

Why Art Cannot be Taught:

A Handbook for Art Students

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Introduction

This little book is about the way studio art is taught. It's a manual or survival guide, intended for people who are directly involved in college-level art instruction—both teachers and students—rather than educators, administrators, or theorists of various sorts. I have not shirked sources in philosophy, history, and art education, but I am mostly interested in providing ways for teachers and students to begin to make sense of the experience of learning art.

The opening chapter is about the history of art schools. It is meant to show that what we think of as the ordinary arrangement of departments, courses, and subjects has not always existed. One danger of not knowing the history of art instruction, it seems to me, is that what happens in art classes begins to appear at timeless and natural. History allows us to begin to see the kinds of choices we have made for ourselves, and the particular biases and possibilities of our kinds of instruction.

The second chapter, “Conversations,” is a collection of questions about contemporary art schools and art departments. It could have been titled “Questions Commonly Raised in Art Schools” or “Leading Issues in Art Instruction.” The topics include the following: What is the relation between the art department and other departments in a college? Is the intellectual isolation of art schools significant? What should be included in the first year program or the core curriculum for art students? What kinds of art cannot be learned in an art department? These questions recur in many settings. In a way, they are the informal elements of our theory of ourselves, and the ways we talk about them show how we imagine our own activity. I don't try to answer them or even to take sides (though I also don't conceal it when I find one view more

persuasive than another): rather I'm interested in providing terms that might help to clarify our conversations.

"Theories," the third chapter, addresses the title of the book. It may seem as if I should have called this book *How Art is Taught*, but in general I am pessimistic about what happens in art schools. Whether or not you think art is something that can be taught, it remains that we know very little about *how* we teach or learn. Lots of interesting and valuable things happen in studio art instruction and I still practice it and believe in it: but I don't think it involves teaching art. Chapter 3 introduces that idea.

The last two chapters, about art critiques, are the heart of the book. Critiques are the strangest part of art instruction since they are not like the final exams that all other subjects have. They are more free-form, and there are few rules governing what is said. In many cases, they are a microcosm for art teaching as a whole. The fourth chapter, "Critiques," considers a list of traits that can make critiques confusing, and suggests ways to control some potential problems. The fifth chapter, "Suggestions," explores new critique formats that I have found useful in trying to understand how critiques work. They are not prescriptions for changing the curriculum, but ways to observe what we do. Contemporary art instruction is not something that can be "fixed" once and for all, but there are ways to step back and analyze it. The final chapter collects my argument into four conclusions, and the book ends with a reflection about the very idea of trying to make sense.

Once, when I was a student in an MFA program, another student showed an installation piece in his final critique. It was a table, and on it was a board, propped up like a piano lid. Between the board and the tabletop, the student had piled garbage he had found around the

studios, including discarded sculpture by other students. From somewhere inside the heap a radio was playing a random station. Everyone stood around in silence for a few minutes. Then one faculty member said this (mostly while he was looking at his feet):

“Well, I’d like to be able to say this is an embarrassing piece. I mean, I’d like to be able to tell you I’m embarrassed because the piece is so bad. I wanted to say it’s badly made, it looks bad, it’s not well thought out, it’s been done before, it’s been done a million times, much better, with skill, with interest...

“But I realized I can’t say that. I’m not embarrassed, because the work isn’t even bad enough to make me embarrassed. Obviously it’s not good, and it’s also not bad enough to embarrass me.

“So I think that the piece is really about embarrassment, about the way you think you might be bored, or you might blush, and then you don’t, because you don’t care. About the way you maybe think about being embarrassed, when you’re not. (Or maybe I am embarrassed because I’m not embarrassed.)

“So I think you should think about this: I mean, ask yourself, ‘How can I make a piece that will be just a little bit embarrassing? Are there different kinds of embarrassment?’ Stuff like that.”

When he finished, he sighed. He was just too overcome with boredom to go on—or perhaps he was affecting to be bored in order to drive his point home.

It may seem surprising to people who haven’t been to art school that such things can happen. But they are not at all rare. At this particular school, critiques were held in front of all the students and faculty, and it was not uncommon to have the artist cry in front of everyone. One visiting student from another department called our critiques “psychodramas.”

In general, critiques aren't anywhere near this negative. I use this example to show how wild they can get, and to underscore the fact that they do not have guiding principles that can address this kind of excess. Critiques are unpredictable, and they are often confusing even when they are pleasant and good-natured. When I was a student, I thought there must be something that could be done to make critiques more consistently helpful. After I graduated with the MFA, I switched to art history, but I retained my interest in the problem. I have almost twenty years' distance on this particular critique, and I have seen some worse critiques since then, but I have not forgotten what it is like to be on the receiving end of a truly dispiriting, unhelpful, belligerent, incoherent, uncaring critique. (And it's hardly better to have a happy, lazy, superficial critique.) The main purpose of this book is to make sense of all that.

Chicago, 1990-1993, revised 2000

Chapter 1

Histories

Is there anything worth knowing about art schools in past centuries?¹ It is worth knowing that art schools did not always exist, and that they were entirely different from what we call art schools today. This chapter is an informal survey of the changes that have taken place in art instruction during the last thousand years. I have stressed curricula—that is, the experiences a student might have had from year to year in various academies, workshops, and art schools. It's interesting to think what a typical art student of the seventeenth or nineteenth century might have experienced: it shows how different art and teaching once were, and how we've invented much of what we take for granted.

The main development is from medieval workshops into Renaissance art academies, and then into modern art schools. Art departments, which are in the majority today, are less important from this point of view since they take their methods and ideas from art schools. Throughout this book, I refer to “art schools,” but what I say is generally applicable to any art department in a college or university.

Ancient art schools

Though we know there were art schools (or workshops) in Greece and Rome, we no longer know what was taught. After the fifth century B.C. art was a complicated subject, and there were technical books on painting,² sculpture,³ and music. According to Aristotle, painting

was sometimes added to the traditional divisions of grammar, music, and gymnastics.⁴ But almost all of that is lost.

In general, the Romans seem to have demoted painting within the scheme of “higher education,” although it appears to have been something done by educated gentlemen. One text suggests a nobleman’s child should be provided with several kinds of teachers, including “sculptors, painters, horse and dog masters and teachers of the hunt.”⁵ Thus the history of the devaluation of painting, which we will follow up to the Renaissance, may have begun with the late Romans, especially the Stoics.⁶

Medieval universities

The idea of a “university” in our sense of the word—“faculties and colleges and courses of study, examinations and commencements and academic degrees”—did not get underway until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷ There was much less bureaucracy in the early universities than we’re used to: there were no catalogues, no student groups, and no athletics. The curriculum was limited to the “seven liberal arts”: the *trivium*, comprised of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and the *quadrivium*, which was arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.⁸ There were no social studies, history, or science. Mostly students learned logic and dialectic. Logic is seldom taught now, except as an unusual elective in college Mathematics or Philosophy Departments; and dialectic, the study of rational argument, has virtually disappeared from contemporary course lists.⁹ Medieval students did not take courses in literature or poetry the way we do in high school

and college. Some professors admitted and even boasted they had not read the books we consider to be the Greek and Roman classics.¹⁰

Before they went to a university, students attended grammar schools, something like our elementary schools, where they learned to read and write. When they arrived at the university, sometimes they were only allowed to speak Latin, a fact which panicked freshmen and prompted the sale of pamphlets describing how to get along in Latin.¹¹ As in modern universities, the master's degree took six years or so (they did not stop for the "college degree," the BA or BS). Those who studied at medieval universities meant to become lawyers, clergymen, doctors and officials of various sorts, and when they went on to professional study (the equivalent of our medical and law schools), they faced more of the same kind of curriculum.

A typical course used a single book in a year. In some universities students were drilled by going around the class, and they were expected to have memorized portions of the book as well as the professor's discussions of it. It is not easy to imagine what this regimen must have been like, especially since it involved "dry" texts on logic and little "original thought"—which is precisely what is required in modern colleges from the very beginning.¹² Today the medieval kind of rote learning occurs in Orthodox Jewish classes on the Talmud, in Muslim schools that memorize the Koran, and to some degree in law and medical schools—but not in colleges, and certainly not in art classes. It is interesting to speculate about the differences between such an education and our own: certainly the medieval students were better equipped to read carefully and frame cogent arguments than we are. From the medieval point of view, being able to memorize and think logically are prerequisites to studying any subject: a student has to learn to argue about any number of things, they would have said, before going on to study any one thing.

That's very different from what happens in art instruction. The closest analogy, which I will consider a little later, is the Baroque custom of making exact copies of artworks. But in general, modern college curricula do not require memory training, rhetorical (speaking) skills, and dialectic (logical argument), and those absences are not made up for in graduate schools. You don't have to be a conservative defender of "cultural literacy" or a Eurocentrist to wonder just how different education could be with the kind of rhetorical and dialectical training that was, after all, a norm in parts of the classical world and in the six or so centuries following the institution of medieval universities.

Artists were not part of the medieval university system at all.¹³ They went directly from grammar school into workshops, or from their parents' homes straight into the workshops. Students began as apprentices for two or three years, often "graduating" from one Master to another, and then joined the local painter's guild and began to work for a Master as a "journeyman-apprentice." That kind of work must not have been easy, since there is evidence that the young artists sometimes helped their Masters in the day and spent their evenings making copies. Much of their work would have been low-grade labor, such as grinding pigments, preparing panels, and painting in backgrounds and drapery. Eventually the journeyman-apprentice made a work of his own, in order to be accepted as a Master.¹⁴

Though painting remained outside the university system, beginning in the twelfth century there were various revisions aimed at modifying or augmenting the *trivium* and *quadrivium*. Hugo of St. Victor proposed seven "mechanical arts" to go along with the seven liberal arts:

Woolworking

Armor

Navigation

Agriculture

Hunting

Medicine

Theater.

Strangely, he put architecture, sculpture, and painting under “Armor,” making painting an unimportant subdivision of the “mechanical arts.”¹⁵

It is often said that Renaissance artists rebelled against the medieval system, and attempted to have their craft (that did not require a university degree) raised to the level of a profession (that would require a university degree). They eventually achieved this by instituting art academies, but it is also important to realize how much medieval artists missed out on by not going to universities. They were not in a position to think about theology, music, law, medicine, astronomy, grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, logic, philosophy, physics, arithmetic, or geometry—in other words, they were cut off from the intellectual life of their time. Though it sounds rather pessimistic to say so, much the same is true again today, since our four-year and six-year art schools are alternates to normal colleges just as the Renaissance art academies were alternates to Renaissance universities. The situation is somewhat better in the case of art departments, because students in liberal arts colleges have more classes outside their art major than art students in four-year art colleges; and at any rate modern art students aren’t as isolated as medieval students were. But there is a gap—and sometimes a gulf—between art students’ educations and typical undergraduates’ educations, and it often delimits what art is about. (Conversely, it marginalizes art that is about college-level scientific or non-art subjects.) Much can be said about this, and I will return to it in the next chapter.

Renaissance academies

The first Renaissance academies did not teach art.¹⁶ Instead they were mostly concerned with language, though there were also academies devoted to philosophy and astrology.¹⁷ A few were secret societies, and at least one met underground in catacombs.¹⁸ In general the early academies sprang up in opposition to the universities, in order to discuss excluded subjects such as the revision of grammar and spelling, or the teachings of occult philosophers.

