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Parapictoriality

Parameters of a Praxeological Aesthetics in Antiquity

Abstract

Aesthetic concepts, as well as theories of sight and perception in 'classical' antiquity, are currently undergoing a renaissance. The focus lies not on the greater aesthetic models proposed by Plato or Aristotle but rather on concepts which can only be detected in traces or found in works of art as implicitly inscribed instructions for how to view or experience them. A critical analysis of recent research on the subject will aim to define the conditions under which antique aesthetic concepts can be reconstructed. This will take into account the physical interaction and tactile engagement with artifacts and art, as well as the spatial and sensory experience of the materiality and substance of art, as the parameters for aesthetic experiences within the context of lived and ritualized practices.

Keywords

Viewer Involvement, Pictorial Acts, Immersive Art Experience, Kinetics of Sight, Parapictoriality, Peripatetic Gaze, Praxeological Aesthetics, Visual Metalepsis

For several years, a renaissance has been underway in aesthetic concepts as well as theories of sight and perception in 'classical' Greek and Roman antiquity. It is no surprise that attention is no longer on the theories of Plato and Aristotle, theories that gained canonic status as fundamental texts of philosophical aesthetics in later European tradition. Current interest has shifted to concepts that played a rather subordinate role in those theories, most of them appearing not as consistently formulated ideas but surviving only in traces (e.g., in the fragments of the pre-Socratics) or implicitly deducible from literary texts such as the Homeric epics, Attic tragedies, or ekphrastic prose from imperial Rome.[1] But it is not the goal of this new interest in ancient aesthetics to ferret out or evaluate previously neglected sources. On the contrary, the search is rather for texts that will demonstrate alternatives to traditions of aesthetic thought established

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1 Above all, the recent path-breaking essay by Porter 2010.

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since antiquity. Above all, the focus on the seemingly obvious development of an ideal of the beautiful, which at least since Hegel has been at the center of most aesthetic theories, is now under challenge, especially with reference to ancient predecessors. In place of Plato and Aristotle as the founding fathers of modern idealistic aesthetics, concepts are to be identified that point to alternative paths of aesthetic reflection and thus also open our eyes to an alternative genealogy of modern aesthetics.[2] A recent suggestion that has attracted attention in this direction will make clear symptomatically what perspectives – but also what difficulties – come into view for the understanding of ancient aesthetic concepts.

In a series of essays followed by a monograph based on them, the classicist Jonas Grethlein has sharply criticized several theories of aesthetics and visual studies that, in his opinion, dominate current discussion. He argues that by privileging elitist and intellectualist discourses of autonomy, they lose sight of what he considers the actual goal of aesthetic reflection in antiquity, namely "aesthetic experience."[3] Grethlein singles out Hegel – and in his wake the entire idealistic and Marxist tradition down to Adorno and analytic philosophy – as the primary culprit in this development, but also the 'linguistic turn,' post-structuralism, and all semiotic theories of art and media.[4] According to Grethlein, their method has always been to see art primarily as a series of signs and a carrier of meaning at the expense of the sensuous, materially tangible quality of works of art, in which one can, after all, discern the actual object of any aesthetics. In opposition to the "anemia" of this philosophical school[5] that in the end reduces art to a system of visual representation, Grethlein offers the phenomenological tradition of philosophy and literary theory from Husserl and Heidegger to Karl-Heinz Bohrer, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Dieter Mersch, and Martin Seel. Surprisingly missing from this list of forebears is Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the founder of modern aesthetics, who

2 In this effort, my chapter is closely aligned with the work of the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*; cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter und Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, esp. section 4.1. It is symptomatic that the concept of aesthetics or some comparable concept that would describe a philosophical field conceptualizing a specific object of such an aesthetic – e.g., the beautiful – did not exist in classical antiquity. See Porter 2010, pp. 25f.

