographs are a valuable contribution to the thesis as a whole as well as laying bare the pedagogy of the western tradition of representation. For the duration of the research they function like pages marked in a book, pages from *Art Academies Past and Present*, their meaning deferred, as is their status. Are these images art? Or are they simply about art, about art history, about the history of representation? It is not a question I intend to answer, and not one that is very interesting. Certainly for now they will be shown as part of an archive. Like a repetitive dream, or a penance, nobody will get much beyond the surface of these images until they have read the image, and reading the image of the life room is a key subject of this thesis.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Wollen on forensic photography and conceptual art, in Ralph Rugoff, ed., *Scene of the Crime* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> This clearly distinguishes the work from serial taxonomies that follow on from Hilla and Berndt Becher – where what can be seen on the surface, the similarities and differences, is what makes up the collection. Different too are the life rooms from the mapping book projects of Ruscha from the 1970's, such as *Every House on Sunset Strip*, or *Gas stations*, where the banal everyday subject matter marks a journey and a territory, a long take, represented in factual format, without any intention or desire to consider those objects any more deeply. The constructed interiors of Jeff Wall,

## 1.6 Reproduction

Rather than dwell on the photograph as a truth telling device, I have focussed on the construction and deconstruction of the image, reading of rhetorical tropes, signs and signifiers, and of course, on the capacity and instrumentality of photography in the reproduction of art, in the production of many copies. For fear of sounding all too obvious, the emergence of the art academy, the academic nude and academic copying of the canon is pre-photographic in mode, even though the system established persisted well beyond the invention of photography, well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Soaked as I am in Benjaminian critiques after *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, I was surprised to find that I knew very little about the practices of copying art and the practices of 'keeping still', that reigned before the photographic reproduction of art that Benjamin talks about, before the celebrated loss of aura, and with it all the accelerations of modernity.<sup>51</sup>

Following the history of the academy traces the opposing movements of copying art that coexisted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One kind of copying persisted in the academy, as a traditional part of the curriculum. And the other, the application of a new image technology to almost anything that

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James Casebere and Thomas Demand are perhaps more relevant here – as their constructed sites have been put under tremendous scrutiny.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Brace & World inc Harcourt (London: Fontana, 1973).



would keep still. The camera arrived on site to document the art work.

While curating the project *Postcards on Photography: Photorealism and the Reproduction*, some years ago, I was thinking about what the history of photorealism might consist of and I was genuinely taken aback to find the core of the eighteenth century art academy curriculum to be a hub of copying - what seemed to me to be dogmatic and routinised copying of works of art, copying copies, endless repetition and reproduction of the canon of established works from antiquity and the Renaissance.<sup>52</sup> The kind of copying that was taught at the academy was particular. It rehearsed the canon, was selective and looked back to the masterpiece. Quite different then from the focus of photorealism which was not so much backward looking, as it was a constrained, incarcerated looking at the photograph. Different too from the copying that the camera itself is capable of: the indifference of the lens to anything placed before it.<sup>53</sup>

Academic copying was a framework to resist change and to control the visual field, to avoid the confusion of the present. Its effects were quite distinct from those of technical reproduction

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<sup>52</sup> See Salaman and Simpson, eds., *Postcards on Photography*, *Transparency Transposed*, for a critique of the history of and resistance to Photography as Art, and the *Introduction* for more about the context of the Photography Gallery and Photography as Art.

