



AUTHENTICITY AND ART AS OBJECT
A HANDBOOK OF TERMS

Edited by David Young Kim

The background of the page is an abstract composition of overlapping, organic shapes. The color palette is dominated by warm tones, including various shades of orange, from light peach to deep, dark red, and some areas of bright yellow. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement, reminiscent of a close-up of a flower or a textured surface. The overall effect is vibrant and textured.

AUTHENTICITY AND ART AS OBJECT



Authenticity and Art as Object

A HANDBOOK OF TERMS

Edited by David Young Kim

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ART
at the UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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Portrait of a Young Gentleman, 1474, Oil on panel, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G.
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Half-title page: Detail: Morris Louis, *Beth*, 1960, Acrylic resin on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of
Art, Purchased with the Adele Haas Turner and Beatrice Pastorius Turner Memorial Fund, 1966-
172-1, © Morris Louis/ Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), Rights Administered by Artists
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Title page: Detail: Bartolomeo Bulgarini, *Annunciate Angel, the Apostle Andrew, a Bishop
Saint (Savinus?), and Saints Dominic and Francis of Assisi [left]; Virgin Annunciate and Saints
Bartholomew, Lawrence, Lucy, and Agatha [right]*, c. 1355-1360, Tempera and tooled gold on
enframed panels with vertical grain, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection,
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PREFACE

From the very beginning of their graduate training, art historians are obliged to declare a specialization in a given field—a certain era, region, technique, or issue. From a macroscopic perspective, however, regardless of expertise, all art historians think and engage in the same, sometimes frustratingly protean medium of language. Words, like modelling clay, take on all manner of forms: the text on the glowing screen, the lecture delivered out loud, the fleeting conversation in one’s mind on the walk home, and when lucky, the printed page and bound book. Yet rare are those occasions when we can reflect on language as medium itself—its modes of argumentation, narrative techniques, even those words and turns of phrase unique and untranslatable to a particular idiom. In the sprint toward data, and ultimately meaning, the very vehicle that conveys significance is often ignored, relegated to the porter’s role. This handbook confronts the role and problem of language by gathering a list of key terms, those essential building blocks and cellular units that help configure and demarcate meaning. And it does so by exploring vocabulary seemingly antithetical to the realm of abstract intellectual discourse, namely the work of art as a concrete object that exists in the physical world.



Figure 1
Detail: Masolino (Tommaso di Cristoforo Fini), also called Masolino da Panicale, Masaccio (Tommaso di Ser Giovanni Cassai), *Saints Paul and Peter*, c. 1427-1428, Tempera and tooled gold on panel with vertical grain, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Inv. 408

Lexicons of art terminology have a venerable history. Filippo Baldinucci's *Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno* (1691) drew on the rich art literature of preceding centuries to offer definitions on such esoteric concepts as *maniera*, *varietà*, and *fantasia*. Baldinucci, to be sure, did describe materials and techniques: his memorable entry on *terra di cava*, or white clay, declares that this earthly substance can be used for anything from priming canvases to making vases for a credenza. Even so, art history on the whole has been reluctant to formulate and exercise a vocabulary about works of art that acknowledges their presence as physical things in the world. In an essay on the blind spots of art criticism, James Elkins has attributed this hesitancy to the idealist foundations of art history. "Describing the materiality of artworks," he writes, "demands words that are more specific than the terms available in phenomenology, and yet phenomenology is the principal theoretical ground for accounts of the physicality and materiality of art." Art history tends to treat works of art as images, rather than objects (Elkins 2008, 30). Standard accounts of Masaccio, for instance, often focus on the Renaissance artist's pioneering experiments with perspectival illusionism. Yet this conception of the Renaissance picture as the proverbial "window" onto the world comes at the expense of taking into consideration the artist's keen interest in surface texture. In the

Philadelphia Museum of Art's *Santa Maria Maggiore* panel, the point of reference for several of these entries due to its complex series of revisions, St. Peter's gold and silver keys serve more as a mere identifying marker (fig.1): the bold application of metallic leaf lends the attribute the appearance of substantial heft and weight. Working along with the book, modeled hands, and the cloak's heavy drapery, the keys underscore the saint's physical presence and by extension, his status as holy antecessor to Martin V Colonna, the pope in Rome during the panel's inception and completion.

How might art history engage more deeply with such paintings that seem to willingly display aspects of their manufacture and facture? This handbook responds to the need to develop a working vocabulary capable of addressing the fundamental thingness of art works. More specifically, the entries orient themselves around two major issues. The first of these is *authenticity*. Whereas *authenticity* is synonymous with the search for and realization of the original condition of an artwork, here we take authenticity instead as a point of departure to address how art works depart from their primary physical states. The entries on *Condition*, *Depth*, *Layer*, and *Sequence* acknowledge how art works inevitably

change, thereby disclosing features of their manufacture that might otherwise remain hidden if not for their articulation through words. The second issue is that of the object, here understood as art works' presence and, more dynamically, material behavior in the world. The entries on *Access*, *Edge*, *Lighting*, *Mobility*, and *Distance* demonstrate how the notion of art works as objects is in many ways a contradiction in terms. Far from being stable, tangible, and permanently visible, art works have the capacity to assume varying stances according to display context and location. Finally, taken together, these entries interact in turn with the fundamental variables of both time and space—how works of art transform over the course of history and invite different readings according to varying modes of installation. Put another way, the lemmata operate as keys that open up works of art to a range of interpretative dimensions, thus challenging any preference for Old Master paintings to endure irrevocably intact, to be heroically self-constituted.

The thinking necessary to bring out the dimensions of authenticity and art as object does not transpire in the domain of written language alone. Though itself a printed object, this handbook had its inception in conversations during a graduate student workshop in Spring 2016 on object-based learning funded by

the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Jointly conceived by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the History of Art Department at the University of Pennsylvania, this specific iteration of the initiative explored the conservation interventions in works of art from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, with emphasis on panel painting and artistic process in the workshop. I would like to express my gratitude to the Mellon Foundation, in particular to Mariët Westermann, Executive Vice President for Programs and Research, and Alison Gilchrest, Program Officer, for their support of the initiative. Mark Tucker and Teresa Lignelli from the PMA Conservation Department and Christopher D. M. Atkins from the Department of European Painting led the dynamic workshop that laid the foundation for this handbook. Thanks are also due to Jenevieve DeLosSantos, Michael Leja, Karen Redrobe, and Emily Schreiner for facilitating the collaboration between Penn and the PMA. The handbook would not have come to fruition without the editorial work undertaken by Anna-Claire Stinebring and Libby Saylor's graphic design. Most of all, I would like to acknowledge the graduate students for their participation in the Mellon workshop and their willingness to formulate their insightful observations in the form of words about and for art history.

Philadelphia, Summer 2017

INTRODUCTION

AUTHENTICITY

Christopher D. M. Atkins

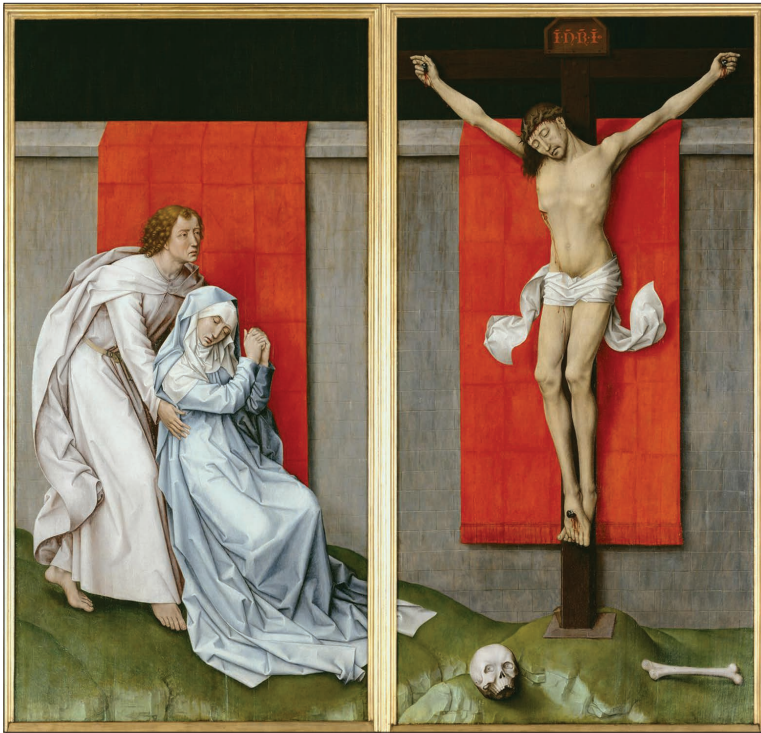
For those who investigate paintings, especially in a museum setting, the first question that must be grappled with when encountering the object is: Is it authentic? Put differently, is the painting what it appears to be, or is it misleading, compromised, or in any way inauthentic?

Inside the museum, the meaning of authenticity of the work of art aligns with issues of originality. In the early twentieth century the collections of many museums were filled with plaster casts and painted copies of famous works of art. These items did not falsely represent themselves; they were clearly and consistently presented as surrogates for objects located elsewhere. Reproductions approximated the experience of seeing a great work of art by presenting the image and vision of an artist, as well as the color and scale of the referenced object. Over the course of the twentieth century, reproductions were replaced with historical objects, even though they were of lesser stature and fame than those works of art that had appeared in reproduction. In this formulation, originality of manufacture provides the desired authenticity.