3 Grethlein 2015a; Grethlein 2015b; Grethlein 2016; Grethlein 2017. After the publication of this monograph, these further essays appeared: Grethlein 2018 (a text that had already appeared in similar form in Grethlein 2017); Grethlein 2020, in which he states that previous scholarship has ignored Plato's outline of an aesthetic theory based on the concept of mimesis in the *Politeia*, apparently unaware that this had already been stated in Gebauer / Wulf 1995; cf. also: Wulf 2005; Gebauer / Wulf: 1998; building on their work on mimesis in antiquity: Stähli 2010, esp. pp. 62–65 on Plato's *Politeia*.

4 Grethlein 2015a, pp. 309f.; Grethlein 2017, pp. 3–7 and 155–158. On the possibility of a 'different' definition of the concepts 'aesthetics' / 'aesthetic' and 'art' or 'work of art,' cf. the chapter by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.

5 Grethlein 2015a, p. 309.

puts sensuous experience at the center of his aesthetics – although he does consider the senses organs of cognition, perhaps making him also suspect of intellectualism in Grethlein's view.[6]

The paradigm shift that Grethlein offers is first and foremost a fundamental turn toward the materiality of artworks themselves. Instead of reconstructing ancient aesthetic theories, the reconstruction and analysis of the aesthetic, sensory experience of artworks should be the central concern. The starting point for an examination of ancient aesthetics should not be the cultural or social discourse that produces and controls both art and aesthetic theory, but instead the immediacy of sensory experience of the artwork's materiality. It is no accident that Grethlein takes up Gumbrecht's suggestion to make the fundamental experience of "presence" (man's exposure to the spatial and haptic world of things) the basis of a theory of aesthetic – i.e., literally sensuous – experience of the material world. According to Gumbrecht, works of art as well as natural events are apprehended by human senses by their sheer "emergence," by overwhelming the observer. They require no interpretive act of the mind.[7] Although images are conceded to possess an "existentialist dimension" (by no means a new observation), for both Grethlein and Gumbrecht it remains uncertain what that consists of.[8]

Like Gumbrecht's concept of presence, Grethlein's aesthetics of sensory experience is explicitly opposed to any hermeneutical, semiological, or other interpretation aimed at understanding artworks by uncovering and interpreting their meaning and their cultural significance. This radical denial of ancient artworks' interpretability, however, does not just remove them a priori from our modern understanding (which one could accept if necessary), it also precludes the possibility that already in antiquity, these works had need of a contemporary interpretive context in order to be understood, indeed, that such a context – or discourse of aesthetic judgment and interpretation of art – ever existed. This leaves open the question of how such aesthetic experiences, as historically or culturally specific perceptive experiences of historically and culturally equally specific material artifacts, can be reconstructed if the cultural discourse that frames and interprets these experiences is dismissed. At this point, Grethlein puts his

6 Baumgarten: Aesthetica.

7 On Gumbrecht's concept of "presence," see Gumbrecht 2004; Gumbrecht 2012; Gumbrecht 2014. The concept of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 is fundamentally different: since every artifact is understood to be situationally integrated in dynamic negotiations between autological and heterological dimensions, this integration must be acknowledged interpretively and also intellectually for an adequate understanding that goes beyond the obligatory sensory impression.

8 "Materiality": Grethlein 2017, pp. 151–190; "existentialist dimension": Grethlein 2017, p. 151. That images in antiquity have an 'existential' dimension – although in quite a different sense – has been asserted above all by the classical archeologists of the so-called Vernant School in Paris since the 1980s. Cf. Universität Lausanne 1984; Schnapp 1987; Schnapp 1988.

money on theories of cognition of visual perception that attempt to define the difference between the perception of works of art and all other visual events as a cognitive capacity to differentiate, as well as on theories of art that make this difference the basis of understanding the perception of images. Primary among the proponents of this direction is Richard Wollheim, whose well-known formula for the perception of images – "seeing-in" – is modified by Grethlein as "seeing as-if."[9] According to Grethlein, this "seeing as-if" enables "immersive experiences" through and with images, which Grethlein in the end sees as the core of his aesthetic theory: an immersion in the images, very similar to Gumbrecht's experience of "presence," but with the constant consciousness of the images' fictional character.[10]