<sup>53</sup> Ironically it is the camera lens that has become the modern signifier of surveillance, though of course the camera is not watching anything at all.

emerging in the nineteenth century, for which the comparative ease of mass production together with a wider distribution of images of famous works of art, Benjamin argued, modernised our relationship to works of art.<sup>54</sup> If we could hold a photographic copy in our hands, the art work changed in scale and meaning from the enormous and sacred, to the everyday and discursive, from the 'out of reach' and élite to the accessible and domestic. For Benjamin, tradition was shattered but access was gained.<sup>55</sup>

André Malraux, would argue in *The Museum without Walls*, that the reproduction of art works enabled the whole basis of Art History to shift.<sup>56</sup> In the nineteenth century, churches and museums began to document architecture and interiors with photographs and send these out to researchers on request. Artworks from disparate locations, varying sizes and different epochs could be brought together and considered along side each other on the researcher's desk. The art historian could work in an unprecedented manner seeing different works simultaneously. Malraux argues this changed the nature of the process of art history because time and distance are collapsed while iconic detail is indexically retained, so works can be compared to other works very

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<sup>54</sup> See Miriam Brath Hansen, "Room to Play," *October* 109 (2004). She considers Mechanical reproduction to be not as clear a translation as Technical reproduction

<sup>55</sup> *Work of Art*, Benjamin, *Illuminations*.

<sup>56</sup> André Malraux, *Museum without Walls*, *The Psychology of Art*, vol. One, Two vols. (London: Zwemmer, 1949).

accurately, even if scale, colour and the emotional and physical experience of travelling to the site is elided. What remains is a graphic likeness - a black and white image of the work - which Malraux describes as the 'idea' of the work.

The collecting of a visual archive of historical and architectural fragments has been a way for me to consider the iconology of the art academy and its curriculum. I approach my collection of images as a series of thematically linked potential and accumulating interpretations. Photography or more likely the photocopier, scanner and computer screen become the technologies that easily accompany this method of working. In this digital or montaged space reproductions co-exist from different sources. I see the reproduction itself as an object implicated by my research area and my research process which bridges modes of copying from the academy to the technologies of image reproduction.<sup>57</sup>

In Malraux's *Museum without Walls* we can see opposing productive effects of reproduction: there is the transparent technical photographic object: the copy of the art work, the modern object that breaks off the idea of the art work, (what it looks like), from its traditional place in the social hierarchy, (palace, church

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<sup>57</sup> Hal Foster connects Benjamin and Malraux in what he considers the fifth moment of the dialectics of seeing, the electronic ordering of information. Hal Foster, "Archives of Modern Art," *October* 99 (2002).

etc), and the effect of compiling a series, or montage of images, where ideas and associations may arise because of what the image is placed next to. In a Barthesian sense this intertextuality brings with it a contemporary approach to interpretation. Within this secondary level of the effects of montage and the unpredictable effects of compiling copies, there is yet a further similarity and divergence with the art academy and the history of vision. For as long as the art academy has been in existence, there was an importance put on gathering a collection of drawings or prints from which to learn, to draw and to reference the canon. If copying in the academy guards against the modernity of photographic reproduction, then the montage of images, reproductions working within the space of research, becomes the place for speculative interpretation.



Figure 13. André Malraux with images from *Museum without walls* c.1950

Compiling series of images on the 'research desk' has become the most important methodology for the current project. On the desk, pin board or notice board images collide and associate (promiscuously and with intention), irrespective of the date or place or genre of their origination. Their status as reproductions on a flat plane democratises these distinctions.<sup>58</sup> The space of the pin board has been, from the outset, a method I have used for assimilating and holding onto ideas as they develop. Images fold-in ideas in a most compressed way, like a raisin holds the days of sunshine. This is not the same as saying that the image contains these ideas – but rather that the images I collect, those that represent thinking blocks for the project, hold *the desired for but yet to be articulated*. This is their outrageous potential.