For curators, consideration of authenticity extends from the work of art to the viewing experience. Most frequently this means presenting works of art as closely as possible to how they were seen by their initial audiences.

Here, the condition of the work of art is paramount. As historical objects created in the past they often show wear. This wear can distort and distract. Thus, we decide not to display works of art that are in conditions that do not properly enable accurate assessment and appreciation of form, execution, and quality. In a related sense, we strive to present paintings in historically appropriate frames as artists accounted for specific frame aesthetics when crafting their pictures.

The authenticity of the viewing experience includes how works of art are displayed. Take, for example, the panels by Rogier van der Weyden (figs. 2, 3). Seeing these paintings that were designed as parts of an altarpiece in a museum is fundamentally different from seeing them in the church for which they were commissioned. During the reinstallation of the European galleries that occurred in the 1990s, the decision was made to hang the pictures on a large stone plinth that approximates the initial installation high



Figures 2 and 3

Rogier van der Weyden, *The Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist Mourning*, Oil on two oak panels: left panel overall 180.3 x 92.2 cm, painted surface 177.8 x 89.9 cm; right panel overall 180.3 x 92.5 cm, painted surface 178.1 x 90.5 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cats. 334 and 335

above an altar (fig. 4). This plinth was located at the end of a long vista so that one encounters them after physically traversing the distance, as they once would have been down the nave of a church.

The museum viewing experience is the result of a series of conscious decisions. These decisions have consequences. In the case of the Rogier paintings, the plinth makes it difficult to examine details like the miraculously translucent tears. Those seeking exploration of brushwork and handling must restrict themselves to the painting's lower registers. As a result, the constructed viewing environment privileges historical appreciation and initial function. Future installations may wish to explore an alternative approach, one that reorients authenticity from that of contextual experience to that of conception and manufacture.



Figure 4
Gallery Installation featuring *The Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist Mourning* by Rogier van der Weyden, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Johnson Collection, Cats. 334 and 335, Photographed by Graydon Wood.

Due to the centrality of these issues to object-based study we organized the workshop around direct exploration of the authenticity of materials, condition, and presentation through a series of examinations of specific works of art of varying states in the galleries, and in the lab. Through close looking and conversations sparked by the different perspectives of an academic art historian, a conservator, and a curator we sought to introduce how consideration of works of art as objects constitutes a methodology, one that can complement and propel other means of investigation.

TERMS

ACCESS

Nicholas St. George Rogers

Object-based art history, which requires access to the object in its physical presence, is a method of scholarship that necessarily entails a politics of privilege. We should be conscious of this whenever we prescribe, and particularly reward, the study of physical objects in their presence. Object-based study is a mode of scholarship with a long heritage—and, as is common to all long heritages, it is a partly unhappy one.

Historically, access to precious artworks has presupposed, or explicitly required, socio-economic privilege. For instance, the study of antiquities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries necessitated extensive (and expensive) travel throughout Europe. Even once travel was undertaken, scholars required social contacts to access much of this material (foundational figures of the discipline such as James Stuart, Nicholas Revett, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and Giovanni Morelli immediately come to mind). Although the particular difficulties attending the material circumstances of the pre-modern era have changed, there remains every justification in interrogating our own insistence on object-based analysis. We may come to recognize that some of the values that shaped object-based scholarship in the past remain active. This point is evinced in the policies of certain

public museums today. Though overwhelmingly public-oriented in their agenda, many museums nevertheless remain shrouded from the view of the social cosmos, since they are so often prohibitively expensive. (I would also note in passing that even without this financial impediment, there are ways in which art museums as institutions remain steeped in their own historical social elitism, with all the problems that that entails. But that is for another discussion.)

In the course of my studies, it has seemed to me at times very obvious that the value we place on access to objects is insidiously elitist. As an undergraduate, I studied European art in Australia. Doing so in those distant antipodes, it followed that we students could not assume access to the material that we studied, and students could not assume that the university would provide travel opportunities. Since taking a trip to Europe to look at paintings is an exceptionally expensive enterprise, any assessment of students' scholarship that rewarded close looking also tacitly rewarded those students' access to the means to travel. Therefore, any successes students enjoyed (or did not enjoy) as a result of their academic success was not absolutely independent of socioeconomic circumstance—their own and others'. It also follows that all students and professional academics will have

different economic circumstances, and that access to the works they study will present varied challenges. A student of American modernism working in the coastal United States will encounter very different challenges than an American student of the historical architecture of Anatolia—particularly, and particularly sadly, in 2016.

It is uncontroversial to claim that academic art history is heavily characterized by class biases—even since it has been made increasingly accessible by the development of reproduction technologies, beginning with the publication of photographic reproductions in the mid-nineteenth century. Access to objects is neither universal nor egalitarian, and this is a determining factor in every kind of scholarship, at every level. If we are to speak of placing value on the close observation of physical objects, it is well to be conscious that the scholarship we idealize is by no means innocent of social privilege.

CONDITION

Anna-Claire Stinebring

An artwork's condition is its visible history. Condition charts the physical changes that an artwork has undergone due to age, environment, or human intervention. It is the material parallel to the shifts in cultural context that shape an artwork's interpretation. The natural changes or deliberate interventions to an artwork, which have occurred over the course of the object's life, must be understood before the conservator or art historian can begin to assess the original appearance of the work. Furthermore, an object may have many authentic iterations as it persists over time. Artworks with long histories, far removed from their original contexts, can be repurposed in new and powerful ways [see also *Mobility*]. Condition intersects with the question of authenticity while acknowledging an "afterlife" to objects, beyond the intentions of the artist or the preoccupations of the original viewers.

Condition issues can be difficult to detect, and depend on close study in front of an artwork. It is virtually impossible to fully understand condition issues via a reproduction, or even a high-resolution image. Conversations with conservators and study of available technical research are further critical resources for understanding an object's condition. Technical tools employed

by conservators include the microscope, infrared reflectography, and x-radiography, all of which can contribute data to the reconstruction of an object's original appearance, as well as of its later history. Technical evidence is subject to interpretation, and should be used to supplement other forms of research.

At times, condition issues stem from overzealous conservation work conducted in the past, instead of from neglect or appropriation. The current conservation philosophy, of reversibility, is critical to addressing condition issues in a responsible manner. Philadelphia Museum of Art Conservator Mark Tucker stated that he spent over 400 hours retouching the late fifteenth-century oil-on-panel *Portrait of a Young Gentleman* by Antonello da Messina (fig. 13), in order to address the heavily abraded paint layers in a careful manner. Tucker's goal was to make sure that the condition issues—stemming from a harsh over-cleaning in the first half of the twentieth century—would not get in the way of museum visitors' experience of the painting. At the same time, Tucker did not want the condition issues to be entirely masked, so that interested students and scholars could understand the condition of the painting. Tucker stated that conservation always has "competing goals," and that conservation remedies to condition issues should always be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

In order to make responsible arguments based on object-based study, art historians must first understand an artwork's condition as fully as possible. For example, an object might be a fragment, or it might be a combination of fragments, passed off as an uncompromised work by a later dealer or owner. (An example of this in the PMA collection is the tempera and gold *Saint Francis of Assisi* by Fra Angelico (fig. 7), once part of a life-size, free-standing Crucifixion group). In oil painting, a layer of paint might be stripped away due to abrasion (often from over-cleaning in the past) [see also *Layer*]. Fugitive pigments can cause areas of a painting to change color over time, and all oil paint naturally becomes more transparent with age.

While a lack of understanding of condition can mar art-historical arguments, a close study of condition can enrich them. A case in point is an interdisciplinary discovery made about the oil-on-canvas *Crucifixion* by Thomas Eakins (figs. 5, 6) and other paintings by Eakins. The discovery, made through both technical and art-historical research by PMA conservators, was that Eakins had originally added dark toning layers over his paintings. These layers, which gave an effect of a "patina" of age, had been disrupted or nearly completely removed by restorers who had misinterpreted the intentional darkness of Eakins's pictures

as due to aged, darkened varnish. The findings had implications not only for the conservation of the paintings, but also for how art historians understand Eakins's relationship to artistic tradition. The patinas are evidence of the desire of an American artist, working in the nineteenth century, to emulate the dramatic tenebrism of the European Baroque artists he studied and admired. Eakins sought to recreate their chiaroscuro effect, but he understood the darkened varnishes as harmonizing with this original evocative effect of Baroque art. An irony of condition is that this very patinated aesthetic, which Eakins saw as integral to the "Old Masters," was partly due to darkening varnishes and to the accumulated grime of centuries—to condition issues.