Thus, in the end, Grethlein's argument reduces the perception of images to a cognitive problem – the processing of sensory impressions in visual perception. The fact that visual media – pictures, artifacts, architecture, etc. – always presuppose specific cultural and historical knowledge that guides their legibility, visibility, spatiality, and suitability as an object one can move, use, or look at – in sum, their status as an event within the material world – escapes him. The interpretations of images that Grethlein himself presents as examples are neither adequate to make his approach plausible nor convincing as a new, alternative aesthetics: they are all conventional iconographic readings of vase paintings, quite traditional hermeneutics of images that trace the theme, content, and meaning of a picture. And what Grethlein offers as examples of immersive experiences are the long-since familiar and extensively researched vases with eyes that as containers seem to look at the viewer (section 3 below), or inscriptions on vases that enter into a 'dialogue' and 'communicate' verbally with viewers[11] – surely objects that stimulate visual, physical, and sensory experiences that go far beyond the 'reading' and interpretation of narrative images but have long since been extensively described and studied as elements of a complex arrangement of social, performative, haptic, aesthetic, and other sensory experiences within a ritualized commensality. They can hardly claim to provide new insights as a previously unknown or even undervalued form of "aesthetic experience." To describe such experiences as "immersive" in the first place is hardly appropriate; that concept is well known to have been coined to describe a literal immersion of the whole body in a virtual-reality environment that the senses can hardly recognize

9 Grethlein 2017, pp. 158–190. On Wollheim's "seeing-in," see Wollheim 1980, pp. 137–151. On the critique of Grethlein's approach, see esp. Junker 2020. As Junker correctly observes, Grethlein's own analyses of images (mostly on Greek vases) are based on exactly the same hermeneutical methods successfully employed for decades by classical archeology – the most appropriate discipline for interpreting vase paintings, not art history, as Grethlein mistakenly asserts.

10 On the immersive nature of aesthetic experience, see Grethlein 2017, pp. 18–29.

11 On the interpretation of vase paintings as catalysts of "immersive experiences," see Grethlein 2017, pp. 192–248; On inscriptions on vases that address the observer, see most recently (and overlooked by Grethlein) Stähli 2014, with many references to more extensive literature.

as fiction – thus an almost perfect simulation of reality. No matter how virtuoso the creation of the drinking vessels at a symposium, there can be no question that they induced such an experience. On the other hand, immersive experiences are an established and thoroughly analyzed phenomenon of other artworks that Grethlein does not take into account, namely, sculptures and, above all, Hellenistic and Roman statuary groups that, through their formal design, spatial arrangement, positioning, and precisely deployed features to guide the gaze, aim to involve the viewer and facilitate immersive experiences. We will return to them later.

As correct as Grethlein's emphasis on the sensory experience of art in antiquity is, his project fails because he has no plausible model to explain the aesthetic, sensory perception of art's materiality *as art* beyond the observation of man's basal cognitive ability to understand visual events and process them with his organs of sight. Thus it is not surprising that Grethlein's own analyses of images do not go beyond the parameters, established in the 1980s, of a semiotically influenced 'reading' of images, primarily vase paintings. Still, Grethlein's insistence on the sensuousness of aesthetic experience correctly draws attention to a deficit: in most surveys of and reference works on philosophy, the existence of an aesthetics in antiquity is either outright denied (with a reference to Kristeller's famous dictum that there was no aesthetic theory before Baumgarten[12]) or the discussion of ancient aesthetic concepts is restricted to theories of mimesis.