The word “academy” comes from the district of Athens where Plato taught.¹⁹ The Renaissance academies were modelled on Plato’s Academy, both because they were informal (like Plato’s lectures in the park outside Athens) and because they revived Platonic philosophy.²⁰ Many academies were more like groups of friends, with the emphasis on discussion between equals rather than teaching. Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, a poet and amateur architect who tried to reform Italian spelling, had an academy,²¹ and so did King Alfonso of Naples, the philosopher Marsilio Ficino, and the aristocrat and art patron Isabella d’Este. After the Renaissance, Queen Christiana of Sweden described her academy in Rome as a place for learning to speak, write, and act in a proper and noble manner.²² Poems were read, plays were put on, music was performed, and what we now call “study groups” got together to discuss them.

The first art academies

Academies of all sorts became more popular and more diverse after the High Renaissance.²³ (By 1729 there were over five hundred in Italy alone.²⁴) After the turn of the

sixteenth century, mannerist taste tended to make the academies more rigid, less “informal and loose,” and the idea of the academy began to merge with that of the late medieval university. Academies specifically for art instruction began in this more serious atmosphere, which lacked a little of the enthusiasm and experimentalism of the earlier academies. Leonardo’s name is associated with an early academy, probably a group of like-minded humanists.²⁵ “Renaissance academies were entirely unorganized,” according to Nikolaus Pevsner, but “the academies of Mannerism were provided with elaborate and mostly very schematic rules.” Not only were there rules, there were odd names: the Academy of the Enlightened, of the Brave, of the Passionate, of the Desirous, of the Inflamed, the Dark, the Drowsy.²⁶

The Florentine Academy of Design (*Accademia del Disegno*) was the first public art academy.²⁷ Its original idea was rather morbid: to produce a sepulcher for artists who might die penniless.²⁸ In 1563, three years after it was founded, Michelangelo was elected an officer (one year before he died). The setting was still informal—lectures and debates were held in an orphanage, and anatomy lessons at a local hospital. (The Ospedale degli Innocenti and the Ospedale of S. Maria Nuova, respectively; they can both still be visited in Florence.) The Florentine Academy was an early “urban campus,” spread out among existing buildings rather than cloistered in its own campus or religious compound.

(Incidentally, the distribution of buildings in an art school or university inevitably affects the kind of instruction. I teach at an urban campus, in a half-dozen buildings scattered around the Art Institute in Chicago, and our instruction is decidedly more involved with the art market and urban issues than the art instruction at the cloistered University of Chicago, which I mentioned in the Introduction. The University of Chicago’s studio art department is on the far southwest

corner of campus, as if someone had tried to push it off into the surrounding neighborhood. Cornell University used to teach drawing in their Fine Arts building and also in a building that was part of the agriculture quad, and the instruction in those two places was quite different. Berkeley's studio art department shares a building with anthropology—an interesting affinity for art students. Duke University's studio art department is a small house set apart from other buildings, in a field behind one of the campuses. If you're studying in a building remote from the rest of your campus, or remote from a big city, you might consider the strengths and limitations of your location.)

The teaching in the Florentine Academy was mannerist in inclination,²⁹ meaning students looked at statues (later called simply “the antique”), studied complexities of geometry and anatomy, and learned to make intricate, “learned” compositions. This was the opposite of earlier Renaissance taste; as we know from drawings, students in the fifteenth-century workshops drew each other, and in general it seems there was significantly less interest in drawing from “the antique” or in bookish learning.³⁰

When they first entered the Florentine Academy, students learned mathematics, including perspective, proportion, harmony, and plane and solid Euclidean geometry. The idea there was to get away from the empirical, haphazard kind of learning that artists had gotten in workshops, and to substitute theories. Artists, it was thought, need a good eye and a good hand, but even before they develop those they need mental principles to guide them: so “measured judgement” and a “conceptual foundation” must come before manual dexterity.³¹ This is our first encounter with an idea that was absolutely fundamental in art academies before the twentieth century: the notion that looking and working are not enough, that art requires a balance between theory and

practice.³² It is an idea worth pausing over. Often, I think, ideas in history are easy to understand—easy to write down or to explain—but difficult to “take to heart,” to imagine as if they were your own. There are two aspects of this idea of theory and practice that I think are particularly alien to current ways of thinking:

1. *The Renaissance educators had in mind a balance.* Today we rarely conceive art as a matter of balance. Instead we look for extreme effects: the phrase “middle of the road” shows how little we care for works that try to blend properties we’ve seen before. Renaissance and Baroque academicians conceived art as a subject that inhabits the middle shades of grey rather than the black or white extremes. The operative word here is *decorum*, indicating a kind of art that does not stray too far from the middle for the sake of effect. It seems to me that modernism and postmodernism are so bound up with dramatic effects and innovations that the Renaissance way of thinking is nearly inaccessible. Imagine trying to make art that has no special effects, and achieves a measured calm and fluency by considering and balancing the moderate and compatible aspects of previous artworks. Harshness, stridency, excess, shock value, crudity, monotony, enigma, radical ambiguity, hermeticism, fragmentation, impatience: all the things we love were once excluded in the name of decorum. How could a well-balanced, moderate work of art possibly be more expressive than a weird, ambiguous, bizarre one? In today’s art world, old-fashioned decorum would be essentially a waste of time.

2. *They balanced the real and the ideal.* The two extremes that the Renaissance and Baroque academies sought to balance were themselves alien to our thinking: they advocated that each painted or sculpted figure should display a knowledge of ideal forms, along with selected peculiarities of the live model. This concept of “ideal forms,” derived from the Platonic Idea, is not a concept that seems real today. When a contemporary artist looks at a model, she do not

compare the model's body to a perfect form, seen only in her mind, and she does not contrast that imagined perfection against the imperfect, mundane form that the model actually has. In other words, we no longer conceive drawing as a mediation between the Ideal and the Real. And the Platonic approach seems especially strange when we consider that the Ideal was colored with ethics and theology. The Renaissance Neoplatonists sometimes equated the Ideal with the highest ethical good, and called it "Venus," "love," or Christian love, *agape*. These ideas are easy to teach in a classroom—there are books on Neoplatonism, and translations of Renaissance Neoplatonic texts—but they are dead as ideas, because it is impossible to translate them into art practice. (It's always possible to invent classroom exercises that employ historical concepts. I can picture an assignment in which students drew Ideal and Real forms of objects, and read texts on the Neoplatonic Ideal—but that would be artificial. Contemporary drawing practice no longer requires that kind of philosophy.)

After mathematics, the next subjects for the Academy students were anatomy and life drawing. Dissections were held once a year in the hospital, often in the winter so that the corpses could be kept around a little longer. Today teachers don't usually bring art students to see actual dissections (courses for that are available at some universities), and anatomy itself has become an elective. Typically, an art school has an art anatomy instructor or a doctor who teaches anatomy, though it is not always claimed that anatomy is indispensable for life drawing. Again the ideas behind the Florentine practice are unfamiliar ones. A primary goal of painting and sculpture was to express states of mind, and it was thought that artists such as Michelangelo had managed to do that by their knowledge of the hidden structure of the body. A person's nobility of the mind was thought to be mirrored and expressed by the nobility of his or her body. Movements of the body were movements of the soul. In addition, Renaissance artists thought

that the body's proportion and its "architecture" had something divine about them. The body had been made by the Divine Architect, and it repeated some of the harmonies that governed the universe. Hence proportions, articulation, and bodily movement were thought to be both expressive and divine.³³ Do we believe anything of the kind these days? I don't think so, and it seems to me that the loss of such ideas accounts for the marginal importance of anatomy in our art schools. Renaissance academicians believed that the motions of the mind are of great importance, and that the body is an echo of something divine, and so for them anatomy was a pressing concern. For today's instructors, art anatomy is a dusty relic of old-fashioned teaching practices. Life drawing, as it is practiced today, has been emptied of much of its original meaning.

A third topic of study at the Florentine Academy was natural philosophy. The idea was that if an artist studied the body in order to express the "motions of the mind" or—to use the Renaissance phrase—"affects of the soul," then it made sense to have a theory about the soul, to explain how the soul works and what forms it can take. Until the late nineteenth century, "natural philosophy" meant physics, and the Academy students learned whatever natural laws were relevant to artmaking. They studied "physiognomy," the science of facial expressions as signs of particular mental states; and they studied the "doctrine of the humors," which held that mental and physical well-being depend on a balance of four bodily "fluids." Too much blood, and a person becomes sanguine and jolly; too much "black bile," and a person becomes melancholic and depressed.³⁴ The doctrine of the humors sounds like medicine, but it was also physics since the humors were thought to be influenced by the planets. All the mistaken medicine and physiognomy was put to the purpose of understanding how the soul expresses itself in flesh. Since contemporary art instructors don't have doctrines like humoralism or physiognomy, art

students are on their own if they want to communicate the idea that their model is in a certain mood. The result is that students don't often try to depict specific moods, or when they do, the moods are expressed by obvious symbolic gestures—an arm over the eyes for sleep, a hand over the eyes for grief. It no longer seems interesting to try to express specific mental states—anger, torpor, humiliation, humility—by studying the typical poses or expressions that accompany each state.³⁵

Two further topics completed the Academy curriculum. First was the study of inanimate objects such as draperies.³⁶ Students were required to draw draperies twice a week, and the seriousness with which they took those classes is attested by beautiful drapery studies done by Leonardo and others. To some people, drapery is the most typical academic subject, since it is reminiscent of the yards of draperies in Renaissance and Baroque painting and sculpture. But it is important not to forget that drapery study came *after* the more essential classes in theory (mathematics) and in the human soul (dissection, life drawing, natural philosophy). Drapery was an “inanimate form,” quite different from the body and face. Today it is the other way around: students draw live models as if they were “inanimate forms,” and they talk about drapery, fiber arts, and fashion in terms of deeper significance.³⁷

The other advanced subject was architecture, and the reason it was placed last may have to do with a famous demand made by the Roman architect Vitruvius, who said that architects should know drawing, geometry, optics, arithmetic, history, philosophy, physics, astronomy, law, music, ballistics, pipe organs, medicine, astronomy, and philology.³⁸ Buildings were thought of as analogies to the proportions of human body, so it stood to reason that an architect should master everything a painter knew and more. In terms of education, architects were to painters as

psychiatrists are to doctors: they knew the rudiments of their art, and also a number of more specialized fields, especially anatomy, geometry, and musical harmony (to help them construct harmonious proportions). From a twenty-first century perspective it's odd to think of architecture as a required "advanced" course in an art school curriculum. Architectural theory has expanded tremendously since the Renaissance, but in this sense we think less of architecture than we once did.

The Carracci's Academy

The late Renaissance painters Agostino, Ludovico, and Annibale Carracci began the best-known Renaissance art academy at the end of the sixteenth century.³⁹ They were reacting against the decades of mannerism, and attempting a return to the standards of the High Renaissance. Specifically, they wanted to synthesize three High Renaissance styles: the drawing of Rome (meaning Michelangelo's and Raphael's), the color of Venice (principally Titian's), and the aristocratic style of Lombardy (meaning Correggio's). They did not admire naked realism, such as Caravaggio was then painting, and they did not want to continue the Mannerists' habit of neglecting drawing from nature. As in the Florentine Academy, they valued work that mediated the ideal and the real: work that was neither a fantastical invention nor a slavish imitation of natural forms.