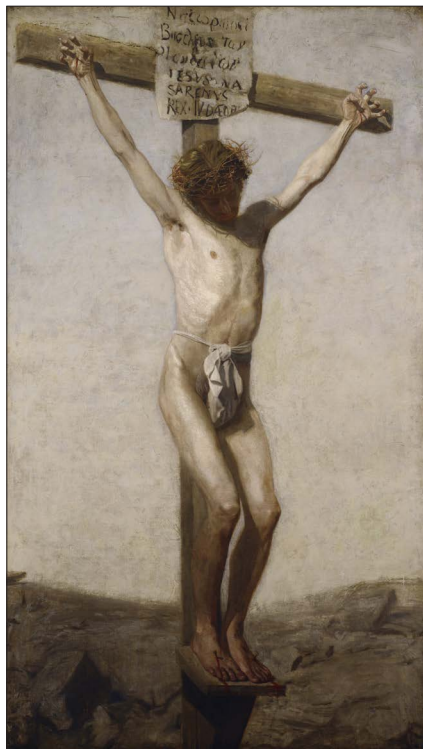


Figure 5
Before Conservation: Thomas Eakins, *The Crucifixion*, 1880, Oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Thomas Eakins and Miss Mary Adeline Williams, 1929-184-24

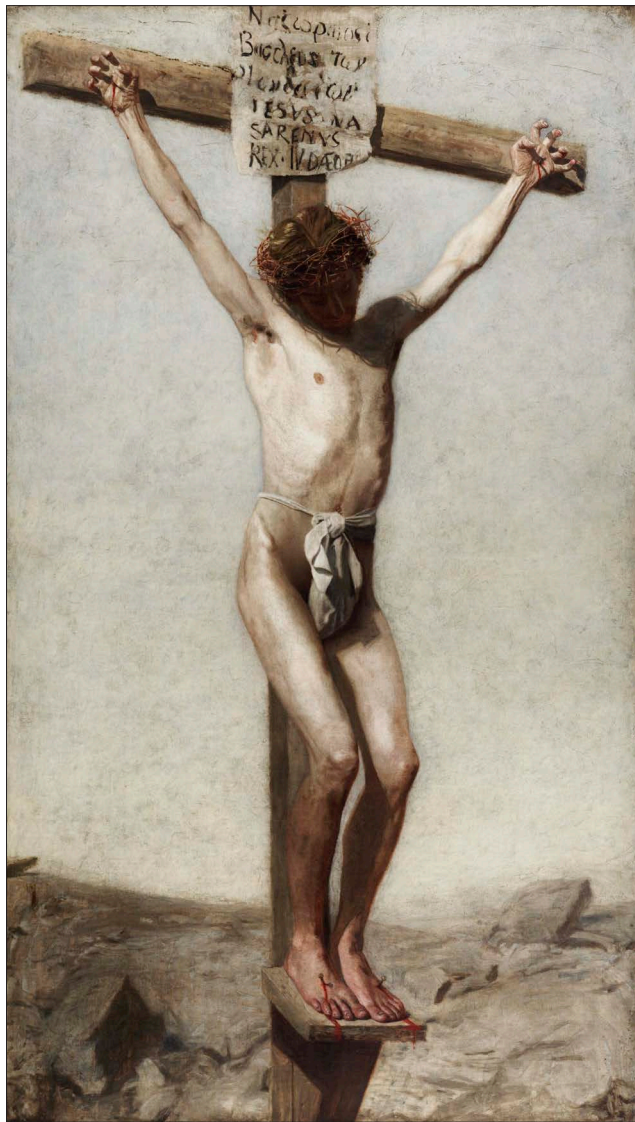


Figure 6
After Conservation: Thomas Eakins, *The Crucifixion*, 1880, Oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Thomas Eakins and Miss Mary Adeline Williams, 1929-184-24

DEPTH

Anna Linehan

Depth measures distance inward or downward. As art historians, we use the term depth in ways that speak to art's dual status as both representation and physical object—a duality we attempt to bridge through object-based study and dialogue with conservators.

When we talk about depth in painting, we usually refer to the illusion of spatial recession, the perceptual effect of artistic techniques like perspective and modeling. This concept of depth is tied to painting's ability to represent three-dimensional space on a plane. It is at the heart of the most famous metaphors for painting: a window, a theatrical stage, a room. Depth continues to be an important term for defining what a painting is in the twentieth century. We see the refusal or problematization of illusionistic depth in much modern painting, with some critics valorizing flatness as the medium's essential and most desirable quality.

Paintings are not only images, but are objects in our world. We also use the word depth to describe aspects of paintings' physicality and occupation of real space: the thickness of a support, the topography or texture of the painted surface, the distance and positioning of viewers in relation to the work.

Conservators might think about a painting as having “depth” in yet another way, using the technologies at their disposal to study the planning of a picture from the bottom up (such as the process of construction and the layering of pigment).

Illusionistic and physical depth interact in complex ways to structure the viewer’s encounter with a work and to create meaning. For example, both types of depth are operative in Fra Angelico’s *Saint Francis of Assisi* (c. 1427) at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (fig. 7). Painted in tempera on panel, *Saint Francis* is a fragment from a silhouetted Crucifixion group made for the oratory of San Niccolò del Ceppo in Florence. Modeling (depiction of shadows and highlights) of the folds of the saint’s garment and the contours of his face create the illusion of three-dimensionality. Yet, as a “cut-out,” roughly life-sized figure, *Saint Francis* does not occupy an illusionistic pictorial space, but stands in relation to real viewers in the space of the museum, as it did in its original location in the oratory. Viewed from any perspective that is not perfectly frontal, the edge and thickness of the panel (fig. 11) are immediately visible. Black paint “wraps” the edge of the panel. In contrast with the museum’s bright walls, the black edge accentuates the physical depth of the panel and outlines the figure, separating *Saint Francis* from our own space. But in



Figure 7

Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro, also called Fra Giovanni da Fiesole), *Saint Francis of Assisi*, c. 1427, Tempera and tooled gold on panel with vertical grain, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cat. 14

an environment with low lighting, perhaps seen from a further distance dictated by its position within the oratory, this black

edge may have had the opposite effect: blurring the distinction between the pictorial space of *Saint Francis* and the architectural space occupied by the viewer. For the museum's website, *Saint Francis* was photographed against a black background, approximating this effect. In this work, the illusion of depth in the painting of the figure, and the manipulation of physical depth in relation to the work's environment, work together to powerful effect.

DISTANCE

Naoko Adachi

Distance, in the museum setting, represents the space between the viewer and the object. Experiencing an object in a museum consists of noticing the object, walking toward the object, and standing before it. In the course of approaching the work of art, the experience of distance changes in the eyes of the viewer, along with the angle of viewing and the perceived size of the object. Even two-dimensional paintings or photographs have different aspects when seen from varying angles. The availability of multiple points of view in a museum provides not only different ways to enjoy the object, but also insights into the production of the object.

While looking closely at a part of a painting yields interesting observations, this analysis is only productive when combined with a thorough understanding of the whole picture. Today, with the development of visual technology, detailed pictures of museum objects have become increasingly available on museum websites. Many of those services enable the user to closely look at the details of the photographic reproduction, and examine different parts or angles. These high-quality photographs of the objects provide insights into their production, such as brushwork



Figure 8
Masolino
(Tommaso di
Cristoforo Fini),
also called
Masolino
da Panicale,
Masaccio
(Tommaso di
Ser Giovanni
Cassai), *Saints
Paul and Peter*,
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Museum of
Art, John
G. Johnson
Collection, Inv.
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or possible visible underdrawing within a painting. However, being able to freely move around the object in the museum is essential to understanding the history of the object, be it the production process, later alterations, or conservation work.

When a viewer notices visible underdrawing or a faint incision on a panel that does not correspond with the present finish of the painting, distance from the painting can provide the reason for the inconsistency. For example, *Saints Paul and Peter* of the altarpiece from Santa Maria Maggiore at the Philadelphia Museum of Art reveals much about its production if seen both closely as well as from a distance (fig. 8). As a result of close looking, various details reveal the production process and the condition of the painting from around 1427. One of the discoveries, in this case, is that there was an initial incision and design for the garment of the saint on the right (fig. 9). Moving around and looking from different angles allows the viewer to notice the lightly incised line in the painting. The *pentimento* reveals that the saint was, in fact, holding a sword. Thus, we understand that at some point during the production, the objects in the saints' hands were switched (fig. 9). This set of revisions would have been difficult, or even impossible to recognize, if the viewer only