But the fact is that such an aesthetic discourse that puts sensory experience foremost can be shown to have existed in antiquity, even if it can be only partially reconstructed. The deficit that Grethlein wants to correct is only apparent. As we will show below, exactly what Grethlein demands has long since been presented in the literature.[13] Thus, in 2010, the classical scholar James I. Porter published "The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece," a monumental monograph aimed at solving the same deficit that Grethlein pillories. He writes that the discussion of aesthetics in Greece was idealized and formalized by Plato and Aristotle, thereby suppressing older traditions of aesthetic, sensory experience of materiality and replacing them with aesthetic theories of the beautiful, ultimately providing the foundation for the later European tradition of philosophical aesthetics.[14] What also needs to be taken into account, however, is an aesthetics of "sensualism," the "sensuous experience of art," and the "aesthetic materialism" of art – exactly what Grethlein also strives to do. In his meticulous and thorough analysis of literary and philosophical sources, Porter documents the impressive variety of widely differing forms of aesthetic experience, the engagement with form,

12 Kristeller 1951, esp. pp. 496f.

13 As Junker 2020 emphatically points out.

14 Porter 2010. Surprisingly, Grethlein seems not to be aware of this publication. It would have saved him some ink.

design, and materiality of artistic objects, and not only the contemplation of artworks in a narrow sense, but of every kind of sensory experience of materiality, appearance, surface texture, and color of artifacts, including, for example, the materiality of writing and inscriptions, but also aesthetic stimulation through musical experiences of listening and singing, including the performative, communal choral singing so important in Greek antiquity.

Porter – as well as Grethlein – has rightly distanced himself from traditional aesthetics as a theory of the perception and knowledge of the beautiful and replaced it with a reconstruction of ancient approaches to a theory of sensory experience. But like Grethlein more recently, Porter also fails to relate the impressive number of written sources he cites to surviving ancient artworks (or artifacts) in order to show clearly how they *as artworks* were bound up with the cultural and social processes of their use and perception and how, in interaction with their users and by means of their materiality, surface texture, artistic form, color, situation in space, visibility, and use developed, asserted, and, as objects, controlled their aesthetic effect themselves. One does not have to go so far as to promote artworks to independently acting agents of their own effect in order to clarify an obvious, long-since acknowledged point: artworks and other artifacts are designed and created so that they not only guide their own aesthetic reception but also include the viewer as an active participant in the development of this aesthetic effect.[15]

Neither Porter nor Grethlein succeeds in conceptually deriving their arguments for a 'different' aesthetic from the visual and other sensory experiences of ancient viewers and then to collate these experiences with forms – observable on the artwork or other artifacts – that guide viewers, direct their gaze, and evoke their sensibility for color, visual effects, or tactile stimuli, thus analyzing them as events of a genuinely aesthetic experiential environment. This could have been easily done and would hardly have failed on account of insufficient preparation. For it is not the case that this kind of study of objects is a completely neglected area of classical studies, as Porter claims at the beginning of his book and Grethlein also wants us to believe. On the contrary, since the gradual growth in research of ancient sculpture in the 18th century and the beginning of systematic study of Greek vase painting in the nineteenth, methodological

15 On artworks and objects as agents, see Gell 1998; various perspectives on the discussion initiated by Gell on the 'power of things' can be found in Osborne / Tanner 2007; Hahn 2015; on Bredekamp's theory of the *Bildakt*, see footnote 53 below. Just as one cannot ascribe to works of art the ability to act, the long-since recognized and often researched fact that monuments, artworks, and other artifacts can take on new meaning and be 'read' differently in changing historical, social, and cultural contexts must not lead us to ascribe object biographies to them as if these changing ideas about their meaning necessarily inscribe themselves in these objects and remain always available. On object biographies, see the critical arguments against this biological metaphor that inscribes in artifacts the inappropriate idea of a biographical narrative in Hahn 2015.