There have been debates about the value of the Carracci's program. Art historians have come to appreciate what they did,⁴⁰ but it seems to me that Carracci-style painting is entirely off the radar screen of contemporary painting. If it appears at all, it appears as a dead end—a long-past, wrongheaded experiment in academic thinking.⁴¹ One of the differences between art

students and art history students is that the former always care about whether they like what they see, and as a result styles like the Carracci's get taught a little less in art schools than other periods. The time of the Carracci is one of the dead zones in art instruction, along with the line of artists the Carracci admired, including Hellenistic sculpture and Raphael, and along with the Baroque art the Carracci Academy inspired. This kind of prejudice, which seems so alien to art historians, needs to be carefully weighed when it comes to studio artists.

Nevertheless I want to emphasize that the Carracci did something unusual with history: they looked beyond their recent past, back to a period that had already ended, where they found models for their own work. They *used* history as a kind of buffet table, picking and choosing the best work. That quintessentially *academic* frame of mind is what makes their Academy, if not their art, important for anyone interested in how art is taught. Many of the Carracci's choices echo in the later activities of European and American academies. In a short list, the Carracci's choices include the following:

- rejecting contemporary art
- looking to a certain “golden age” when art was better
- taking only certain elements from artists
- putting those elements together into a new art.

These are simple ideas, and they might seem unproblematic. But each entails a certain way of imagining the past, a way that can be called “academic,” and they often occur together as symptoms of academia. I will return to them when I examine the concept of academic art in chapter 2.

Baroque academies

Even in the Baroque, there were still many “academies,” “schools,” “societies” and informal “studio-academies” in which instruction essentially followed the medieval guild system.⁴² Yet for the most part, the Baroque is the period in which the large, well-organized academies began.⁴³ The most important were the French Academy, founded in 1655, and the Royal Academy of Arts in London, founded in 1768,⁴⁴ and there were dozens of others throughout the eighteenth century—though America did not have an academy before the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ (The Philadelphia Academy of Arts was the first in America. It opened in 1805, though it had been preceded by an art school.) In non-Western countries, art academies were still being set up early in this century. The first Chinese academy opened in Nanjing in 1906, following the Tokyo Art School by seventeen years.⁴⁶

Some of the Baroque academies had aristocratic beginnings. As early as the sixteenth century, drawing was one of the things that a polite gentleman or lady might do in their spare time. Once painting had gained its new status as a liberal art, it became a suitable aristocratic pursuit. The odd effect is that in a way it was demoted again, this time into an “amateur” activity: one text lists painting along with other pastimes appropriate to a gentleman, including fencing, riding, classical learning, and coin collecting.⁴⁷ Other sources suggest that gentlemen should learn to draw in order to know about maps, or in order to acquire a good calligraphic handwriting, or to be better able to appreciate art.⁴⁸ Various sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors also mix art and aristocratic education.⁴⁹ It is necessary to recall this aristocratic, amateur tradition when considering academies in general. Though we’ve lost most of it, some lingers.

Anyone who travels to London should see the cast sculpture gallery in the Royal Academy, which still breathes the dark, serious air of the Baroque.

In many respects the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris is exemplary. It was the largest, most influential, and best-organized of the seventeenth-century academies. From 1656 onward, classes were held in the Louvre.⁵⁰ Like most other academies, the French Academy taught only drawing. The purpose was again to provide theoretical instruction to go along with the practical knowledge that could be gotten in studios. Students were expected to learn painting, carving, and modelling in workshops, where they were apprenticed to Masters somewhat in the medieval fashion. As time went on, the workshops became less important, and by the later seventeenth century, the academies had broken the monopolies that the guilds once had on commissions and teaching.

The curriculum was divided into lower and higher classes, but it was essentially a three-step process: first, students were only allowed to draw from other drawings; then they drew from plaster casts and antique sculptures; and finally from live models (from 6 to 8 in the morning in the summer, according to one schedule).⁵¹ In the eighteenth century, beginning students did not even draw from *original* drawings, but from lithographs of drawings. Often enough the originals were done by teachers at the Academy rather than Renaissance masters, and the “Raphael” and “Michelangelo” the students copied were contemporary lithographed versions of originals. And the first-year course was even more dismal than that, since in the first stages students didn’t even copy lithographs of *entire* drawings, but lithographs of drawings of parts of bodies: ears, noses, lips, eyes, feet, and so forth. The idea of disassembling the body in this way appears to have begun with Leonardo, and it was practiced as early as the Florentine Academy.⁵² Broadly

speaking there were two kinds of body part illustrations: proportional studies, meant to show what ideal noses looked like, and physiognomic studies, intended to teach how noses reflect a person's soul—how, for example, the nose of a virtuous man might differ from the nose of a sinner. In the Berlin Academy, these “first rudiments” included lithographs of flowers, ornaments, and “ideal foliage.”⁵³ Students worked their way from plants to small body parts, and from there to larger parts of bodies, whole figures, and then compositions of more than one figure.

The academies kept collections of life-size plaster casts of famous sculptures, and also collections of casts of body parts. Many drawings of ideal Greek sandaled feet survive. The effects of studying them can be seen in paintings such as David's *Death of Socrates* in the Metropolitan Museum, where Socrates's foot shows off the anatomy of the classical, Roman-style sculpted marble foot. Even Picasso drew from such casts, and several of his drawings survive. Students from all over Europe learned from the same cast of plaster characters: the *Belvedere Torso* (called simply “The Torso”), the *Farnese Hercules*, the *Spinario* (a boy pulling a thorn from his foot, from a Roman bronze statue), the *Apollo Sauronctonus* (Apollo with a lizard), the *Discobolus* (discus thrower), the *Apollo Belvedere*, and the *Laocoön*. Most of these are unfamiliar today, but they were deeply engraved on the imaginations of students who drew them and lived with them every day. (A life-size plaster cast can be an intimidating presence, well worth a visit. In America, they can be seen in Pittsburgh and at Cornell University. London, Pittsburgh, and Paris also have museums with life-size plaster casts of architecture.) In addition the French Academy had *écorchés*, plaster casts of flayed figures, used to study anatomy. Some of them were casts of flayed versions of famous sculptures, and others were designed by academy members and modelled on actual dissected bodies.

This silent population has almost vanished from schools.⁵⁴ A typical art school or large art department may have one or two battered *écorchés*, where it may once have had dozens. The Art Institute of Chicago threw away its collection in the 1950's, and as I write this in 1991, the School of the Art Institute has a single remaining *écorché*, a famous one designed by an artist at the French Academy.⁵⁵ An upper floor at the Fogg Museum of Art has a cast of Michelangelo's *Giorno*. Cornell University has a large collection scattered in various places: a small library room houses a copy of the *Discobolus*, a coffee shop has an entire pediment from Olympia, and a small art gallery has the *Laocoön* and the Pergamon Altar. Even if plaster casts of antique sculptures no longer have any importance in contemporary schools, their ghostly presence—and the fact that no one knows their names—is strange and a little sad.

It's hard, these days, to recapture the effect that the casts (and, in some cases, the originals) had on artists' imaginations. The closest that we have is sculptures like Rodin's *Thinker*, because everyone knows it—anytime you draw or photograph someone in a pose remotely like the *Thinker*, you're reminded of it. Still, it's not a close parallel, because artists seldom use the *Thinker* in their work, and students are not required to draw it. I doubt many people are even sure of the pose. (Is the thumb out or in? Which knee does the elbow rest on?) By contrast the painting and sculpture of the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries wouldn't be thinkable without the ghostly presence of famous Greco-Roman sculptures.

One of the principal aims of this sequence of instruction, and one which is virtually forgotten today, was to enable students to draw from memory. It is seldom appreciated that Michelangelo, Titian, and other Renaissance artists could invent poses and arrange entire compositions in their heads, with relatively little reliance on models. (One of the reasons we do not pay much attention to this is that it is not easy to say which figures and compositions were

imagined and which real.⁵⁶) Invention (*invenzione*) was a Renaissance goal that included this ability, and academies through the nineteenth century included classes in invention. Vasari, Leonardo, and Cellini all advocated drawing from memory,⁵⁷ and remnants of the doctrine still occur.⁵⁸ There's a simple exercise that can be done in life drawing classes to give some feeling for what Renaissance and Baroque artists could do: draw the model, omitting one arm. Then invent a position for that arm, add it to the drawing, and re-pose the model so his or her arm corresponds with what has been drawn. That way you can compare the model to what you invented. The exercise can be made progressively harder by inventing more and more, until you're beginning by drawing *just* the arm, and inventing the whole body to go with it. Students trained in the French Academy and other Baroque academies were expected to be able to invent whole compositions of figures without models; models were used to fill in details but not to build compositions.

Though Renaissance artists including Leonardo and Squarcione had advocated the same basic three-step sequence from copying drawings to drawing casts to drawing from life, they could not have imagined the sober rigor with which it was implemented by the French Academy, or the absolute exclusion of media other than drawing. French Academy students were judged for criteria that now sound alien or repellent:

1. *The drawings were required to have perfect proportions.* Baroque academies didn't place any value on inventive elongations or other distortions of the figure. Bodies had to be represented in the heights and breadths in which they appeared, or in slightly idealized versions of their natural proportions. These days that kind of restriction would seem absurd, and more to the point, we would probably find it very difficult. Students often say "I'm not very good at that

kind of thing,” when they see an academic figure done in flawless “photographic” proportions, and people outside the art world assume that few people can make such figures. But the Academies proved that everyone with a modicum of talent can make an impeccably proportioned figure, if they are trained to do so. The tens of thousands of drawings by Baroque academy students, held in museums throughout Europe and America, show that basically anyone can learn to draw a figure with reasonably correct proportions. A proportionally correct drawing is not really a matter of skill, and only marginally a question of training. Everything difficult about drawing begins *after* proportions are no longer an issue.

One of the keys to the academies’ success in producing accurate drawings was their long life-drawing sessions. Typically, in the “*atelier* system,” students looked at one model (or cast or drawing) for four weeks, and they made only a single drawing in that time. One of the students, designated *massier*, set the model’s pose each morning, making sure it exactly matched the day before. Later, when the Romantic aesthetic began to hold sway, students found this way of working “pertrified, immobile, and artificial and commonplace,” if not “hopelessly dead.”⁵⁹ Another convention that allowed art students to make drawings with precise proportions was the hierarchy of *kinds* of drawings, from “first thought” to thumbnail sketch to composition drawing to anatomic study to oil sketch to full-scale monochrome underpainting.⁶⁰ Students trained in the use of different levels of sketches could more easily produce impeccably proportioned studies, because they used their first drawings (which were normally done from imagination, without models) to begin thinking about proportions, and then gradually refined them by working up detailed studies from life.

2. *The students were required to observe decorum.* Drawings could not be too large or small, and they couldn’t be made too quickly or too slowly. The speed of the chalk or the *crayon*

(that is, the pencil) on the paper could not be excessively rapid, nor the pressure too heavy or too light. As in the Renaissance academies, decorum meant moderation in all things. These days teachers tend to encourage drawings and paintings done very rapidly, or with a tense hand, or very loosely and weakly. There is nothing particularly wrong with pictures that are uneven, or disunified, or otherwise quirky. The idea is to find interesting effects. In the Baroque academies, the purpose was to avoid *bizzarrierie* and abnormal excesses, in order to practice the most broadly and effectively expressive style.