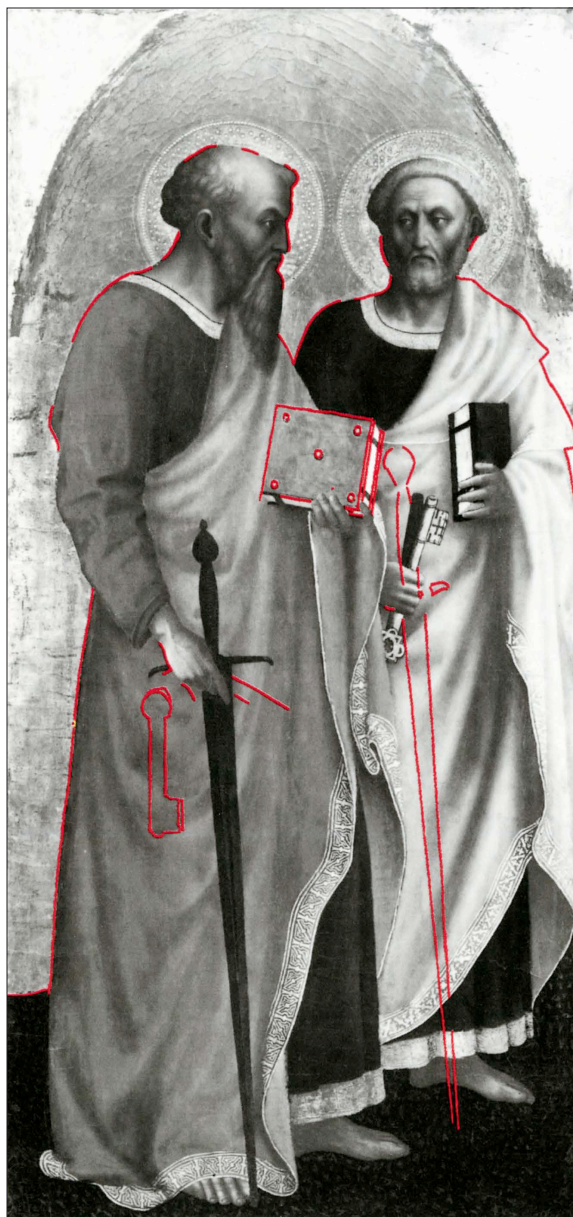


Figure 9
Tracing by
Mark Tucker
of the incised
lines on Fig.
8, showing
aspects of
the original
composition,
Philadelphia
Museum of Art
Conservation
Department

looked at a reproduction or a detailed photograph. Therefore, museums provide an ideal environment for close looking, as well as viewing, and contemplating works of art from a distance.

EDGE

Sam Mapp

An edge delimits art; it is the boundary between the artwork and its context. An artwork culminates a form whose surface tension with the surrounding context is different from ordinary objects. This is because the surface of art is more than material fact. It is also an idea: something with intention and purpose; a provocation. Art is there to sensitize our understanding of, and awareness to, reality.

The encompassing edge, or what may be better termed the frame, affirms the space of art and, in doing so, display. While an artwork is itself a kind of display, or what may also be thought of as a "showing," it requires a larger context to be seen. The gallery provides this space with clean walls and floors to intensify the experience of art. In another context, such as a hardware store, art would be lost in a different system of display: a commercial space designed to maximize the quantity of objects available for purchase. And although, like art, these banal objects accumulate on shelves, on the wall, and on the floor, they do not pressure their context or the meaning of their reality as such. Their edges have no surface tension. A urinal in a hardware store is a contained, discrete form that does not solicit continuity. Its edge is hard and closed, while the edge of art is open. Art mobilizes the capacity

for transformation that would allow a banality to be more or other than itself, such that the utility of an object is exchanged for a question.



Figure 10
Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1950 (replica of 1917 original), Porcelain urinal, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition, Gift (by exchange) of Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris, 1998, 1998-74-1, © Succession Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP, Paris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2017

In a gallery, this same object precipitates meaning beyond its immediate, recognizable, and functional purpose. The ontology of the urinal has dramatically changed into Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (fig. 10), not because anything is formally different, but because it has been situated within another system

of display. Its rounded, white ceramic edge, now set against a white plinth and wall, blurs the distinction of subject and object. It is both external to the space of art and yet, in this instance, the subject of art. The boundary, or what I have called the edge of art, is then not only material, but also conceptual.



Figure 11

Detail: Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro, also called Fra Giovanni da Fiesole), *Saint Francis of Assisi*, c. 1427, Tempera and tooled gold on panel with vertical grain, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cat. 14

In an earlier time, well before Marcel Duchamp, this same test of art occurred in a representation of Saint Francis of Assisi painted by Fra Angelico (figs. 7, 11). It is a painted silhouette on panel, originally part of a Crucifixion group in Florence, which was unceremoniously removed for sale in the early twentieth century. The authentic fragment now resides at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, while a replica fills its original place in Florence.

What is immediately striking about this painting is its exterior edge, which profiles the head, torso and extending arm of Saint Francis. Unlike in painting that invokes a rectilinear portal or window, this panel is carved to follow the painted edge of the figure's body. Yet, it is not volumetric like sculpture, but flat like painting. It is a painting that engages the wall—its immediate context—directly and without the aid of further painted information within the frame, as if to say that Saint Francis is *here* in our space, standing on the floor that we stand on. In this way, the work transforms the gallery into sacred space.

The profile that Fra Angelico's Crucifixion group once cut in Florence is now composited from authentic and inauthentic pieces that have been redistributed across the world--not unlike the *Fountain* that was made and destroyed, only to be

remade once again. It is no longer a crucifixion specific to a single site, but a constellated scene of sacrifice that endures in the presence of absence. The edge that circumscribes *Saint Francis* in the PMA also, by the implication of extension, includes the entire scene in Florence, as shown in the accompanying wall didactic. We are offered two readings of the work: the present display in a vitrine and the intended installation captured in the photograph. An edge in art is not only spatial and material but also temporal, appearing in other media from other times that elucidate but also complicate meaning. These multiple edges that intersect to create meaning demonstrate that, while an artwork may be physically contained, it bears contingent edges that are internal and external to its being, which is another way of saying that the idea transcends the material. Thus, the object's location in the PMA is but a touchstone for a larger circumscription of value.

Both works of art were once objects with utilitarian value that have been augmented by aesthetic value. Two edges of knowledge that tell us what an object is good for.

LAYER

Abigail Rapoport

In light of the increasing profusion of digital images through museum websites and databases such as Artstor, high-resolution images, including of objects with multiple viewing points, are rendered accessible and even readily transparent for the twenty-first century viewer. With this shift in the habits of close looking – from museum galleries to computer screens – layers of an image or object seem to be compromised to a certain extent, or even sacrificed entirely, for the sake of instantaneous looking. This, of course, assumes that the consideration of layers – which will be addressed conceptually and formally in this entry – demands a mode of close looking. Even without addressing the issue of close looking, however, we should still ask: can the viewer arrive at the meaning or “essence” of the art object without unraveling and digesting the multiple layers of the particular image/object? To what extent, if any, do layers invite and even require our attention?

The aim of this entry is to consider the multiple meanings and functions of layers and to highlight how layers interact with, and even complicate, the act of looking itself. This entry does not attempt to define “layers” in any one-dimensional or uniform manner, but seeks to consider and analyze layers in relation

to the following factors: a) viewer, and more specifically, the act of looking; b) artist; c) painting/object itself; and d) temporal and spatial aspects. These factors, of course, vary based on different contexts. Layers can be hidden in paintings, concealed in pigment, or they can be embedded in objects. Layers can be revealed through cracks, stains, and abrasions. Layers might be invisible, concealed scars of time or visible scars of physical conditions.

On the most basic level, layers of a painting (i.e., physical layers) imply the physical brushwork and the actions of the hand of the artist. These brushstrokes can be deliberate and intentional, or can be subconscious “doodles.” Underdrawings and *pentimenti* [see also *Distance*] are not only layers of pigment, but are also traces of the artist’s thought process, decision making, and even mistakes and edits. Layers can also entail the meticulous and deliberate application of paint, which is a key technique of the oil medium in particular.

Layering can be a vehicle through which artists create a fabric of texture and patterns, as well as gradations of shadow and light [see also *Depth*]. The Italian artist Bartolomeo Bulgarini’s wings of a tabernacle (c. 1355-1360) in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, made with tempera and tooled



Figure 12

Detail: Bartolomeo Bulgarini, *Annunciate Angel, the Apostle Andrew, a Bishop Saint (Savinus?), and Saints Dominic and Francis of Assisi [left]; Virgin Annunciate and Saints Bartholomew, Lawrence, Lucy, and Agatha [right]*, c. 1355-1360, Tempera and tooled gold on enframed panels with vertical grain, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cat. 92

gold, were originally framed together with a center panel now located at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (fig. 15). The wings highlight several issues regarding layers of making. On the most visible layer to the viewer – the surface – the artist created stippled incisions in the gold, which are particularly accentuated in the haloes and along the individual borders of the holy figures (fig. 12). Simultaneously, however, the artist appears to have painted gold for the decoration of the figures' robes.

These multiple layers of making raise the following question: do these two types of gold demand that we employ two different modes of looking? Even without more than one means of representing gold, goldwork demands a specific type of surgical looking, and even maniacal focus. The viewer needs to look microscopically through, and at, the object. In the context of layers, then, perhaps we are not only expected to look at different conceptions and representations of gold simultaneously, but we are invited to somehow look *through* or visually penetrate the multiple layers.

The intricate patterns also raise the question of body movement in relation to the act of looking. Do we need to employ more deliberate body movements in order to internalize the complex layers of a painting? Moreover, the question of temporality

should be considered as well: do layers require us to look at the image or object for a longer duration of time?

One also needs to consider the implications of the reconstruction of the two wings, which have been forced together and represented without the central panel [see also *Condition* and *Mobility*]. This restructuring may even achieve pictorial unity and the illusion of being whole. This unification of the two wings, however, overlooks the artist's original arrangement of holy figures. Moreover, on an iconographic level, figures are now forced into a symbolic and visual dialogue with one another – facing each other representationally – but they were not necessarily intended to be in such a dialogue.