approaches and a set of analytical concepts were developed that allow us to analyze sculptures and mythological vase paintings, but also wall paintings, architecture, and other artistic object of daily use, in their respective social, cultural, spatial, and perceptual contexts and successfully identify various forms of tactile, visual, or multisensory experiences – e.g., religious rituals, celebrations, theater performances, athletic contests, arena spectacles, and triumphal processions, as well as social situations like the symposium – and apprehend them descriptively and analytically as events of visual perception. Seeing cannot be reduced to the conditions of the visual perceptive apparatus – merely a representation of reality created by the physiological and optical processes of the visual mechanism – as Grethlein would have us believe. Instead, it takes place under particular perceptive, communicative, or interactive conditions; it is a form of perception of reality guided by specific historical, social, and cultural patterns of knowledge and interpretation.[16] By no means are the conditions that determine our visual experiences nebulous and difficult to comprehend. They are fundamental cultural habits, learning processes building up an apparatus of interpretive routines, recollections, and experiences that allow the visual center in the brain to translate our visual (and other sensory) impressions into cognitively understandable visual information and interpretation of the world of experience. These interpretive tools are always culturally and socially transmitted and historically specific; although individually experienced, they are always socially acquired. We always share the cultural interpretive patterns with which we process visual impressions with a social group of individuals with similar or related cultural habits.

1. The Praxeology of Visual Perception

Instead of studying artistic images as visual representations of the real world, how would an aesthetics look whose central concern was to analyze the sensory experience of art's materiality and the interaction between the viewer and the 'thingness' of artworks and artifacts? Building on poststructuralist approaches, Sophia Prinz a decade

16 For some time now, research on the sense of vision, the perception of art, the viewer's management of the gaze, and artworks themselves, as well as on the optical and cognitive conditions of human sight, has been enjoying a certain boom; I offer only a selection of essays that have dominated the discussion on seeing in classical antiquity: Elsner 2007; Courtray 2013; Giuman 2013; Squire 2016; Neer 2019. Available ancient sources have been clearly collected and annotated by Moser von Filseck 1996, a publication that deserved a better reception. Publications on visual communication between humans and the gods (or their images) now constitute their own subgenre, see the fundamental Scheer 2000; cf. also Platt 2011. Not useful, since written without knowledge of Scheer 2000, is Grand-Clément 2017.

ago showed the way with the outline of an aesthetics of materiality.[17] Like Grethlein, Prinz also rejects cultural-semiotic analyses that understand visual media, artworks, and artifacts as mere vehicles for signs or representations onto which cultural meanings – such as lifestyles or cultural practices – are inscribed, the decoding of whose significance is the primary task of interpretation.[18] What Prinz proposes is a "praxeology" of visual perception with a sociological and action-theoretical approach which assumes that humans acquire, store, apply, and pass on cultural knowledge – "the socio-cultural conditions of their existence" – not only through cognitive verbal and visual communication but also store – "incorporate" – it as physical knowledge in their actions, movements, and body language. They then reproduce, performatively enact, and communicate the resulting "internalized systems of rules." Prinz calls this incorporated knowledge an "unconscious [...] *informal* logic" of action, a "knowledge of praxis" that is non-cognitively, spontaneously, and intuitively acquired and implemented. As "patterns and codes of praxis" it is again implemented and displayed in physical actions; thus, it achieves precisely what Bourdieu calls the physical "habitus."[19] The body is not just a surface onto which a cultural code of physical forms of expression is inscribed, but is itself the producer of such cultural schemata.

As Prinz writes, the model of an "incorporated knowledge" is quite compatible with discourse-theoretical approaches; incorporated knowledge is cultural and social knowledge acquired and stored by non-discursive practices and reproduced in practical action. Thus Prinz can point to Michel Foucault, who understands discourse as an "implicit knowledge" that allows humans to understand and interpret the world and can appear as practical, non-cognitive, 'incorporated' knowledge.[20] Even though Prinz correctly stresses that Foucault can be read ambivalently here, with the notion of the *dispositive*, he offers a concept to transfer the praxeological approach to a plausible scenario for a praxeological aesthetics. In Prinz's reading of Foucault, dispositives can be understood as spatial regularities and materialities – objectified topologies – in which subjects react to the contingency of spatial and material events with discursive practices, subjectify the dispositive by their "schemata of perception" and their physical practices, and compose it as an order constitutive of knowledge and perception. Thus artworks – and generally, all forms of visual media or artifacts – are more than mere representations that can be interpreted for the cultural discourse condensed within

17 Prinz 2014, esp. pp. 32–35, 41–116, and 283–327; with similar arguments Reckwitz 2003, to whom Prinz refers; cf. also Reckwitz 2017, chapter 1.1 on "Aesthetic Practices." For an overview of praxeological approaches in visual studies and theories, see Seja 2009.