3. *The students were not asked to be original.* Creativity in the modern sense, in which each student is helped to make something that is his or her own, was not important in these stages of academy instruction. It was as if students in a life drawing class were to be asked to conform to the teacher's way of drawing: there was little question of individual interpretation; the idea was to bring whatever was peculiar to the student's own manner under the control of the accepted style. Today that is exactly what teaching is *not*, or to say it the other way, virtually all our instruction goes into fostering individuality. It's hardly possible to imagine an art classroom at the beginning of the twenty-first century—at least in Europe and America—where students are encouraged *not* to try to find individual voices and styles.

Even though Baroque academy's curriculum was more restricted than the Renaissance curricula, there were other subjects, typically perspective, geometry, and anatomy. The most important addition to the student's education were the periodic lectures, called *conférences* and modelled on the less widespread Italian Renaissance lectures (*discorsi*).⁶¹ Some of the lectures were published, and there were also books that came out of the Academy environment.⁶² (This book is in that tradition: it is a theoretical treatise, concerned with education, that belongs to the school environment.)

In English-speaking countries, the most famous of these books of lectures is Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*. The first of his duties at the Royal Academy in London was to give a series of lectures setting out the Academy's goals. The fifteen *Discourses* are still read, though their ideas are not often applied to contemporary art.⁶³ In France there were a number of such books,⁶⁴ and they helped give France the first independent body of art theory since the late Renaissance.⁶⁵ Today such books are mostly read by art historians. But the *idea* of having public lectures to define a curriculum is not a bad one for any art school or art department. If it is rare, that may be because it requires an administrator who is also an art theorist—but there is no reason not to have a symposium on the organization and purpose of a school or department even if the school has been around for some time. I recommend this to any school or department: it's always interesting to see what faculty produce when they're asked about the purpose of their institution, and paper trail that results can be helpful to the next generation of teachers and administrators. (And also to historians trying to understand how art instruction has changed.)

The books produced in Baroque academies seem rather stilted today. They sometimes had a rather formulaic way of discussing paintings: one book, for example, evaluates all pictures according to their invention, proportion, color, expression, and composition.⁶⁶ The categories entailed rules, *préceptes positifs*, which determined how best to treat each subject. Another author, Roger de Piles, rates painters on a scale from one to eighty on the basis of composition, expression, design, and color. Some results:

Raphael and Rubens (a tie) 65

Carracci 58

Poussin	53
Rembrandt	50
Michelangelo	37.

Today we might invert this order (and add other artists that de Piles neglected).

Baroque academic theorists also rated paintings by genre. The so-called “hierarchy of the genres” determined which subjects were worthy of serious attention. One hierarchy reads, from lowest to highest:

Still life

Landscape

Animals

Portraits

Histories.⁶⁷

Facts like these are valuable to the extent that we might define ourselves in relation to them. And here again is an idea that is easy to read about but quite difficult to take seriously. Can portraits really be more worthy than still lifes because they are inherently more noble? In contemporary parlance, “noble” is a word that most often occurs in speeches by politicians. The late-twentieth century view is decidedly anti-hierarchical: “Men think they are better than grass,” as the poet W. S. Merwin says.

In the French Academy, beginning students were called *élèves*. They had a reasonably good life; they were exempted from military service, and were well positioned to compete with

apprentices outside the Academy. There were monthly examinations, designed to weed out inferior students, but the major goal, from 1666 onward, was to win two all-important prizes: the Grand Prize (*Grand-Prix*), and the Rome Prize scholarship (*Prix-de-Rome*).⁶⁸ The Grand Prize was not easy to get. First students had to pass an examination by executing a drawing in the presence of an instructor. If they passed that test they could submit a sketch, and if that sketch was accepted, they were invited to make a picture or relief from the sketch while locked in a room (to make sure they weren't cheating by copying other drawings). All the pictures that had been made that way were put in a public exhibition, and eventually a panel chose a single Grand Prize winner.

The subjects were often set beforehand, and they were usually taken from Greco-Roman mythology. Imagine an art competition today that required artists to pick from the following subjects:

Hannibal looking down on the Italian Plain

Albinus and the Vestal

Papirius and his Mother

Alexander and Apelles

The Death of Caesar

Achilles and Thetis

Venus leading Helen to Paris

Hector leaving Andromache

Ulysses and Diomedes carrying away the Horses of Rhesos

Achilles's Fight with the Rivers

*Achilles and the Daughters of Lycomedes.*⁶⁹

Part of the student's work was to research such subjects, even though Greek and Roman myths were more or less common knowledge until the mid-nineteenth century. It's ironic that one of the few modern artists who makes pictures with titles like these is Joel-Peter Witkin—his work is strongly academic in that sense, and infused with art history, even though it would have been unthinkable to the French academicians. (It would have seemed mad.)

The Rome Prize was much more generous than today's grants and fellowships. Winners went to the French Academy in Rome for four years, and when they returned they had a choice of careers.⁷⁰ Either they could set up shop in some small town, or else try for the next step up in the Academy. After being an *élève*, and taking part in the Grand Prize competition, a student could apply to be accepted as an *agrégé*, which involved finding a sponsor and submitting another painting. *Agrégés* then had to pay a fee and complete a third work, this time specifically for the Academy's permanent collection; and if it was accepted, they became *académiciens*, the highest normal position, something like our Full Professors.⁷¹ This three-stage system was adopted from the medieval sequence from apprentice to journeyman-apprentice to Master. The correspondence with the medieval system is therefore:

<i>Medieval guilds</i>	<i>French Academy</i>
Apprentice	<i>Élève</i>
Journeyman	<i>Agrégé</i>
Master	<i>Académicien</i>

The Rome Prize and the other competitions put tremendous pressure on Baroque students to produce a winning work, a “masterpiece,” which would launch their careers. The closest modern comparison I know is the large music competitions such as the Tchaikovsky competition, which proceed by a merciless weeding-out to find a single winner. That winner is then offered concert dates and an opportunity to build an international reputation. The large public competitions for buildings or monuments are not quite the same, in part because they generally attract people who are already professionals. (The same could be said for the MacArthur “genius” grant, which is often given to people who are already established.)

Another consequence of the Rome Prize system was that art students had to be singleminded: they had to think of each of their classes as preparation for a single painting. In fact, the entire curriculum of the Baroque academies was geared toward the production of a single work. Art historians who study the Baroque academies ask about what kinds of work was most likely to win the prize, and they note that the Rome Prize kind of competition fostered uniformity and discouraged experimentation. It is also important to see it from the student’s viewpoint: everything they did, from drawing lessons to reading the classics, would have fed into the production of their competition piece. It was a blinkered curriculum, and it must have encouraged obsessive students. What would it be like if one of today’s art schools offered a single prize so lucrative and prominent that the winner would be virtually assured of making a living? The whole school, I think, would become obsessed with the prize, and suddenly the non-competitive atmosphere of postmodern practice would evaporate.

The early French Royal Academy perpetuated and legitimized a number of customs and ideas that are still with us. One worth reiterating in this context is the idea that an academy exists

for the sake of *theory*, rather than menial practice. The Academy's exclusive attention to drawing, even at the expense of color,⁷² came from Renaissance ideas about design (*disegno*), though the Baroque academies narrowed the Renaissance meanings of *disegno* into an unyielding pedagogic demand. The idea that theory belongs in academies, and "mere" technique belongs elsewhere still has influence, even though the majority of contemporary art schools and departments also tend to provide some market-oriented, technical, "industrial" and engineering instruction. (This is not to say that there was an obvious connection between the theory that the students learned and the paintings they made. Then as now, theories often had little to do with the work.⁷³)

Another seminal idea was the dissective manner of talking about pictures that got underway in the seventeenth century. Though pictures are no longer divided into "invention, proportion, color, expression, and composition," they *are* divided, and contemporary critics and teachers sometimes forget that Renaissance writers were not usually as concertedly analytic. Systematic art theory was not common in the Renaissance, though there are examples of it. Instead people wrote appreciations mixed with snippets of biography and other anecdotes, technical information, and descriptions of what the pictures were about. It was mostly very informal. The forms and categories of art theory got underway at the end of the Renaissance, and flourished in the ambience of the French Academy. When students today complain that there is too much icy intellection at art school, too much jargon and theory-speak, they are complaining about something whose seeds were planted in the early Baroque in France and Italy. The phenomenon has always been academic.

There is no better way to appreciate the atmosphere of a Baroque academy than to put yourself through some of the exercises the Baroque students had to master.⁷⁴ It is fairly easy to

find a second-rate, anonymous academic drawing from eighteenth-century France in a local museum; and many museums allow drawings to be copied in their Prints and Drawings departments. If that is not possible where you live, then you can try drawing from reproductions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drawings and casts of sculptures. (That wouldn't be so different from the first-year students at the Academy, with their lithographed books of drawings.) Or you could draw from the plaster statues that ornament downtown buildings—Cézanne did that in the south of France. The three-part regimen of the academy (drawing from drawings, from casts, and from life) can be duplicated in three day-long sessions. This may sound like an odd suggestion, but the experience is informative no matter what you end up producing. It will give you a sense of eighteenth-century artists' physical exactitude and mental constraint, and you'll remember it long after you've gone back to the freer exercises that are done in today's studio classes.⁷⁵

Nineteenth-century academies

Inevitably, there were revolts against this pedantic and artificial way of teaching. In general, the rebellion is associated with the Romantic movement, especially in Germany in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth. One leading idea, held by the young artists who came to teach in the late eighteenth century, was that the subjective, individual vision of each artist is more important than any sequence of classes or standardized theory. Routine and requirements were thought to be wrong; freedom was all-important. The artists spoke out against uniformity and in favor of the “special qualities” and “particular talents” of each student. Teaching, they thought, should be “natural,” “unaffected,” and “liberal.” One aspect of codified Baroque instruction, the analyses of paintings according to

fixed categories of color, expression, and so forth, seemed particularly offensive. Art was conceived as an “organic entity,” something “living” that should not be dissected.

These sentiments led to sweeping rejections of art academies. It was said that all academies do more harm than good. Academy students were compared to maggots, feeding on a rotting cheese; academy drawing was compared to masturbation; academy rooms were compared to coroners’ rooms full of corpses; the academy was imagined as a hospital for sick art.⁷⁶

There are tempting parallels between the early 1800s and the 1960s, even though the kinds of art produced in the two periods are completely different.⁷⁷ Still, both periods shared a surplus of idealism and a shortfall of practical curricular change. It is one thing to rebel against a bureaucracy, and another to actually change a curriculum. On 11 November 1792 Jacques-Louis David voted to close down the French Academy. In 1795 it was split in two (it became the Institut de France and the *École des Beaux-Arts*⁷⁸), but both branches quickly reverted to very conservative positions. The new academies were, in a word, antidisestablishmentarianist.⁷⁹ Some educators in European academies tried to get rid of the first years of the Baroque curriculum, but typically the old ways of teaching remained in place, and nineteenth-century students continued to draw from drawings and casts. The Romantic emphasis on drawing from nature instead of from the Antique usually meant even more life drawing, instead of trips into the countryside.⁸⁰

German Romantic artists did not rebel the way late twentieth century artists did, and their works look strange by our standards. Yet the Romantic rebellion has had lasting impact on contemporary art schools. Five notions are particularly important:

1. *We still devalue the intensive investigation of meaning.* Most of what is taught in studios is loose and informal—a whole mix of criteria and judgments without pattern or

consistency. (It's the subject of chapter 4.) Contemporary instructors avoid the kind of formulaic, compartmentalized analyses that the Baroque academicians promoted. Even professional art critics, who can seem downright nasty, are tender toward artworks in that they rarely try for a "complete" analysis the way Roger de Piles did: instead they work impressionistically (another nineteenth-century term), going from one image or allusion to another. All that is a lasting heritage of the Romantic rebellion.