In the case of Antonello da Messina's *Portrait of a Young Gentleman* (fig. 13), which he painted with oil on panel in the late fifteenth century, the intricate details of the figure's strands of hair similarly invite the viewer's close looking. Moreover, the distinctions in black paint between the background and the figure's clothing establish subtle monochromatic layers which are only noticeable through precise lighting and careful looking. Without close looking, we would not necessarily notice the subtle variations in black fabric, the curls of the figure's hair, or the black



Figure 13

Antonello da Messina (Antonello di Giovanni di Michele de Antonio), *Portrait of a Young Gentleman*, 1474, Oil on panel, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cat. 159

background. At first glance, or from a distant viewing point, the intricate details can dissolve into the stark black background.

A discussion of layers also undoubtedly relates to questions of authenticity. The key goal in conservation is to remain faithful to the artist's intention by making deliberate choices and developing a hierarchy for these decisions. This restoration also seems to involve an act of reintegration or even perhaps *re-layering*. By paying attention to layers, we not only engage with the work of art more closely on a temporal and spatial level, but we can also better comprehend the artist's original intention. Through the act of close looking, past traces of paint can become central clues for decoding the brushwork and even the hand of the artist. Continued discussions on the meaning and function of layers can structure a dialogue around close looking itself, which would present intriguing questions for the conservator and for the art historian, as well as for museum visitors.

LIGHTING

Kristopher Cody Castillo

Lighting, or the illumination of an object via artificial or natural means, can transform one's viewing experience in dramatic ways. Lighting color, intensity, direction, and placement are all important factors in the viewer's experience of a work. Particular lighting set-ups may alter the perception of certain colors and figures, as well as the surface of the work itself. Lighting also factors into many of the terms presented in this handbook, and, moreover, into the interpretive lexicon of art historical discourse. For example, specific illumination is required to highlight the topography of the surface [see also *Layers*].

We are often presented with reproductions that utilize diffuse light sources to flatten the surfaces of objects. Flattening an image is valuable when examining the content of works, particularly paintings, as it creates a more photograph-like image. This downplays the characteristics of the medium, however, and may not replicate the intended viewing experience of the object. One must consider that artists often created works with their setting in mind. These settings, particularly for older works, were generally dim. Therefore, the use of bright, diffuse light can alter the perception of color, brights, and shadows. Though some museums may offer multiple angles of

lighting for an object, this is not always the case. The scholar should keep in mind the importance of viewing works in person to fully understand their details. Lighting therefore plays into the issue of authenticity, which arises when curatorial studies and art history intersect. Part of this challenge is observing the work in its entirety, and certain lighting setups can impede this.

Another example of the effects of lighting on our understanding of a work is the visibility of texture. The texture of an object can manifest itself in a variety of ways, from cracks and bumps in the surface to faint incisions or chipped paint. In certain situations, an uneven texture is intentional, as in the painted works of many Abstract Expressionists, where paint is thickly applied. The thickness of the paint creates a visible texture, which reveals the technique of the artist and allows for light to play off the coarse surface of the canvas.

Textural changes may also reveal how an object moved from idea to completed work. Such marks may indicate a mistake, a shift in content or medium, and even a significant restoration over the history of the piece. An awareness of these traces through the process of close inspection can then inform the research process, as a scholar works to reconstruct the life of



Figure 14
Masolino
(Tommaso di
Cristoforo Fini),
also called
Masolino
da Panicale,
Masaccio
(Tommaso di Ser
Giovanni Cassai),
*Saints John the
Evangelist(?) and
Martin of Tours*,
c. 1427-1428,
Tempera, tooled
gold, and silver
on panel with
vertical grain,
Philadelphia
Museum of Art,
John G. Johnson
Collection, Inv.
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an object and draw conclusions about its context. At its core, lighting acts as a tool that facilitates close looking in a generally noninvasive manner. By applying varying intensities of illumination and different angles of lighting, one is able to observe certain aberrations and perhaps suggest further testing.

In the Philadelphia Museum of Art, one encounters an example of how the creative use of lighting can help uncover new details about a work. A two-sided lateral panel from the *Santa Maria Maggiore* altarpiece depicts Saints Paul and Peter, and Saints John the Evangelist and Martin of Tours (figs. 8, 14). Dated around 1427-28, Masaccio began the panels and Masolino completed them. A shift in style and the untimely death of Masaccio at the age of 27 support this claim, and close examination of the surface of the panels also reveals traces of this change. With the aid of raking light, one is able to see the incisions used to outline the original figures (fig. 9). The ambient lighting present in the gallery does not highlight this evidence, but the introduction of raking light uncovers a surface topography with etched lines that produce ghostly shapes of figures and aspects that no longer survive.

MOBILITY

Francesca Ferrari

Although works of art in a museum setting are installed to facilitate contemplation and preservation, they remain mobile objects in two ways. This mobility can translate via an artwork's circulation among collections, geographic areas, and artistic hierarchies. It can also translate via its physical functioning through movable parts.

Evidence of the former kind of mobility can be found on the object itself, in the explicit form of archival stamps and collection signatures. The latter kind of mobility is mapped in an artwork's structural elements, which result from changes in format or framing. In both cases, mobility is strictly connected to an artwork's function within a social and cultural system, which can shift over time.

Works of art can be handled, turned, displaced, re-contextualized, owned, interacted with, and broken. Mobility, therefore, is an important quality that exemplifies the material nature of works of art. The context of the museum gallery, with its "Please Do Not Touch" impositions, seems to be at odds with the question of the mobility of works of art, generating a confusion about whether museums should preserve or prevent this quality.

The preservation of this inevitable mobility, on which the histories and appearances of artworks depend, parallels the consideration of artworks as objects. Yet, it might require decisions incompatible with the institutional agenda of the museum. For example, museums might allow visitors to actively interact with, and possibly risk damaging, artworks. In this way, they would threaten the transmission of such works to future generations. Or, museums might put their collections up for sale, allowing objects to circulate, but also inevitably jeopardizing their public function.

For these reasons, most museums around the world suppress the mobility of artworks, minimizing the economic and ethical risks listed above. However, this decision enforces a perception of works of art as immobile, unchanging, and untouchable entities, while their condition as objects presupposes a direct interaction with their historical, social, and economic context, redefining their meaning.

Is there, then, any way in which museums could emphasize the mobility of artworks without endangering their own mission? I argue that a gallery installation attentive to the material presence of artworks is a point of departure. Some kinds of display can encourage close looking, allowing museum visitors to detect, in the work of art, the traces that testify to its history as a mobile

object, in spite of its present immobility. For example, an artwork that is exhibited in a glass case that reveals both its recto and verso, and that is installed in a way that is closely accessible to the eyes of the visitor, has more chances to render such traces visible than an artwork conventionally hanging on a wall.

Facilitated by such display strategies, any viewer could become sensitized to the materiality of works of art, and could turn into a detective investigating the history of the mobility of objects. Close looking might suggest that a large painting was cropped and reframed in order to become easily transportable, or to fit the walls of a bourgeois home. It can reveal that the painting's rear was decorated in order to advertise its value as it was handled, or that the format was rearranged to accommodate more contemporary tastes. This information not only enriches the viewer's experience of an artwork, but it also opens a dialectical perception of the object. When we conceive of a work of art as a mobile object, we see it both as a material entity that offers itself to the viewer's gaze, and as an immaterial bundle of past events that necessarily connect the artwork to people, places, and practices. The social and cultural histories of an object, which unfolded in the past, shape the object's material presence and our phenomenological reception of it.

In the galleries of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, one work of art provides a perfect example of how, supported by the right display, close study of an untouchable, immobile object can lead to important insights about its past mobility: the wings of a tabernacle, painted by Bartolomeo Bulgarini in c. 1355-1360, which are framed together (fig.15). Without previous knowledge about the story of the painting, one can still deduce, through active observation, that the physical makeup of the artwork has been acted upon in a way that addresses issues of mobility.

Thanks to the transparent display case, perpendicular to the wall, in which the painting is exhibited, the viewer can observe that its rear is decorated with a rough golden pattern at odds with the finely carved motifs of the front. On the edges of the object are also visible some collection signatures and exhibition stamps, which suggest that the painting circulated among different hands at different points of both arrival and departure. One could assume, then, that the rear pattern was added to increase the market value of a painting migrating from one owner to another, to unify the rear and the front of the object, or to disguise some structural modifications enacted on the painting.

In fact, although the two parts of which the painting is composed are well integrated, their shape recalls the wings of a triptych. This



Figure 15
 Bartolomeo Bulgarini, *Annunciate Angel, the Apostle Andrew, a Bishop Saint (Savinus?), and Saints Dominic and Francis of Assisi [left]; Virgin Annunciate and Saints Bartholomew, Lawrence, Lucy, and Agatha [right]*, c. 1355-1360, Tempera and tooled gold on enframed panels with vertical grain, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, Cat. 92

suspicion is confirmed by the smooth texture and rough patterns visible on the surface connecting the two wings, which contrast with the fine quality of the wing-like panels. One can deduce, through a compositional analysis of the religious correspondences that arise between the different figures, and especially of the scene depicting the Annunciation, that the two parts of the painting once were the internal panels of the wings of a tabernacle. Hence, they were supposed to be separated by a central panel (today at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston), which would modify their symbolic meaning. Moreover, the two panels were enclosed within the structure of the tabernacle, and would be visible only on specific liturgical days. The fact that two panels of a triptych were joined, and thus constantly made visible, entails a cultural transformation that demonstrates the notion of the mobile artwork. The structure of the tabernacle dictated that the painting be placed in a sacred environment, and that its devotional function be connected to the ritual of the mass. The painting's physical transformation into a smaller and more compact frame suggests a shift towards a new context, emphasizing intimate contemplation but not the original religious function.