18 Prinz 2014, pp. 20–31.

19 Prinz 2014, pp. 33–35; on 'habitus', see Pierre Bourdieu 1990, pp. 52–65; cf. Krais / Gebauer 2002.

20 Prinz 2014, pp. 41–166 (the chapter "*Foucaults Analyse visueller Ordnungen*" – Foucault's analysis of visual regulations); cf. Foucault 1972, pp. 192 f.

them; in the perception of subjects, through their gaze, they become elements of dispositives in which humans both cognitively and intuitively, sensuously and physically react to and interact with these material objects. Thus Prinz can read dispositives in Foucault's sense as spaces in which we react physically to the materiality of things, perceive objects as a sort of material actants, as an environment that brings demands for action to our attention. In response, our physical and sensory reactions establish discursive practices – a practical incorporated knowledge. Within a dispositive, spatial orders of things and viewers' forms of perception determine each other; the material world and ordering of artifacts shapes the visual experience and thereby participates in the creation of knowledge. Prinz interprets the material world of things – including images and artworks – as active, "image-producing media."[21] Foucault's dispositives are thus directly related to a concept I have for several years tentatively been calling *parapictoriality*. It means the ensemble of practices, discourses, and cultural knowledge by which images or artworks are constituted and become recognizable and 'readable' as such.[22]

Unlike Grethlein's rather vague plea for an aesthetics of artifacts' materiality or Gumbrecht's existentialist wonder at the presence of things, Prinz's praxeology of seeing offers a plausible theoretical model that understands aesthetic perception not just as a purely cognitive visual experience or decoding of an image discourse, but *also* as the result of physical interaction, an aesthetic experience guided by non-cognitive, incorporated knowledge. Prinz's suggestion, building on Foucault and Bourdieu, assumes that cultural and social knowledge is not just cognitive knowledge but can also be physically acquired – incorporated – as practical, discursive knowledge. Human beings see and understand the external world and, through sensory perception incorporate ways of behavior, i.e., cognitively and physically acquired knowledge of the forms of expression and action, a knowledge of physical reactions and methods of presentation, and deploy them both intuitively and spontaneously in their physical behavior and reproduce them expressively in their body language. The actions of these agents, as Prinz perceptively remarks, have more significance than they themselves are aware of[23] – they are not fully conscious of the practices they acquire and incorporate, as though effortlessly acquiring discursive knowledge.

In what follows, I will use three examples to show how a praxeology of aesthetic experience and perception for artworks from Greek and Roman antiquity could be developed. I have chosen examples that presuppose three different dispositives of the perception and experience of art, require three different levels of artistic expectation from their viewers, and represent three different genres of artistic works that require various forms of use and manipulation. They also come from different epochs. Moreover, they

21 Prinz 2014, pp. 26–30.
22 See Stähli 2022a.
23 Prinz 2014, p. 294.

are by no means eccentric examples that represent only special cases but instead exemplify well-known works whose analysis could easily be applied to many similar cases. As an introduction before my first example, I present an artwork from a more recent era as contrast to my ancient examples, but by no means should one assume that a praxeological aesthetics is intended only for the perception of the art of classical antiquity and cannot on principle be applied to more recent – or, in fact, more ancient – epochs.