2. *Artists should be independent of the state.* Baroque academies were a little like modern businesses, since they served the aristocrats who needed artists to build and decorate their houses. After the French Revolution that source of income dried up, and in the wake of Romanticism artists tended to proclaim their independence from any class of patrons. Today there is a spectrum of opinions about the relation between artists and their society, but there is a nearly universal consensus that artists should not primarily serve the state.⁸¹ There's a simple thought-experiment you can do to measure your distance from your society. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the great majority of academicians would have been happy and proud to be commissioned to do a portrait of their king or queen. But how many art students these days are motivated by a desire to paint the President? Artists *caricature* the President, and critique him, but I don't know any who admire him, or want him to commission their painting.

3. *We retain the Romantic re-invention of the "master class."* In order to foster individuality and freedom (and in part, to return to what they thought of as authentic medieval workshops), the Romantics expanded the advanced levels of instruction. Students worked under masters, who helped them to develop their "individual genius." Contemporary teachers adhere to this in that they do not try to foist a uniform standard on each student they advise. Instead they try to feel their way to an understanding of what each student is all about. Teachers acknowledge

that everyone has different ideals, directions, talents, and potentials. That sense of individuality is quintessentially Romantic.

4. *We still think—sometimes—that art cannot be taught.* Some Romantics thought that only techniques could be taught in art school. Hermann Grimm (son of one of the brothers Grimm) held that art was “altogether unteachable.” Later in the century Whistler said “I don’t teach art; with that I cannot interfere; but I teach the scientific application of paint and brushes.”⁸² These ideas are extreme, but they follow directly from the less radical idea that artists are individuals: if everyone is different then there’s no telling how art can be taught. The Romantics were the first to explore the idea that art cannot be taught, and some of their reasons are also my reasons in this book.

5. *It is possible to study painting in art school.* Because the Romantics thought individual vision was so important, nineteenth-century students could study art from beginning to end in their classrooms. They no longer had to learn painting, sculpture, and other arts outside the academy, by apprenticing themselves to independent masters. In the Royal Academy in London in the nineteenth century, some teachers specialized in painting, ornament, and even coach decoration. The huge range of techniques and media in current art schools is due to the Romantics, who took the essential first step of bringing painting into the academy.

Modern Academies and the Bauhaus

The history of modern academies begins in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the Great Exhibition of 1851. Nineteenth-century exhibitions were more like national trade fairs than the World Fairs we think of today, and this one was particularly driven by manufacturing, since one of its purposes was to showcase and improve industrial and manufacturing skills. These days

people like to complain about how “cheap” manufactured goods are. At the turn of the century, people complained about the poor quality of architecture and furniture (why don’t we complain about furniture outlets anymore?), and in the mid-nineteenth century people complained about the poor quality of everything that was manufactured, as opposed to being handmade. Each generation has thought it was the first to notice the disappearance of skilled craftsmen, and the first to see that industrialization was the cause. Perhaps to future generations the late twentieth century will seem like a Utopia of skilled apprentices.

The Great Exhibition provoked a number of books on the subject of the loss of the workshop tradition. The nineteenth-century architect Gottfried Semper thought that the crafts had degenerated so far that the best decoration was to be found on the objects that needed it the least, such as weapons and musical instruments.⁸³ Museums were set up for people to study examples of good craftsmanship; the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is the most prominent instance. Educators began to think that what was needed was a single curriculum for “fine art” and “industrial art”—meaning whatever is made with the help of machines, from hammers to iron staircases. Others thought that the principles of “fine art” were of prime importance, and they needed to be applied to decorative and industrial arts (hence the term “applied arts”).⁸⁴

The most influential nineteenth-century worker along these lines is William Morris. Like many others, he associated the unity of arts and crafts with the pre-industrial age, and specifically with the middle ages. His shop, called “Morris, Marshall and Faulkner, Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals,” founded in 1861, made things only by hand. The phrase, “Fine Art Workmen” is telling, and so is the art movement that Morris enlisted: the Pre-Raphaelites, who wanted a return to higher, and non-academic, standards of production.⁸⁵ A

number of schools followed Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. Birmingham had a school for jewelers and silversmiths in 1881, and various schools incorporated crafts such as printing, goldsmithing, and embroidery into their curricula.⁸⁶ Part of the impetus for this was purely economic: students at the state-run academies objected to being given worthless degrees. Who needed academic painters when Courbet, Degas, Renoir, and others were challenging the status quo, and who needed a degree in painting when there was so much demand for skilled craftsmen?

If there was a drawback to Morris's ideas, it was that handmade objects could only be afforded by the rich. Mass production and industrial techniques could not be avoided if the goal was to disseminate the arts rather than just improving them for a minority of customers. The most famous solution to that problem was Walter Gropius's school, the Bauhaus, which taught a range of subjects—even if it was not entirely singleminded in its integration of “industrial” and fine arts. Students at the Bauhaus went through a three-stage curriculum, which I'll list in detail because the Bauhaus is by far the most important influence on current art instruction:⁸⁷

1. *The first year course.* A six-month preparatory class was first in line. It was taught originally by Johannes Itten,⁸⁸ and it has been extraordinarily influential in modern art instruction. Itten divided the course into three topics:⁸⁹

(a) *2-D instruction: Training the senses.* The first exercises were to train the senses and the hand. (Sometimes Itten even had his students get ready by doing special breathing exercises!) Students were asked to draw fine rows of parallel lines, pages of perfect freehand circles, and spirals. Some of this still survives in postmodern curricula. I have assisted in classes taught by a student of a Bauhaus artist, in which the students drew long

series of fine parallel lines across long sheets of brown butcher paper. Each line had to be a little darker than the one before, and then a little lighter, so that the paper looked like it was buckled in waves. The object was control of the hand, the arm, and the eye. I remember it as difficult, exhausting, and apparently irrelevant to any other kind of artmaking. The first portion of Itten's course also included exact drawings from models and the study of different textures and materials.

(b) *2-D instruction: Training the emotions.* Here students were given emotional themes (anger, sorrow, pain) or emotional subjects (a thunderstorm, a war) and told to represent them graphically. Sometimes an abstract approach was required, but more frequently the surviving drawings show a high degree of abstraction that includes realistic elements.

(c) *2-D instruction: Training the mind.* The intellectual side of art was promoted by exercises in the analysis of Old Master paintings, color schemata, and simple formal oppositions (light / dark, above / below, motion / rest). Live models and abstractions were both used to teach the analysis of rhythm.

These same three principles—training for the senses, the emotions, and the mind—were then applied to 3-D objects, including some arrangements of junk that Itten brought into the studio to test the students' capacity to render unusual textures and forms. This final portion of the six-month introductory course was meant to lead into the studio work of the next stage.

2. *The undergraduate curriculum.* Next in the Bauhaus curriculum came a three-year program in which students specialized in an area of their choice (stone and marble, textiles, "wall-painting," ceramics, glass, woodworking, and so forth). The entire Bauhaus was open so students could learn new disciplines, but they were expected to remain in one area and apprentice themselves to two masters. (That was a compromise between the master-class of the German

Romantics and older academic instruction, and it still survives in the contemporary system of two or three “advisors.”) Bauhaus students were instructed in materials, geometry, construction, model-making, and some history of art.⁹⁰

3. *Assistant work.* At the end of the three years, students took a standard municipal trade examination and got a Journeyman’s Certificate. That in turn enabled them to enter the third course, which was something like being an assistant in an architectural firm or doing postdoctoral research in science. The graduates helped with Bauhaus commissions, and sometimes did work in local industries.

The specific agendas and organization of the Bauhaus have been superseded, but a number of Bauhaus-inspired exercises are still common today. As often as not, they form the basis of the First Year or Foundation programs in art schools and art departments. Some of the more common examples include:

- *Textures.* Students gather different textures, and try to depict them in pencil or charcoal.
- *Materials.* Learning about different materials by making carvings, molds, and so forth. Sometimes the object is to make as much as possible out of a single material.
- *Value.* Students are asked to arrange small newspaper clippings into a continuous scale from white to black, or reproduce a scene or still-life in shades of grey.
- *Rhythms.* Arranging objects into a rhythmic composition, or making a complex drawing using simple forms.
- *Concrete to abstract.* Beginning with a still life or a painting, students analyze “lines of force” or “points of equilibrium” and eventually arrive at an abstraction.
- *Collections.* Students collect objects that seem to have little in common, or else similar objects (e.g., red things), and see how they are related.

- *Emotions*. Abstract or concrete drawings or constructions are made that express given emotions.

- *Color*. A wide range of experiments aim to sensitize students to color relations.

There are many more, and they can be found in Albers's and Itten's books, and in books on the Bauhaus written by former students. Though the Bauhaus instructors did not originate all these exercises, they were unknown in Baroque or Romantic instruction. The list I've given is fairly typical, and versions of it are nearly universal. Yet it should provoke some questions:

1. *Is there a tabula rasa?* Some Bauhaus instructors used exercises like these to erase bad habits inculcated by the society and the state of the arts. Itten spoke in these terms: he wanted to return students' minds and muscles to a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate.⁹¹ Yet as time passes, it becomes more apparent that Bauhaus exercises weren't aimed at a timeless blank slate, but were closely related to the styles of the day. Some Bauhaus students' works look expressionist, and others show the influence of international abstraction. This is well known to historians, but it is not as often noted in contemporary art instruction. When exercises like the ones I've listed are done today, teachers don't usually talk about the *tabula rasa*, and their goals remain similar to Itten's: to do something rudimentary, without the influence of current art styles or art history. But I think it makes sense to think of art history, and the styles that inevitably creep into the exercises —after all, an exercise that looks “timeless” today (say a sheet of butcher paper, covered with straight lines) will look very much of its time to future viewers. In other words, there is no *tabula rasa*.

2. *What is the relation between sensitivity and work?* Many of the Bauhaus exercises are aimed at increasing sensitivity to colors, values, textures, and compositions. Itten's idea was to bring out the individual's capacity to respond to phenomena. Albers' book on color is a sequence

of “scientific” “experiments” in color perception intended to provoke “new ways of thinking,” to “[shake] up the students’ confidence in their sensory knowledge.” Yet it’s an open-ended sequence because the purpose is primarily to increase sensitivity. (Albers says you probably will never get to be as good at seeing color as he is.) Albers’s “experiments” are still popular because they increase the enjoyment of everyday life: if you go outside after a session with Albers’s book, you will probably notice more colors, shapes, textures, and compositions than you had before. But the same reactions may not be helpful in the studio. Is Albers’s artificially high level of color sensitivity really necessary to painting? Some kinds of art require nuance, and others don’t. Sensitivity can be irrelevant, and Bauhaus-style exercises can be more like meditation than like making art.