Sometimes I don't know if I am analysing an image sequence or if the sequence is analysing me – withholding yet promising so much, waiting for me to find a form of words. Most of the chapters of this thesis are based on the readings of a few stubborn images, visual analogies that require slow unpacking to reveal the thought

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<sup>58</sup> Use of the pin board is often the first research method introduced to art students, who are urged to collect their references together and stick them on the wall in front of them, as well as being the basis of artworks exhibited for artists such as the Independent Group, or more recently contemporary artists Tarik Alvi, and in a very different way Ella Gibbs, to mention just a few. Tarik Alvi and Ella Gibbs were showing at the Whitechapel Gallery in *Temporary Accommodation*, 2001 for which I did a Gallery talk called the *The Notice Board*.

vectors that made them attract each other and hold my attention. I could have written this thesis early on with the presentation of about six pictures, but this may have been legible only to myself. The 'image maps', that accompany the chapters present a developed form of this working method.

My methods of image analysis remain similar to those outlined by Barthes in *The Rhetoric of the Image*, and *Elements of Semiology* which come from a re-reading of Saussurian linguistics, combined with the *Dream Work* as outlined by Sigmund Freud and put to work by, amongst others Victor Burgin.<sup>59</sup> Though not mentioned in *The Museum Without Walls*, the German Art Historian Aby Warburg (1866- 1929), developed an innovative practice of image research based precisely on what Malraux describes. Though his renowned library and institute moved to London in 1933, Warburg's work is still not very well known in Europe or America, while his pupil and associate Erwin Panofsky, who moved to the USA during the war, became very well known, in part for the method he developed from Warburg's inspired openings in Iconology.<sup>60</sup> Turning to Warburg, quite late on in the progress of this thesis has given an important historical grounding for my own work of collecting and

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<sup>59</sup> Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Johnathan Cape Ltd 1967 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973). Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography*.

<sup>60</sup> Mathew Rampley, "Iconology of the Interval: Aby Warburg's Legacy," *Word and Image* 17.4 (2001).

reading images. His work perhaps more than that of Panofsky's relates to an as yet unwritten history of semiotics.

Though never completed, Warburg's most compelling work is a collection of glass plate negatives called the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, partly published by Akademie Verlag in 2000.<sup>61</sup> The negatives document Warburg's working process. They record temporary pin boards he arranged in his library, beginning an 'art history without a text.'<sup>62</sup> His study was of the early Renaissance, he collected black and white photographic reproductions of art works from antiquity, the Renaissance, and sometimes from more modern images, such as this board number 55, on Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*.

Warburg was fascinated by Manet's invention of the modern picture that breaks with academic conventions and decorum while integrating an ancient motif of river gods from an engraving by Raimondi of 'The Judgement of Paris'.<sup>63</sup> Exactly this kind of drawing from Raimondi would have been common at the art academies for students to copy. *Pin board 55* collects an investigation into that motif, from Raphael to an ancient Roman sarcophagos.

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<sup>61</sup> Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: 1999).

<sup>62</sup> Knowledge: Movement. (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies.) Georges Didi-Huberman p 11, foreword, to Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

<sup>63</sup> see E.H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg, an Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1970). and Hubert Damisch, *The Judgment of Paris*, trans. John Goodman (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).



Figure 14. Aby Warburg plate 55 (Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*)

Some of Warburg's boards in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* document specific talks and lectures, but the majority are for the purposes of building up thoughts and connections not yet fully established or articulated. This process strongly relates to my own use of the pin board. It is thought Warburg intended to write an accompanying text or 'theory' for his boards but this he never did, which makes the boards relatively open to interpretation and

appealing to readers out of the immediate zone of Renaissance studies.

### 1.7 Survival

While methodologically Warburg has a great deal to interest my work, his interest in the survival of the image from antiquity is based on universal ideas of man and paganism quite different to my own motivations and ideas about the persistence of Renaissance tropes in the institutionalisation of art education. Though I am also interested in the *survival* of antiquity, Warburg is concerned with the primitive, with pagan man re-emerging in the Christian culture of Medici Florence, while for me the persistence of the academic curriculum modelled on the Antique, is a much more prosaic continuum that I interpret in quite a negative way. I associate classical art and its endless reiteration in academic art with darker connotations of conformity and the use of high culture in modern politics; connotations of European expansionism, colonialism and even fascism.<sup>64</sup> Warburg collected details of the antique concerned with a less controlling energy, they are more wild and