2. Where is Diotima? Visual Metalepsis

The concept of metalepsis, coined by Gérard Genette, identifies an artistic technique common both in antiquity and modern times that shatters an image's mimetic illusion, unmasks the presentation as a representation, and lets viewers know that they are dealing with an object whose represented reality they are supposed to see through, thus clearly stressing the artificial, artistic character of art as an artifact created by human hands – in Grethlein's words, as an instrument that emphasizes the materiality of art and identifies that as the object of an aesthetic experience. By way of introduction, I shall begin with an illustrative example of Genette's concept of metalepsis in a painting. Despite its self-evident acceptance in literary studies, metalepsis has attracted hardly any attention from art historians, much less from classical archeologists. In a second step, I will show how precisely the concept of visual metalepsis offers a convenient entry into praxeological aesthetics, an aesthetics that – compared to hermeneutic or semiotic readings of visual media – foregrounds intuitive, emotional, and physical interaction with objects, artifacts, and artworks.

As used by Genette, metalepsis is a – if not *the* – key concept in a complex narratological theory that its author has revised several times and gradually expanded, resulting in steadily increasing conceptual differentiation and ramification.[24] From an art-theoretical or aesthetic standpoint, however, one can distill a relatively manageable definition that ignores the various narrative perspectives of narratological analysis[25] –

24 Genette mentions "métalepse" in Genette 1972, pp. 243–246 (English trans. Genette 1982; pp. 106, 115), and again in Genette 1983 (English trans. Genette 1988), then in a paper for a conference devoted solely to the concept of metalepsis: Genette 2005; and finally in a monograph with a revised and expanded version of the latter, Genette 2004. The literature on his concept of metalepsis is already vast; useful and critical analyses that open up narratological perspectives on the concept are Fludernik 2003 and Hanebeck 2017.

25 I do not mean to say it would make no sense to transfer Genette's narrative perspectives onto visual images. Thus, although most pictures do not distinguish between a first-person narrative (i.e., an extradiegetic narrative in which the narrator appears as an explicit "I") and a third-person narrative (i.e., a heterodiegetic narrative in which the narrator does not appear), there are pictures that do this, e.g., artists' self-portraits. For the argument I am making here, however, this is irrelevant. Essays on the subject can be found in Pier / Schaeffer 2005; for the discussion

except for the one that is important here: In classical rhetoric as well as in Genette's narratology, metalepsis identifies a transgression in narrative perspective, a change in the narrative voice, or a change of location from the level of narration (the 'diegetic' level in Genette) to a standpoint outside the narrative – as the voice of a commentator or interpreter of the story who often merges with the voice or position of the author and thus breaks through the diegetic narrative strand. But not always: Dorrit Cohn has drawn attention to the fact that in addition to this classic form of metalepsis – which Cohn defines as "métalepse extérieure" – there is also a less common form she calls "internal metalepsis" ("métalepse intérieure"), in which a person who is part of the diegesis unexpectedly addresses the reader directly, thus momentarily falling out of their role in the narrative.[26] However rare this form of metalepsis may be in written narrative, it corresponds to a frequent visual metalepsis common to all epochs of art history: the eyes of a figure in a painting looking directly out at the viewer.[27] Cohn gave this special form of internal metalepsis the epithet "mise-en-abyme," a wonderful expression that unfortunately has had an unparalleled career in art-historical and classical archeological literature in English; it inflates every random form of trompe-l'œil effect or questioning and ironizing of the conventions of visual representation, no matter how common, into an apocalyptic plunge into a chasm of visual mirage.

What does a visual metalepsis look like? As an introduction, I have chosen a familiar 18th-century painting whose special metaleptic quality has apparently never been recognized before (Fig. 1).[28] The second version of Anselm Feuerbach's *Symposium*, or *Gastmahl des Platon*, a painting of monumental dimensions, now hangs in the stairwell

of the figure of artistic metalepsis in antiquity, see Eisen / Möllendorff 2013. Genette himself had hardly anything to say about metalepsis in pictures, but see Genette 2004, pp. 79–81 on Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, where he follows Michel Foucault's interpretation closely). His attention was more attracted to film (Genette 2004, pp. 58–78) – not by accident, film being narratologically the most fruitful visual medium. Visual art, however, remained in the end foreign to Genette. His own outline of an aesthetics follows a comparatively conventional path: Genette 2010 (English trans. Genette 1997b).