The history of the mobility of Bulgarini's painting, which was probably cropped and rearranged by an unscrupulous art dealer

in a previous century, for the “portable” necessities of a bourgeois market, reveals two important implications for the objecthood of works of art. First, mobility reflects how works of art, far from being considered whole entities impossible to desecrate, can transform their appearance through a history of aesthetic or logistical necessities. Second, it demonstrates how, in an object composed of movable parts (in this case a fixed panel with revolving wings), movement defines its cultural (here liturgical) meaning and function. This type of intervention transforms the way we view and understand the work of art, both physically and conceptually.

Therefore, the mobility of an artwork pertains to its status as a material object, which occupies shifting positions in a social and cultural context. Both mobilized through social relations and often carrying a potential for mobility in its material structure, the work of art is in constant interaction with its surroundings. This interaction becomes visible through close looking, a practice that museums should encourage through appropriate displays and curatorial decisions, which would allow for a better conception of the different meanings an object can hold throughout its lifetime. As long as works of art hang on museum walls in a way that conceals their history of mobility, their meaning remains concealed as well.

SEQUENCE

Jeffrey J. Katzin

Sequence is the particular order in which related events follow one after another, either continuously or among intervals and gaps. It is a central concern within any consideration of history, as the notion of a sequence establishes that the traces of history available in the present did not come into being all at once, but rather were the result of developments that occurred over time, at a variety of times, and in a specific succession.

This understanding of sequence has immediate bearing on the technical study of works of art—objects that are almost always the result of a sequence of events. Many works of art plainly disclose elements of sequence. The viewer of a painting, for example, can easily infer that when one brush stroke passes over another, the upper stroke must have been applied later than the lower one. Whether the earlier stroke had dried before the later one was painted might be similarly discernable, along with a host of other possible sequential events.

Other works, however, may not leave the entire sequences of their making so visibly apparent on their surface. A gilded Renaissance panel painting—Masaccio and Masolino's *Saints Paul and Peter*, for example—may present viewers with a unified surface

(fig. 8). Yet, works of this type typically began with cut and glued wood panels that were then coated with glue, lined with linen, covered with multiple coats of gesso that were scraped into a smooth surface, painted with bole (a reddish brown substance made from clay), and covered with gold leaf, which was then burnished to create a smooth surface. Some of these steps entail sequences of their own. Gesso, for example, is made by heating a combination of gypsum and animal skin glue. Burnishing would require the procurement or construction of an appropriate tool, usually tipped with an animal tooth. Present-day knowledge of sequences like these may come from primary documents such as artists' manuals or journals, but sources of this nature are often unavailable, incomplete, or lacking in specificity. At the same time, the final appearance of a panel painting is wholly dependent on a particular sequence of events. Gold leaf, for example, is so thin and transparent that it will only resemble solid gold with a bole under layer (a white under layer will cause it to take on a greenish-yellow color cast). Therefore, technical examination of paintings and other works may be entirely essential to ascertain why they look the way they do. Overlap with other concerns is inevitable here, as the appearance of a work of art may also be determined by the materials employed in its making, its subsequent preservation [see also *Condition*], or by myriad



Figure 16
Brice Marden, *Red Ground Letter*, 2007-2010, Oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Promised gift of Keith L. and Katherine Sachs, SCC-108, © Brice Marden/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

other factors, but sequence may well be crucial to explaining both artists' techniques and the distinct results they achieved.

Sequence also implies that at a past moment, midway through a given string of events, much of what is available in the present would not have been evident at all. In art, where human volition is centrally involved, this means that artists may not have a fully premeditated vision for their work even as they are

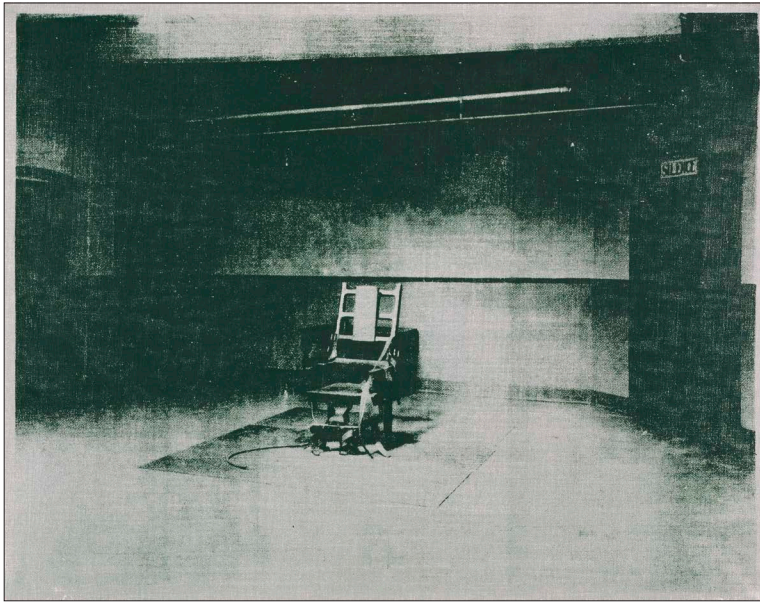


Figure 17

Andy Warhol, *Electric Chair (Gray)*, 1964, Screenprinted synthetic polymer on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David N. Pincus, 1979 1979-161-2, © 2017 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

in the process of creating it. A career that in hindsight seems teleologically directed towards its final stages may actually have been full of experimentation and uncertainty as it unfolded in real time, and the same can be true for an individual work. Brice Marden's *Red Ground Letter* (fig. 16) shows clear overlap of line, implying the sequence of its creation—Marden first applied a red ground and followed it with gray, white, and finally black curves. Stepping back through this sequence to imagine what Marden



Figure 18

Morris Louis, *Beth*, 1960, Acrylic resin on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the Adele Haas Turner and Beatrice Pastorius Turner Memorial Fund, 1966-172-1, © Morris Louis/ Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), Rights Administered by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, All Rights Reserved

saw as he was painting might yield an understanding of the artist's manner of composing in real time on his canvas. In *Beth* (fig. 18), Morris Louis's stains do not so much overlap as blend into one another. Untangling their sequence would be more difficult, but could be similarly illuminating.

Alternatively, Andy Warhol professed a machinelike approach of premeditated art making, but close analysis of his *Electric Chair (Gray)* (fig. 17) might determine if this work was indeed the product of one swift action (which would be a provocative approach to sequence) or instead the result of a series of concealed decisions and adjustments that ultimately only look like a unified surface—this would make Warhol’s print more like a gilded panel.

In these works and others like them, much of the significance that can be found in any mark is enmeshed in sequence. Artists may work with the final appearance of an object in mind (and this is indeed what viewers will receive at first glance), but, in practice, they must make a mark, and then perhaps another, and so on. Whether they proceed with as little letup as possible, pause between marks to reconsider the direction they are taking, or decide that their work is done—and how they navigate these steps and decisions—may be subtly recorded in each sequential mark that they make. It is meaningful to see a work as its creator (or creators) saw it upon its completion, but considering these implications of sequence can connect viewers with what artists thought and experienced during an extended process of creation. In a sense, this reanimates works of art, makes a more forceful connection between the past and the present, and opens up many new avenues for historical consideration.