3. *What are “rudiments”?* The exercises were concentrated in the “preparatory” course. There is a much longer history of “rudiments,” going back before the Baroque academies. The earliest post-medieval Western art text is Alberti’s *Rudiments of Painting*, written in the early fifteenth century. His “rudiments” are geometric forms and constructions.⁹² In the Baroque the rudimentary discipline was drawing. Both Alberti’s geometric exercises and the Baroque drawing books make good sense for their respective periods: the Renaissance did base much of its picturemaking on geometry, and the Baroque practice was founded on certain conventions of drawing. But it should not be accepted without question that the Bauhaus’s miscellany of exercises is our “rudiments.” Do we really think that materials and textures are the basis of our practice? Is postmodern art practice well served by the formal agendas of the Bauhaus?

The Bauhaus curriculum contained the seeds of the 2-D, 3-D, 4-D sequence that is common today. That sequence is open to the same objections as the study of “rudiments.” Why assume that 3-D should come after 2-D? If you’re a teacher, and you have some latitude in the

curriculum, you might consider rearranging the 2-D, 3-D, 4-D sequence. Why not teach 4-D, then 3-D, then 2-D? (Start first-years students with time arts, work down through painting to drawing, and end up in the spring with lines and points.) Does it make sense to start art with sequences of “D’s” at all? Should there be *any* “fundamentals”? After all, postmodernism prides itself on not believing in foundations, and the remnants of Bauhaus teaching look more out of place with each passing year. At the same time, I am not so sure there is any such thing as a post-Bauhaus method of elementary art instruction. The Bauhaus notion of rudiments, and the 2-D, 3-D, 4-D sequence are the *only* workable alternatives to the academic model. It can seem as if contemporary art departments and art schools have done away with the Bauhaus by intermixing all sorts of new things in their first-year courses—digital video, multimedia installation, biology, ideology and politics, and even pornography—but the mixtures only obscure the ongoing belief that art *does* have rudiments, and that they have to do with seeing, making, and the tabula rasa.

4. *The resistance to theory.* There is an interesting parallel between the first-year course at the Bauhaus and the children’s exercises advocated by Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of the kindergarten. Froebel gave children woolen balls, blocks, laths, paper, and hoops. He encouraged them to draw, to compare sizes, make patterns, investigate texture and color, weave, and model clay. The rationale was that learning takes place best in nonutilitarian interaction with materials. Like the Bauhaus instructors, Froebel held that theory—what he called “mind”—need not, or cannot, develop before activity.⁹³ These ideas are held by a wide range of theorists, from Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi through John Dewey.⁹⁴ It is worth considering that the kindergarten and the Bauhaus first-year course share an interest in nonverbal, atheoretical learning, and that such learning may not correspond with artmaking that is done in later years. How many subjects in

elementary school are prepared for by kindergarten exercises? How useful are the various remnants of Bauhaus pedagogy?

One last point about the Bauhaus. Like some instructors in the French Academy, teachers at the Bauhaus made statements and wrote pamphlets, lecture notes, and books. Several students wrote about their experiences. That, more than any single factor, accounts for the importance the Bauhaus continues to have. Students still read Albers, Klee, Mies, Itten, and Kandinsky, and that makes all the difference in our estimation of the school. Today teachers who write about successful classes they have taught publish in journals like the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* or in the various regional teachers' journals—where their articles are immediately lost. Most art schools have no formal histories and few archival documents. This is a note more for instructors than students: consider writing at length about the school where you teach, to define it and your teaching.

Art Schools Beyond the Bauhaus

Art academies were very slow to catch up to contemporary styles. In the late 1930's, when Nikolaus Pevsner was writing his history of art academies, the school of the Beaux-Arts still had three departments (painting, sculpture and architecture), and the Royal Academy was still teaching a nineteenth-century curriculum of five classes (the antique school, school of painting, life drawing, life modelling, and architecture). Only the London Central School of Arts and Crafts, Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin Fellowship, and the Royal College in London—originally an industrial arts school—are mentioned as progressive, and mostly they were following late nineteenth-century ideas about the unification of the arts and crafts and the return to medieval apprenticeships.⁹⁵ A utilitarian kind of art education flourished in the United States

in the nineteenth century, stressing the practical value of visualization, handwriting, and accurate drawing. Though such instruction pertained mostly to elementary and high school curricula, it found its way into art schools, where it mingled with the academic strains inherited from Europe.⁹⁶ (Thomas Eakins is an example of an academic artist strongly influenced by such training.)

Art schools in the contemporary sense did not arise until after the Second World War.⁹⁷ They are marked by an absence of almost all restrictions on the kinds of courses that can be taught, and on a radical increase in the freedom students have to choose courses. The educational reforms of the 1960's removed even more restrictions, sometimes including letter grades and basic or "core" course requirements. Many American art schools were reorganized in the '60's and '70's to remove older-sounding names such as "applied art" and substitute inclusive categories such as "communications" and "art and technology." The tendency to lump subjects continues today.⁹⁸ At the same time schools and departments tend to disavow any overarching purpose in favor of pluralism and the independence of different courses or departments. The result is a curiously free "learning environment," in which students have a large say in what they will learn and when they will learn it.

What I want to stress here is not how we are connected to the past but how strongly we are *disconnected*. For practical purposes current art instruction doesn't involve a fixed curriculum, a hierarchy of genres, a sequence of courses, a coherent body of knowledge, or a unified theory or practice. In large art schools, any two students will be likely to have very different experiences of their first year program, which is supposed to be the common foundation for further work. They will have been in different classes, and had different teachers. In art

departments, students' experiences differ widely year by year. Since instructors are generally free to devise their own class plans within the general guidelines of the school or department, the same core course can be very different in different hands. (Art history surveys are restricted by the textbooks, but they vary too.) It is as if modern art schools are a different *kind* of school, as different from the French Academy as it was from medieval workshops. Contemporary art instruction does have a past. But what is done at the beginning of the twenty-first century is strongly different from what was done in the preceding centuries. Art instruction has invisibly reinvented itself, creating the impression that nothing has changed. It looks as if art is being taught in all sorts of ways—in any old way—but really what is done in studio classrooms is often the determined *opposite* of the customs and habits of the older Academies, or else the lingering, nearly inaudible echo of the Bauhaus.

And is there anything beyond the Bauhaus? I have seen bits and pieces of post-Bauhaus teaching, which are free of the ideas I discussed above—the *tabula rasa*, the rudiments, sensitivity training, resistance to theory, the sequence from 2-D to 4-D. I've seen postmodern exercises intended to demonstrate how *little* can be understood about art: that's certainly a post-Bauhaus mentality. The Bauhaus itself has adopted a post-Bauhaus curriculum; students design "sociological experiments"—essentially public installations and performances—and take courses to build up whatever skills they may need.⁹⁹ Any first-year program that stresses ideology and politics over media and skills is certainly post-Bauhaus. But any introductory course that focuses on seeing, on visibility, on textures, colors, motions, value, weight, emotion, assembly and composition, or sensitivity, is working in the shadow of the Bauhaus. Contemporary art instruction has moved far beyond the Baroque academy model, without even noticing it. At the same time we have only moved only baby steps away from the Bauhaus.

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ There are two other English-language histories of art academies, but they are for specialized audiences. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art Past and Present* (New York, 1960 [1940]), is for art historians (Pevsner leaves quotations in French, Italian, Latin, Greek, and German untranslated), and Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education, Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York, 1990) contains a history aimed at art educators.

² The “earliest known theoretical treatise on painting” is by Agatharchus (c. 450 B.C.). J. J. Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1974), 14 and 256-57.

³ The earliest post-Egyptian professional treatise on sculpture may have been Polyclitus’s *Canon* (c. 425-450 B.C.).

⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* 1337b. For an English translation see *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed.

Richard McKeon (New York, 1941), 1306-08; and for further information, Eva Keuls, *Plato and*

Greek Painting (Leiden, 1978), 144.

⁵ Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting*, 145-46.

⁶ Henri Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*, translated as *A History of*

Education in Antiquity, tr. George Lamb (New York, 1956).

⁷ Charles Homer Haskins, *The Rise of Universities* (Ithaca, New York, 1957 [1923]), 2.

Haskins' account is mostly anecdotal, but has a good introductory bibliography. The standard

work is still Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M.

Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford, 1936 [1895]), 3 vols.

⁸ This was codified by Martianus Capella. See Paul Otto Kristeller, “The Modern System of the

Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951): 496-527,

and *ibid.* 13 (1952): 17-46. The reference to Capella is in *ibid.*, vol. 12, 505, and in Kristeller,

Renaissance Thought II, Papers on Humanism and the Arts (New York, 1965), 163-227.

⁹ If you want to read some medieval logic and dialectic, there are a number of books available.

A typical thirteenth-century curriculum would have required the logical works of Aristotle (the

Organon, divided into two collections of essays, called the *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior*

Analytics). See Philoleus Böhner, *Medieval Logic: An Outline of Its Development from 1250 to c.*

1400 (Manchester, England, 1952).

¹⁰ Books were very expensive since they had to be copied and checked by hand, but many of the

classics were available in monastery libraries; the tendencies I am noting here weren't due to

economic restraints.

¹¹ Haskins, *The Rise of Universities*, 67, gives a number of entertaining anecdotes about such books and the informers (called “wolves”) who reported anyone who spoke their native language.

¹² To get an idea of the kind of text that would have been studied, look at Justinian I (483?-565), *Institutiones*, a standard Roman law text. A recent translation is *Justinian’s Institutes*, ed. Peter Birks and Grant McLeod (Ithaca, New York, 1987).

¹³ It is not irrelevant that the medieval schemes that associate an art with each of the nine muses omit the visual arts and associate poetry and music with the sciences. See August Friedrich von Pauly, *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1894-1972), 70 vols, especially vol. 16 (Stuttgart, 1935), 680 and 725, cited in Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts,” 506 n. 68.

¹⁴ See Emile Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières en France depuis le conquête de Jules*

César jusqu'à l'révolution (Paris, 1959), 2 vols, especially vol. 1, 204, cited in Albert Boime,

The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (New Haven, Connecticut, 1986

[1971]), 2.

¹⁵ Kristeller, "Modern System of the Arts," 507. (At the time, armourers were skilled in

engraving and in the construction of house-sized machines, so Hugo's classification isn't entirely

arbitrary.)

¹⁶ For Renaissance academies see Charles Dempsey, "The Carracci Academy," *Leids*

Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87) ('s-Gravenhage, The Netherlands, 1989), 33-43; K. E.

Barzman, "The Florentine *Accademia del Disegno*: Liberal Education and the Renaissance

Artist," *ibid.* 14-32; and Zygmunt Wazbinski, *L'Accademia Medicea del Disegno nel*

cinquecento, Idea e istituzione (Florence, 1987).

¹⁷ The best-known academies of language are somewhat later. The Florentine Accademia della Crusca was founded in 1582 and brought out its dictionary in 1612. The Académie Française, founded in 1635, published its dictionary in 1694 (but did not complete its grammar until 1932).