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<sup>64</sup> Consider the film of Harun Farocki *Images of the world and Inscriptions of War* (1988) which cuts back to the life room in between an essay on technology and war, aerial photography and evidence of concentration camps in WW2. Here the life room is cited as a clear instrument of representation and naturalism in a continuum with the technological war machine. Though I do not analyse the life room from this perspective, these associations are relevant.

inappropriate.<sup>65</sup> Though both archives correlate the persistence of ancient motifs into modernity the *Mnemosyne Atlas* excavates the absolute opposite of what I have been collecting of the neoclassical curriculum.

One example of this overlap and divergence is in the collection of images of the *Laocoön*. Warburg is interested in Laocoön and his two sons being enveloped and torn apart by serpents. He collects images of the classic Greek statue a few times on the plates of the Mnemosyne Atlas, as well as using it as a central reference for his slide talk at the Kreuzlingen Sanatorium, April 21<sup>st</sup> 1923; 'Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America.' For Warburg the *Laocoön* was a survival of the serpent cult of primitive man, 'The poisonous reptile symbolises the inner and outer demoniac forces that humanity must overcome.'<sup>66</sup>

Warburg was interested by an early work of F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, where we find an analysis of culture internally split between the cult of Dionysis; god of wine revelry and sensual abandon and that of Apollo, the sun god, god of order, reason, self control. Apollo is master of beautiful appearances, the world of the

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<sup>65</sup> See Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*. for an account of his work on the *Birth of Spring by Botticelli*.

<sup>66</sup> Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael Steinberg (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

plastic arts, and the imagination.<sup>67</sup> 'The formal beauty of the figures of the gods, and the tasteful reconciliation of Christian and pagan beliefs should not blind us to the fact that even in Italy around 1520, that is at the time of the most free and creative artistic activity, antiquity was revered, as it were, in a double herma, which had one dark, demonic countenance, that called for a superstitious cult, and another, serene Olympian one, which demanded aesthetic veneration.'<sup>68</sup> This quote of Warburg from Walter Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, has echoes of the Nietzschean division, and this follows through to Warburg's interest in Laocoön, and the dancing mannaeds, chorus to the *tragedies*, another related group he collects. His interest in Dionysis was multilayered – ideologically he railed against the formal aestheticism of his time, wanting to leave Art History all together still dominated as it was by the conservative neoclassicism of Winkleman, with its emphasis on the quiet nobility of Greek sculpture. In addition Warburg himself experienced periods of loss of control and of psychosis, during which times he sought medical attention. And this personal experience no doubt gives his work an added energy of identification. He may follow the writhing of the Laocoon with the serpent, or the dancing Nymph or Manean for reasons of Renaissance scholarship and anthropology but he

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<sup>67</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>68</sup> Warburg, p34 quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977). p225

himself went through periods of mental turbulence, and these images speak of such turmoil.<sup>69</sup>

My collection of *Laocoöns* is more comic than tragic. I have found them, on a regular basis in the corridors of the academies I have visited, and they present for the modern reader a kind of known-unknown. This is what I mean by doing a performance about technology and forgetting. I collect references in my camera without knowing them in any academic sense. My Laocoons ring with a jokey reference to Greenburg's *Towards a New Laocoon*, while spiralling back to Michelangelo, who was present in 1506 when the group was first dug up. The Laocoon was the prime cast for the art academy as the physiognomy was considered to be near perfect, yet somehow the content and drama of this group has fallen off the register.<sup>70</sup>

The recent work of Georges Didi-Huberman on Aby Warburg provides an important link for the intellectual framework of the interpretation of Warburg's work. In his article 'Dialectic des Monstrums: Aby Warburg and the Symptom Paradigm', Didi-Huberman writes 'Warburg's dreamed-of 'historical psychology of

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<sup>69</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, "Dialectik Des Monstrums: Aby Warburg and the Symptom Paradigm," *Art History* 24.5 (2001).