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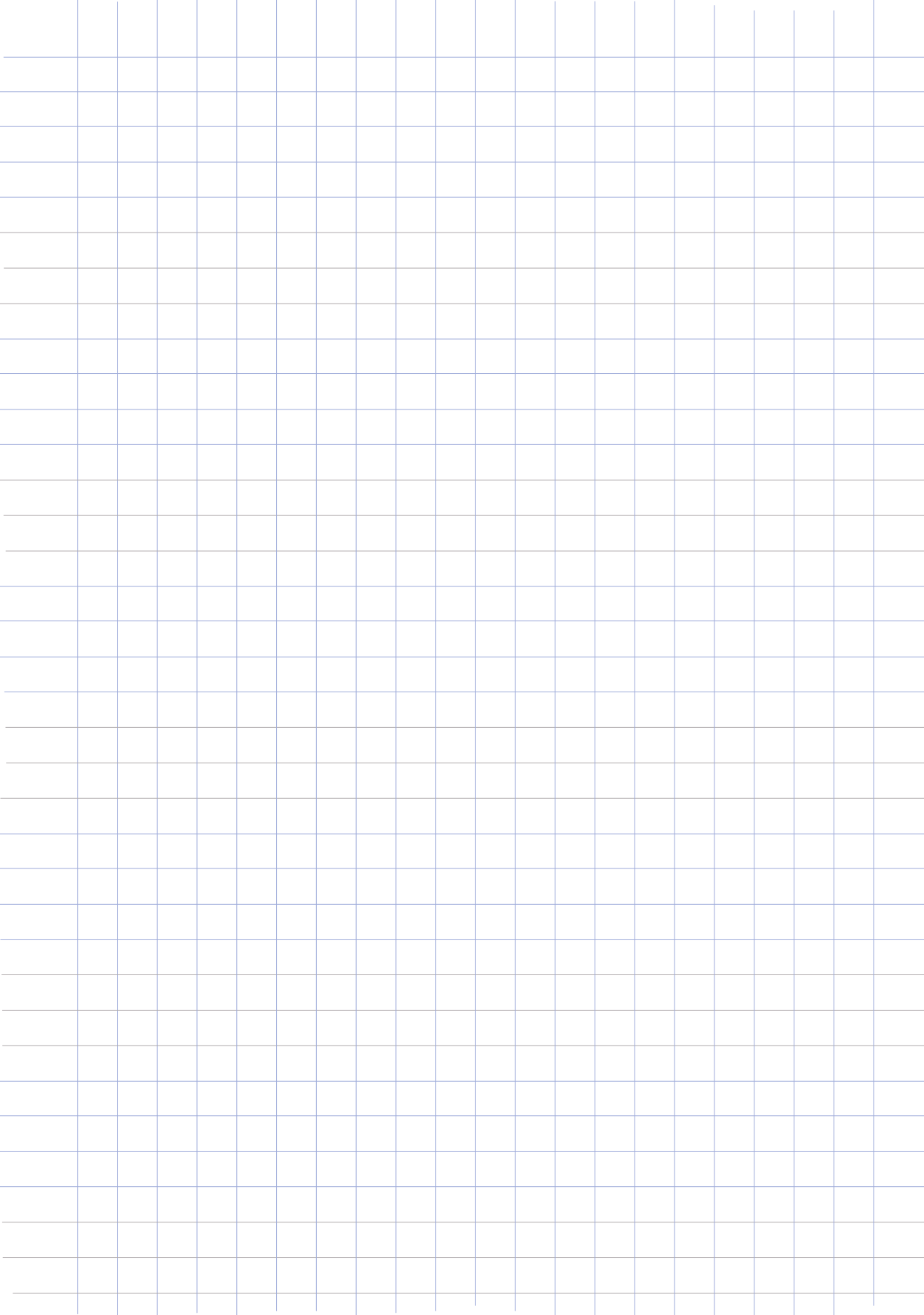
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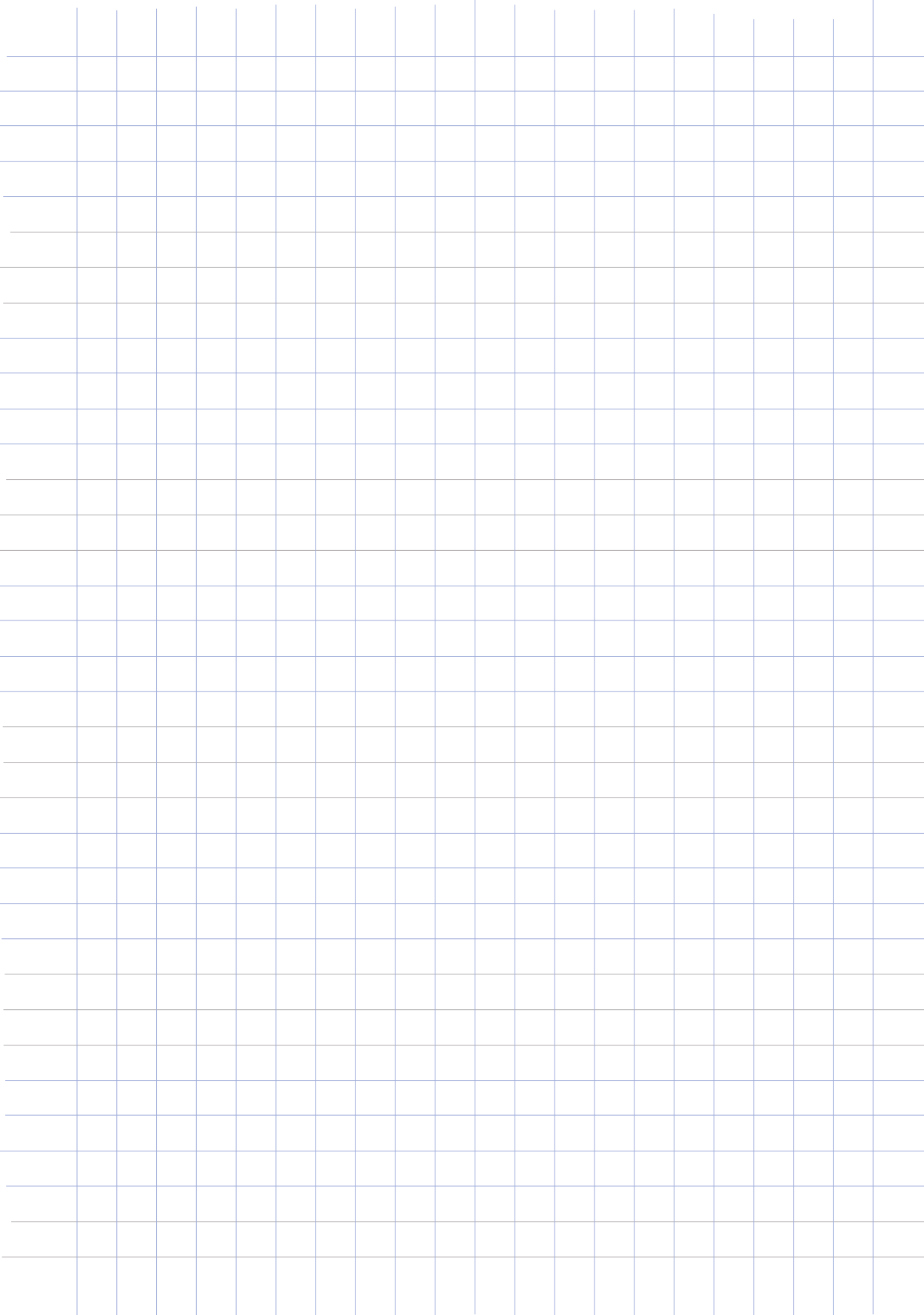
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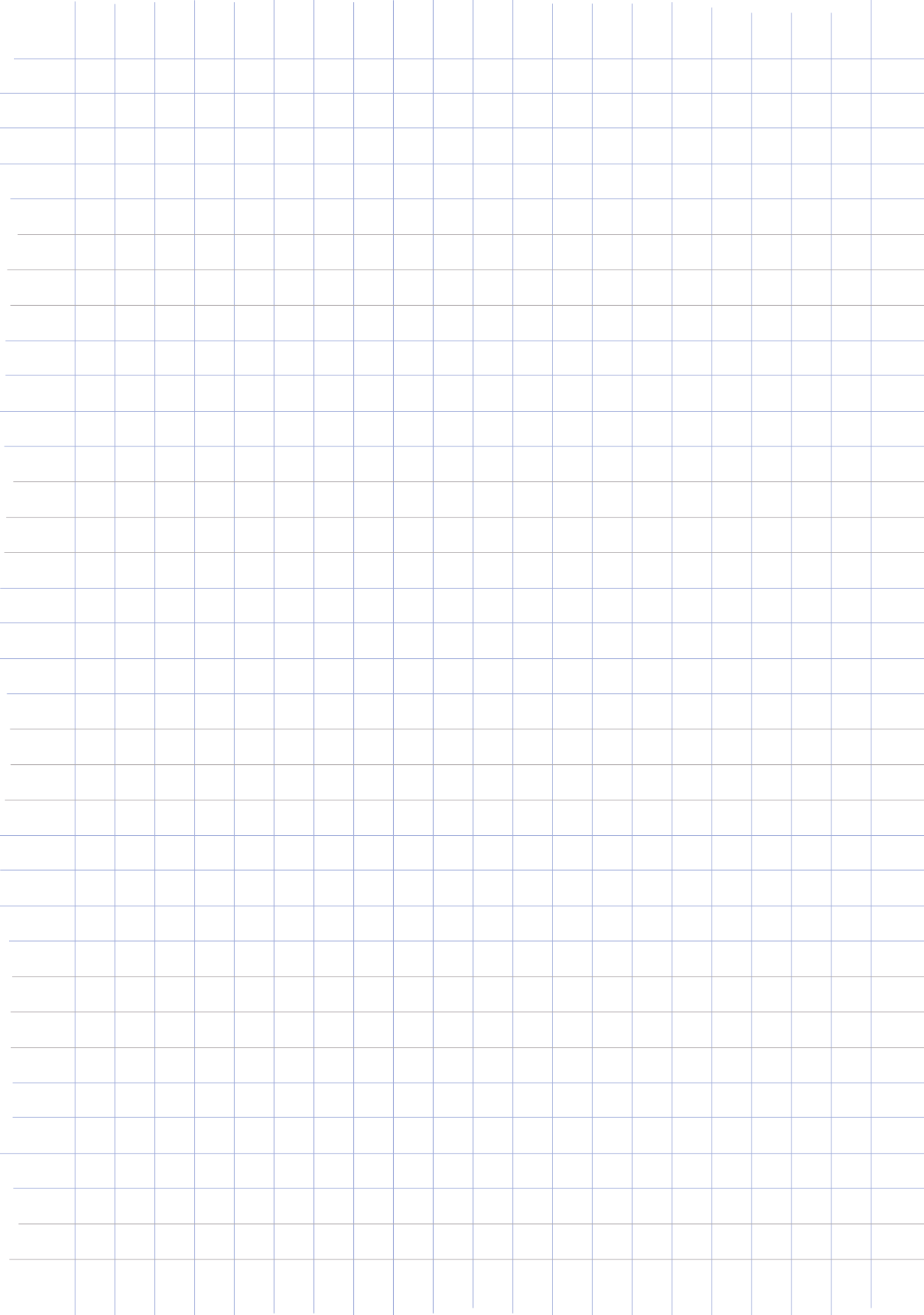
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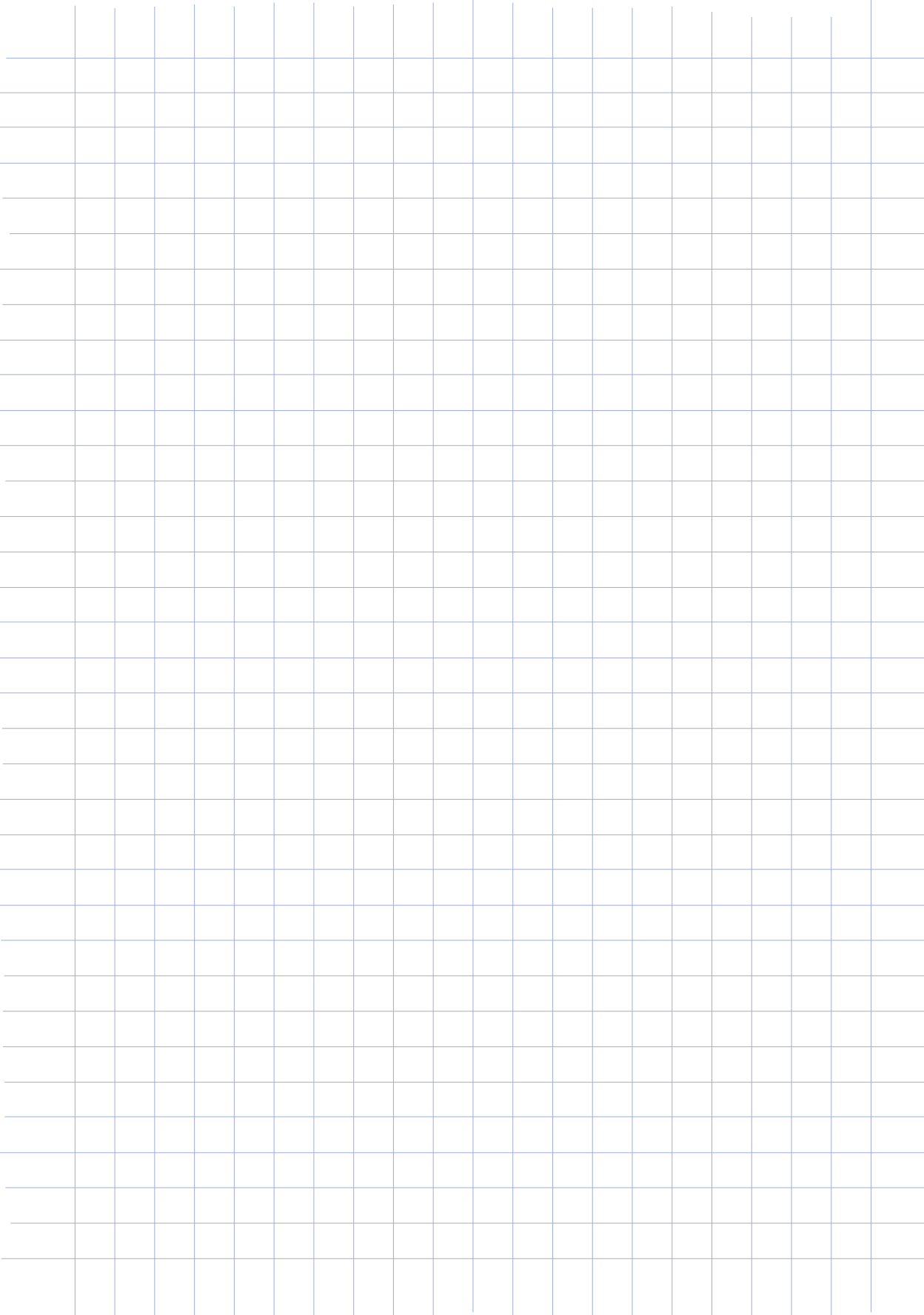
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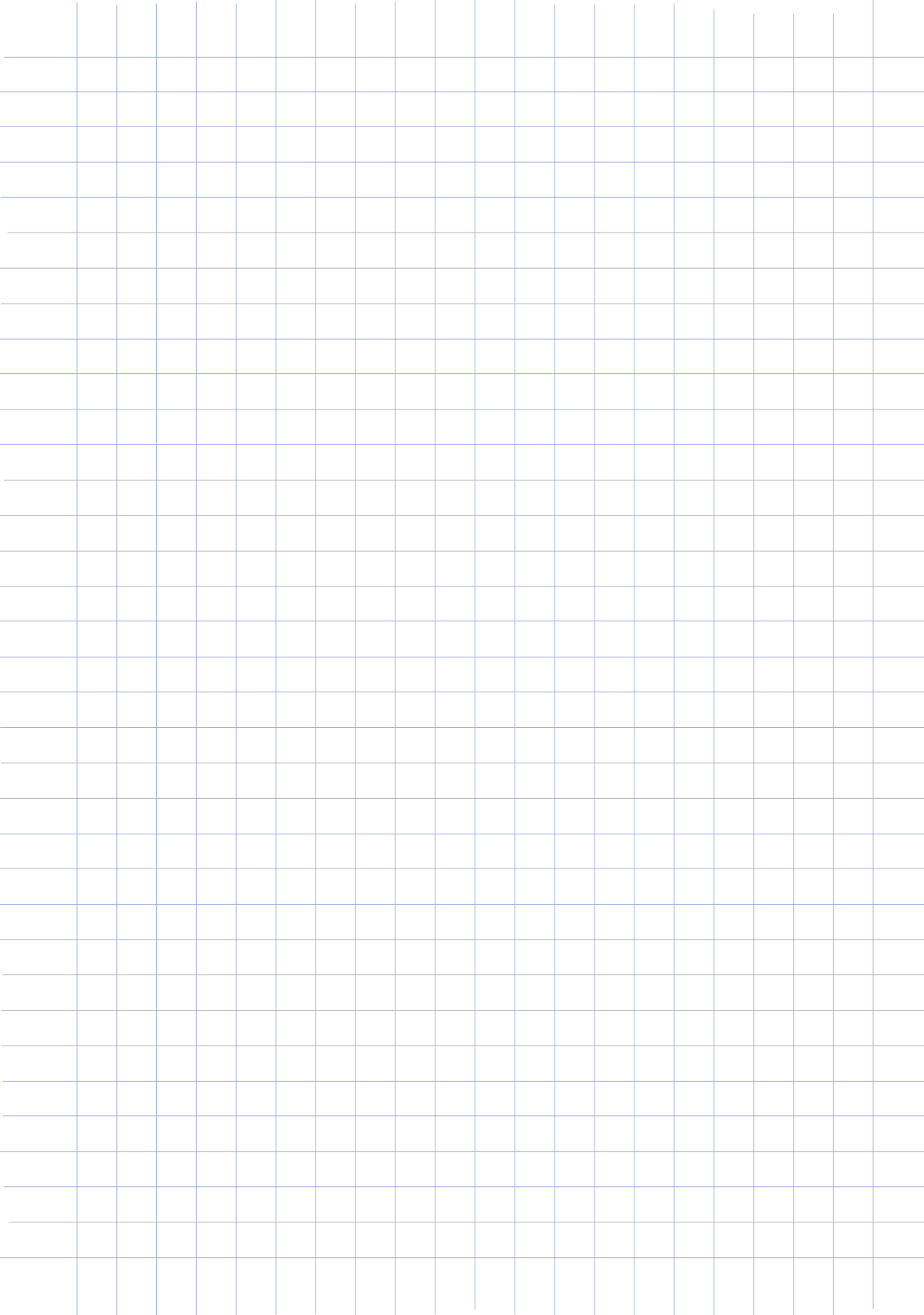
READER'S NOTES











DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ART AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

What language does the discipline of art history employ when confronting the physical presence of art? This handbook offers the reader a guide to vocabulary relevant to the issues of artistic process, condition, conservation, and display. Accompanied by key examples and illustrations drawn from the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the selected entries demonstrate how an object-oriented art historical lexicon can shape and inform the interpretation and exhibition of European and American painting, from the fifteenth century to the present day.

David Young Kim is an assistant professor in the Department of the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania, and visiting lecturer at the University of Zurich. He is the author of *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 2014) and the editor of *Matters of Weight: Force, Gravity, and Aesthetics in the Early Modern Period* (Edition Imorde, 2013).



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Authenticity and Art as Object

[SPINE]

KIM

AUTHENTICITY AND ART AS OBJECT A HANDBOOK OF TERMS

Edited by David Young Kim