¹⁸ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 4-5 n. 1, lists seven meanings of “academy” current around 1500, including “semi-secret astrological societies,” others devoted to Platonic philosophy, and still others to Ciceronian skepticism and “genuine (not scholastic) Aristotelian philosophy.”

Inscriptions found in catacombs in 1475 were left by academicians in secret meetings.

¹⁹ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 1.

²⁰ This was first discussed by Frances Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1988 [1947]), and more recently by Carl Goldstein, “The Platonic Beginnings of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris,” *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* (’s-Gravenhage, The Netherlands, 1989), 186-87. Goldstein’s views are collected in his *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers* (Cambridge, 1996).

²¹ See Trissino, *Epistola* [and other works], edited by R. C. Alston (Menston, Yorkshire, 1970).

²² Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 8.

²³ One sign of diversity is the proliferation of science academies. Among the most famous is the

Accademia dei Lincei, founded in 1603, whose members included Galileo. Others are the Royal

Society of London, founded in 1645, and the Accademia Scientiarum, founded in 1700 on the

insistence of Leibniz. See Martha Ornstein Bronfenbrenner, *The Role of Scientific Societies in*

the Seventeenth Century (Hamden, Connecticut, 1963 [1928; the Hamden edition is from the

third edition, 1938]).

²⁴ This is from M. Joannis Jarkii, *Specimen historiae academiarum eruditae Italiae* (Leipzig,

1729), quoted in Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 7.

²⁵ See C. E. Roman, "Academic Ideals of Art Education," *Children of Mercury, The Education of*

Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, exh. cat. (Providence, 1984), 81. Roman's

essay is a commentary on the early pictures of ideal academies.

²⁶ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 7, 11, 12-13. Pevsner also cites Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der*

Generation in der kunstgeschichte Europas (Berlin, 1926), 55.

²⁷ The *Accademia* is still operating, under the name Academy of the Fine Arts, although its curriculum has no resemblance to its Renaissance original.

²⁸ Charles Dempsey, "Some Observations on the Education of Artists in Florence and Bologna

During the Later Sixteenth Century," *The Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 552. See also Zygmunt

Wazbinski, "La prima mostra dell'Accademia del Disegno a Firenze," *Prospettiva* 14 (1978):

47-57, and Wazbinski, *L'Accademia medicea del disegno a Firenze nel Cinquecento: idea e*

istituzione (Florence, 1987).

²⁹ See Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, *Petrarchismo*, and the

Vernacular Style," *The Art Bulletin* 58 (1976): 374-94; Marco Rosci, "Manierismo e

accademismo nel pensiero critico del Cinquecento," *Acme* 9 (1956): 57-81.

³⁰ It is possible to use the drawings assembled in Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen, 1300/1500* (Berlin, 1968-1982) as a general indication of what went on in fifteenth-century Italian workshops.

³¹ K.-E. Barzman, “The Florentine Accademia del Disegno,” 19. Barzman reports that the mathematics program at the Academy of Design was so successful that professional mathematicians were brought in to teach it, and later the Mathematics chair at the University of Florence was transferred to the Academy.

³² The fundamental text here—though it is not easy reading—is Erwin Panofsky, *Idea, A Concept in Art Theory* (New York, 1968 [1924]).

³³ Among the primary sources see Ignazio Danti, *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni* (Florence, 1567), a treatise on proportions which was to be the first of fourteen books on design (*disegno*). Michelangelo had plans to write an anatomy text that would have stressed movement.

³⁴ Among many sources here, see Rudolph Siegel, *Galen on Psychology, Psychopathology, and*

Function and Diseases of the Nervous: An Analysis of His Doctrines, Observations and

Experiments (Basel, 1973), and Galen, *Galen on the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, trans. P. W.

Harkings (Columbus, Ohio, 1963).

³⁵ For examples, see my *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis* (Stanford, 1999), chapter

2.

³⁶ Barzman, "The Florentine Accademia del Disegno," 24.

³⁷ For art historical examples see Eva Kuryluk, "Metaphysics of Cloth, Leonardo's Draperies at

the Louvre,' *Arts* 64 no. 9 (1990): 80, and her *Veronica and her Cloth: Sources, Structure, and*

Symbolism of A "True" Image (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991).

³⁸ The best translation is Vitruvius Pollio, *Vitruvius: Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Ingrid

Rowland (New York, 1999). The list is given in I.i.3, but it is augmented by things Vitruvius

mentions throughout I.i.

³⁹ The Accademia degl'Incamminati, as it was called, was founded in 1582 and lasted until financial troubles in the second decade of the next century. See Dempsey, "The Carracci Academy," 33 and 35, and Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci and the Beginnings of the Baroque Style* (Glückstadt, 1979). A summary of earlier work is available in Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 75.

Among the primary sources are Giovanni Battista Armenini, *De veri Precetti della Pittura... Libri tre* (Ravenna, 1587), translated as *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting* (New York, 1977), trans. Edward Olszewski (Armenini provided part of the theoretical basis on which the Carracci formed their Academy); Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice* (Bologna, 1841); and Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of Annibale and Agostino Carracci*, trans. by Catherine Enggass (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1968).

⁴⁰ The best recent assessment is Dempsey, "Some Observations." See also Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci and the Beginnings of Baroque Style (Villa i Tatti Monographs, III)* (Glückstadt, 1977); Denis Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory* (Westport, Connecticut, 1975 [1947]); Mahon, "Eclecticism and the Carracci: Further Reflections on the Validity of a Label," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953): 303-41; Mahon, "Art Theory and Practice in the Early Seicento: Some Clarifications," *The Art Bulletin* 35 (1953): 226-32; Carlo Ragghianti, "I Carracci e la critica d'arte nell'età barocca," *La Critica* 31 (1933): 63; and M. J. Levine, "The Carracci: A Family Academy," *The Academy*, *Art News Annual*, XXXIII, ed. Thomas Hess (New York, 1967), 19-28.

⁴¹ See for example Lionello Venturi, *The History of Art Criticism* (New York, 1964 [1936]), 116, for the claim that the Carracci's interests "could not be an artistic programme."

⁴² Described, for example, in Karel van Mander's biographies (the *Schilder-boeck*, published in Haarlem in 1602-1604 and reprinted in Utrecht in 1969). See H. Meidema, "Over Vakonderwijs aan Kunstschilders in de Nederlanden tot de zeventiende Eeuw," in *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 268-82, with English summary; and E. van de Wetering, *Studies in the Workshop Practice of the early Rembrandt* (Amsterdam, 1986). "Studio-academies" is from Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 73.

⁴³ On Baroque academies see: Jonathan Brown, “Academies of Art in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 177-85; J. H. Rubin, “Academic Life-Drawing in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Eighteenth-Century French Life Drawing*, exh. cat. (Princeton, 1977); W. Busch, “Die Akademie zwischen autonomer Zeichnung und Handwerkdesign. Zur Auffassung der Linie und der Zeichen im 18. Jahrhundert,” *Ideal und Wirklichkeit der bildenden Kunst im späten 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herbert Beck, Peter Bol, and Eva Maeck-Gérard (Berlin, 1984), 177-92; Gottfried Bammes, *Das Zeichnerische Aktstudium. Seine Entwicklung in Werkstatt, Praxis und Theorie* (Leipzig, 1973).

⁴⁴ Sidney Hutchinson, *The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1968* (London, 1968); Hutchinson, “The Royal Academy of Arts in London: its History and Activities,” *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 451-63.

⁴⁵ See the list in Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 140. Most academies lack thorough histories; an exception is John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin Since the Eighteenth Century: A History of the National College of Art and Design* (Dublin, 1995).

⁴⁶ Chu-Tsing Li, *Trends in Modern Chinese Painting* (Ascona, Switzerland, 1979), 5-7.

⁴⁷ The author is Baldassare Castiglione, whose book *The Courtier* was influential in the sixteenth century. See Kristeller, "Modern System of the Arts," 507.

⁴⁸ These are sixteenth-century English opinions, noted by I. Bignamini, "The 'Academy of Art' in Britain before the Foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768," *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 434.

⁴⁹ See for example Michel de Montaigne, “On Pedantry” (1572-78) and “Of the Institution and Education of Children: to the Lady Diana of Foix, Countess of Gurson,” (1579-80) in *The Complete works of Montaigne*, ed. D. M. Frame (Stanford, 1967 [1948]), 97-104; Rabelais, *The Most Horrific Life of the Great Gargantua*, trans. S. Putnam (New York, 1964 [1946]), 124-32; and Jan Amos Comenius [Komensky], *The Great Didactic*, trans. M. W. Keatinge (New York, 1967). Further references are listed in R. J. Saunders, “Selections from Historical Writings on Art Education,” in *Concepts in Art and Education, An Anthology of Current Issues*, ed. George Pappas (London, 1968), 4.

⁵⁰ Ludovic Vitet, *L'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture: étude historique* (Paris, 1861); Carl Goldstein, “The Platonic Beginnings of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris,” *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 186-202; Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 82.

⁵¹ The first two are called drawing from *modèles de dessin* and drawing *à la bosse* (from casts).

⁵² M. Missirini, *Memoire per servire alla storia della Romana Accademia di S. Luca* (Roma, 1823), 32, and Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting (Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270)*, ed. A. Philip McMahon (Princeton, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 45 and 65, cited in L. O. Tonelli, “Academic Practice in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Children of Mercury*, 97. Leonardo is also the first to have advocated a sequence of drawing: first from drawings, then from reliefs, and finally from models. See *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. Edward MacCurdy (New York, 1958), 899.

⁵³ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 174.

⁵⁴ M. Baker, *The Cast Courts* (London, 1982), and Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven, 1981). Other institutions that have intact collections are the Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania Academy.

⁵⁵ In 1990, it was in a side room missing an arm. See Pauline Saliga, “Plaster Casts, Painted Rooms, and Architectural Fragments: A Century of Representing Architecture at the Art Institute of Chicago,” *Fragments of Chicago’s Past*, ed. Pauline Saliga (Chicago, 1990), 52-67.

⁵⁶ For the case of Michelangelo, see my “Michelangelo and the Human Form: His Knowledge and Use of Anatomy,” *Art History* 7 (1984): 176-86.

⁵⁷ Cellini, *Sopra i principii e ’l modo d’imparare l’arte del disegno*, in *Opere di Benvenuto Cellini*, ed. Giuseppe Guido Ferrero (Turin, 1971), 829 ff. For Vasari see the excerpts from the *Vite* published as *Vasari on Technique*, trans. Luisa Maclehorse (New York, 1960), 206 ff. For secondary sources, L. O. Tonelli, “Academic Practice in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Children of Mercury*, 97; C. E. Roman, “Academic Ideals in Art Education,” *Children of Mercury*, 84; and Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600* (Oxford, 1970), 96.

⁵⁸ Gropius's plan for the Bauhaus includes the injunction to draw heads, models, animals, landscapes, plants, and still-lives from "fantasy." See his "Programm des Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar," reprinted for example in H. W. Wingler, *Das Bauhaus* (s.l. [probably West Germany], n.d. [c. 1962-1969]), 41. (This book is in the collection of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Intitute of Chicago, with the call number 707.0943 B34ba.)

⁵⁹ Saul Baizerman, "The Journal, May 10, 1952," edited by Carl Goldstein, *Tracks I* (1975), 17, quoted in Goldstein, "Drawing in the Academy," *Art International* 21 (1977): 42-47.