<sup>70</sup> Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

expression', the theoretical foundation for his anthropology of images, was envisaged, above all, as a psychopathology.<sup>71</sup> *Nachleben*, the German term for the *survival* or *after life* of antiquity was one of Warburg's main themes. It is interpreted by Didi-Huberman as psychic time, the space of the *return of the repressed*; the images of chaotic movement that so captivated Warburg are seen as symptom.<sup>72</sup> The interesting link for our purposes is that Didi-Huberman connects and then distinguishes Warburg's archive of psychopathology; the body in the throes of extreme expression and the clinical visual archive of hysteria compiled by nineteenth century French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) at the Salpêtrière in Paris.

Didi-Huberman's work on Charcot and photography is well known, though only translated into English quite recently.<sup>73</sup> *The Invention of Hysteria* has much to offer a feminist critique of the way our culture has pathologised femininity, as it reveals the overlapping visions of emerging modern medicine, early photography and the anatomical drawing skills of Paul Richer, Anatomist of the Beaux Arts

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<sup>71</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Surviving Image: Abbey Warburg and the Tylorian Anthropology," *Oxford Art Journal* 25.1 (2002). and Didi-Huberman, "Dialectik Des Monstrums: Aby Warburg and the Symptom Paradigm."

<sup>72</sup> Didi-Huberman, "Dialectik Des Monstrums: Aby Warburg and the Symptom Paradigm."

<sup>73</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria, Charcot and the Photography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (MIT, 2003).

in Paris. This is where my thesis brings back into frame a more contemporary reading of the life room, through the lens of the anatomy room that I analyse in Chapter 3. The structure and space of the life room and the system of vision developed there is thought through and then considered as it becomes implicated in a different crime from the one I began my investigation with. From the entombing of the male nude in the stone of classical reference, the life class in the Salpêtrière becomes a stage in which the female body performs for the doctors a pathology carefully recorded, sequenced and understood as notations on female sexuality. The structure of the peep show, deferred in my first chapter, re-emerges here at the end of my third chapter, newly articulated via the anatomy class of the clinic, not the life class of the art academy.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have established a picture of the emergence of the art academy in Florence in 1563 to the establishment of the Paris Academy in 1648, and described the elevation of drawing from a craft activity to one associated with the liberal arts. The life class was the core innovation of the art academy. I have gone on to indicate my methodologies for investigating the space of the life room, the contemporary reading of which needs to be held at bay, while the implications that it implied a male model not a female one are considered. I have emphasised that the research visits



generated original material and a series of interior documentary photographs, and that the collected archive of images fed into my montages of reproduced images or 'image maps'. My self-conscious use of a camera in the life room is intended to stand as a self-reflexive gesture within a range of visual methodologies which compile media about looking and about mediation, technology, art and art history. Survival of antiquity, from the terminology of Aby Warburg and the annotations of Didi-Huberman is the last twist in the question of transmission mentioned by Newman in the Introduction. Warburg's *atlas* has been an inspiration and my search at times overlaps his, though our rationale could not be more different.

As far as the definition of the artist's work as intellectual or manual, the antagonism mentioned in the first section of this chapter presides as a motif and a motor for my work. This conflict has persistently presented itself at all the junctures of change I cover here in this thesis, from the emergence of the art academy in the sixteenth century to emergence of the Bauhaus in the early twentieth century to the re-organisation of art education in the UK in the 1960s. It is through my contemporary engagement with the presences of this conflict that I make new sense of its historical manifestation which in my opinion underpins the persistence and contradictory nature of the life room apparatus that this thesis attends to.

The following chapter, Chapter 2: Re-reading Pevsner, considers three instances of my researching images of the art academy life room in Pevsner's *Academies* that lead to the discovery of new material or to new readings of old material.