⁶⁰ These terms are translations of more exact French and Italian words. “First thoughts” renders *première pensée* (Italian *primo pensiero*), and sometimes *croquis* or *mise en trait*. There followed various kinds of drawings, *dessins* (Italian *disegni*), also called *esquisses* (Italian *schizzi*), and *pochades*. *Études* (Italian *studi*) were anatomic and other detailed studies, leading to the *ébauche* (Italian *abbozza*), the finished mock-up or monochrome underpainting. See Albert Boime, *The Academy*, 26, 80-82, 150-53, Charles de Tolnay, *History and Technique of Old Master Drawing* (New York, 1972 [1943]), and David Karel, “The Teaching of Drawing in the French Royal Academy,” PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974, unpublished.

⁶¹ L. O. Tonelli, “Academic Practice in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Children of Mercury*, 103.

⁶² The Baroque was also the time of the first systematic art treatises. The earliest French treatise is Abraham Bosse, *Sentimens sur la distinction des diverses manières de peinture, desseins et graveure* (Paris, 1649) see Goldstein, "The Platonic Beginnings of the Academy," 190. The eighteenth century saw the proliferation of handbooks, manuals, popularized explanations, and textbooks of all sorts. Students, dilettantes, connoisseurs, and the idle rich could learn watercolor, engraving, perspective, color theory, anatomy and drawing.

⁶³ See Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert Wark (New Haven, 1975). In the literature on the *Discourses* see B. A. C. van Brakel-Saunders, "Reynolds' Theory of Learning Processes," in *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek V-VI (1986-87)* ('s-Gravenhage, 1989), 464 ff.; E. H. Gombrich, "Reynolds's Theory and Practice of Imitation," *Burlington Magazine* 80 (1942): 35-40; Charles Mitchell, "Three Phases of Reynolds's Method," *Burlington Magazine* 80 (1942): 35-40; and "Sir Joshua, P.R.A.," in *The Academy*, ed. Thomas Hess, 39-46.

⁶⁴ The most important are: André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes: (Entretiens I et II*, ed. René Démoris (Paris, 1987 [1666]); Roland Fréart, Sieur de Chambray, *L'Idée de la perfection de la peinture* (Paris, 1662), translated as *An Idea of the Perfection of Painting*, trans. J. E. Esquire (initials only) (London, 1668); Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, *De arte graphica liber*, translated as *The Art of Painting of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy*, tr. William Mason, with an introduction by Sir Joshua Reynolds (York, England, 1783); Roger de Piles, *Balance des peintures* (Paris, 1708); de Piles, *The Art of Painting* (London, 1706), and later translations; and Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti moderni*, second edition (Rome, 1728).

⁶⁵ Until the mid-seventeenth century, art theorists still used Lomazzo, Armenini, and Zuccari. See Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 93. The primary sources are: Federico Zuccari, *L'idea de' pittori, scultori ed architetti* (1607), reprinted in Zuccari, *Scritti d'arte*, ed. Detlef Heikamp (Florence, 1961); Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Idea del tempio della pittura* (Hildesheim, 1965 [1590]) (for which there is an old translation, *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge...*, tr. R. H. [Oxford, 1598]); and Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, translated by Edward Olszewski (New York, 1977).

⁶⁶ The best way to understand this mentality is to study examples of such analyses. See in particular Donald Posner, "Charles Le Brun's 'Triumphs of Alexander'," *The Art Bulletin* 61 (1959): 237-48 (discussing *Alexander at the Tent of Darius* [1661] in Versailles); and André Félibien, *Les reines de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre, peinture du cabinet du roy* (Paris, 1663).

⁶⁷ The authors are Roland Fréart, Sieur de Chambray, Roger de Piles, and Andree Félibien, respectively; de Piles's scores are repeated in Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 94, n. 2.

The beginnings of the hierarchy of genres can be seen in Pliny, who mentions a painter named Piraeicus who was called *rhyparographos*, "painter of low things." See Stephen Bann, *The True Vine, On Visual Representation and The Western Tradition* (Cambridge, 1989), 37, quoting from *Textes Grecs et Latins relatifs à l'histoire de la peinture ancienne*, ed. Adolphe Reinach (Paris, 1985), 390.

⁶⁸ See Albert Boime, "The Prix de Rome: Images of Authority and Threshold of Official Success," *Art Journal* (1984): 281-89.

⁶⁹ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 168-69. These are subjects set in Parma and Weimar.

⁷⁰ After 1748, winners were also housed in the Louvre for three years before they went to Rome.

⁷¹ There is some evidence that there was a widening gap between the winning of the Rome Prize and the election to the Academy. At first, artists could become “academicians” in their twenties and thirties. Later, as the bureaucracy grew, the average age of an academician was fifty-three.

Harrison White and Cynthia White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (New York, 1965), 17, quoted in Boime, *The Academy*, 4.

⁷² Generally speaking, the imbalance continued until the resolution of the “Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,” which disputed the relative importance of design and color from 1671 to 1699.

See Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La couleur éloquente: rhétorique et peinture à l'âge classique* (Paris, 1989).

⁷³ For attempts to connect Baroque academic theory with practice: E. H. Gombrich, “Reynolds’s Theory and Practice of Imitation”; and Carl Goldstein, “Theory and Practice in the French Academy: Louis Licherie’s ‘Abigail and David’,” *Burlington Magazine* 111 (1969): 346-51.

⁷⁴ There are some schools that carry on these traditions. Until very recently, Shanghai university taught an essentially Baroque curriculum, mixed with nineteenth-century Russian models. After c. 1980, some elements of the Bauhaus curriculum were added. As of c. 1987, Baroque style classes were still in effect. In the United States there is Atelier Lack (in Minneapolis), which offers a rigorous Baroque-style curriculum without the social realist flavor of Shanghai.

⁷⁵ The best book to read in preparation for this is Boime, *The Academy*.

⁷⁶ These invectives are collected in Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, chapter 5.

⁷⁷ If you want to see their work, look up the Nazarenes, Franz Pforr and Friedrich Overbeck, and Peter von Cornelius. See for example Keith Andrews, *The Nazarenes* (Oxford, 1964).

⁷⁸ See for example J. Thuillier, "The Birth of the Beaux-Arts," in *The Academy*, Art News Annual, XXXIII, ed. Thomas Hess (New York, 1967), 29-38.

⁷⁹ T. Burollet, "Antidisestablishmentarianism," in *The Academy*, Art News Annual, XXXIII, ed. Thomas Hess (New York, 1967), 89-100.

⁸⁰ Landscape painting in the academy, as opposed to landscape drawing, began in the 1830's in

Germany. Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 232-33.

⁸¹ The spectrum of opinions is examined in my *Failure in Twentieth-Century Painting*, work in progress; see Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven, 1996), chapter 1.

⁸² Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 236.

⁸³ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 252.

⁸⁴ Rudolf von Eitelberger von Edelberg, *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften* (Vienna, 1879),

vol. 2, 121; Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 257-58. On the history of the *Kunstgewerbeschulen* see

also Stuart MacDonald, *History and Philosophy of Art Education* (London, 1970). (MacDonald's

book is principally concerned with British nineteenth- and twentieth-century art instruction.)

⁸⁵ R. F. Zeublin, "The Art Teachings of the Arts and Crafts Movement," *Chautauquan* 36 (1902):

282-84.

⁸⁶ See the accounts of Breslau, Weimar, and Leipzig in Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 274-75.

⁸⁷ The English terms are just for comparison. The original words are: *Vorkurs*, *Werklehre*, and

Baulehre.

⁸⁸ In 1923 Moholy-Nagy took over, and Albers taught from fall 1928 to 1933. For an analysis of

Itten's teaching see Marcel Franciscono, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus: The*

Ideals and Artistic Theories of its Founding Years (Urbana, Illinois, 1971), 178; and Johannes

Itten, *Design and Form; the Basic Course at the Bauhaus and Later*, tr. John Maass (New York,

1966). Material on the first-year course is also available in Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in*

Motion (Chicago, 1947) and Gyorgy Kepes, *The Language of Vision* (Chicago, 1944).

⁸⁹ The *Vorkurs* was different under other instructors. *Experiment Bauhaus: das Bauhaus-Archiv,*

Berlin (West) zu Gast im Bauhaus Dessau exh. cat., ed. Magdalena Droste *et al.* (Bauhaus

Dessau, 1988).

⁹⁰ Clark Poling, *Kandinsky's Teaching at the Bauhaus: Color Theory and Analytical Drawing*

(New York, 1986).

⁹¹ See *Bauhaus 1919-1928*, ed. Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius (Boston, 1959), 34; and Hans Maria Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 64. Howard Dearstyne, who attended Albers's foundation course in 1928-29, thought that the exercises were "without reference to established art conventions." See Dearstyne, *Inside the Bauhaus* (New York, 1986), 91; and compare the description in *Experiment Bauhaus*, 10.

⁹² For the *Rudiments of Painting* (not *De pictura*, translated as *On Painting*) see the discussion in my *Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca, New York, 1994).

⁹³ *Friedrich Froebel's Pedagogics of the Kindergarten: Or, His Ideas Concerning the Play and Playthings of the Child*, tr. Josephine Jarvis (New York, 1904). See also John MacVannel, *The Educational Theories of Herbart and Froebel* (New York, 1905), and Arthur Efland, "Changing Conceptions of Human Development and its Role in Teaching the Visual Arts," *Visual Arts Research* 11 no. 1 (1985): 105-119.

⁹⁴ Pestalozzi, *ABC der Anschauung* (Zurich and Bern, 1803); Pestalozzi, *Leonard and Gertrude*, trans. Eva Channing (New York, 1977 [1785]); and Kate Silber, *Pestalozzi, The Man and his Work* (London, 1960). For Dewey's Laboratory School see John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of Tomorrow* (New York, 1929 [1915]), and Katherine Mayhew and Anna Edwards, *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago 1896-1903* (New York, 1966 [1936]).

⁹⁵ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 287-93. Pevsner cleverly reproduces the letterheads of three leading art academies in Berlin, London, and Paris, to show how conservative they were (fig. 28).

⁹⁶ Foster Wygant, *Art in American Schools in the Nineteenth Century* (Cincinnati, 1983), reproduces many drawing books of the time. Efland, *A History of Art Education*, chapters 3-6, puts these developments in European contexts.

⁹⁷ For material on German education before and after WWII, “Art Education and Artist’s Training in the Federal Republic of Germany,” ed. W. von Busch and O. Akalin, special issue of *Bildung und Wissenschaft* 7-8 (1985), 1-99. The monograph also contains information on the state of German art education at all levels.

⁹⁸ Edmund Burke Feldman, “Varieties of Art Curriculum,” *Journal of Art and Design Education* 1 nr. 1 (1982): 21-45, argues there are four kinds of curricula: those based on technique, on psychology, on anthropology, and aesthetics. Bernard Dunstan, “A Course of Study,” *Artist* 95 nr. 1 (1980): 10-13, suggests there are only three legitimate subjects in art schools: technique, drawing from nature, and art history.

⁹⁹ Thanks to Prof. Dr. Karl Schawelka, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, for this information. On the other hand, the Bauhaus in Weimar can only operate at this distance from the original Bauhaus pedagogy because it teaches very little painting and drawing. The emphasis on objects and design makes the problem of specifically fine art, with its attendant dogmas, less visible.