26 Cohn 2005; "métalepse extérieure": Cohn 2005, pp. 122–125; "métalepse intérieure": Cohn 2005, pp. 125–130; in the English translation: Cohn 2012 ("exterior metalepsis," pp. 106–108; "interior metalepsis, pp. 106–111).

27 The literature on this subject is immense; still fundamental for the art-theoretical mastery of the theme are the analyses of Stoichita 1999, esp. pp. 265–351; a rich compendium of examples of metalepsis in visual art of the modern period is presented by Giusti 2009, esp. pp. 219–239; for antiquity, see esp. Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, as well as more recently Stähli 2021, esp. pp. 133–146 with references to further studies.

28 Figs. 1 and 2: Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880): Das Gastmahl (nach Plato) (The Symposium [after Plato]), second version, 1871–1873/1874, oil on canvas, 400 × 750 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie A I 279. See Keisch 1992, with further references; and esp. Muthmann 1951, pp. 97–112.

Fig. 1. Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880): Das Gastmahl (nach Plato) (The Symposium [after Plato]), second version, 1871–1873/1874. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie A I 279.

of the Alte Nationalgalerie on the Museum Island in Berlin. The picture's theme is the banquet from Plato's famous dialogue, a banquet organized some time earlier by Agathon. The events of the Symposium, having in the meantime become legendary, are reported by a pupil of Socrates named Apollodoros, who for his part had heard them from a certain Aristodemos long after the Symposium occurred. Thus, what we have is not an eyewitness account but a narrative handed along through several stages. During the banquet, the participants make speeches about Eros; Socrates is the last speaker, and his speech in its turn is a report of what was once told him by the – obviously invented – seer Diotima (Plato, *Symposium*, 201d–212c).

Feuerbach's painting shows the moment after Socrates has finished speaking and the drunken Alcibiades enters from the left, accompanied by an extremely affable entourage. At approximately the same height as Socrates (who sits on the right in the background, turned away from the new arrivals), in the farthest forward spatial plane, a painted vase stands on the ground (Fig. 2). Its form is similar to that of ancient vases, but its painted surface depicts a woman seated in a landscape – more reminiscent of a motif from contemporary classicistic paintings than of Greek painted vases.

A piece of fabric, dropped apparently carelessly on the vase, reveals itself on closer inspection to be extremely artistically draped; its folds part like curtains from the bulge of the vase, revealing the sitting woman as if on a stage. The rest of the cloth falls to the floor of Agathon's banquet hall and from there over the richly decorated frame of Feuer-

Fig. 2. Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880): Das Gastmahl (nach Plato) (The Symposium [after Plato]), second version, 1871–1873/1874. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie A I 279, Detail.

bach's painting; a frame which for its part, through this precise effect, proves to be only painted, a trompe-l'œil. The cloth transgresses the painted, illusionistic picture space where it originates to enter the world of the viewer – a classic metalepsis, a transgression of the visual narration and the mimetic illusion of the painting that underscores the artificiality and perfection of the artistic object's artistically formed materiality as well as – through the double deception of the trompe-l'œil frame – the quality of the deceptive artistic intention. It seems evident to me that with the cloth's double gesture of veiling and unveiling, Feuerbach also gives us a hidden clue as to the identity of the female figure sitting in the middle of this metaleptic theater: she must be Diotima, the person who did not participate in Agathon's symposium but nevertheless was its central figure, since she alone knew the true nature of Eros – a truth Socrates imparted to the Symposium's participants which then, beginning with Aristodemos, leads through several nested narratives to Plato's text and on to today's reader – comparable

to the step-by-step revelation of trompe-l'œil levels that the tossed-aside piece of cloth crosses and reveals, beginning with the 'picture-in-the-picture' of the seated woman who sits at the spring of knowledge of the true nature not only of Eros, but also of the deceptive intention of art.[29]

However, the visual metalepsis in Feuerbach's *Gastmahl des Platon* – the transgression of the mimetic illusion – remains a purely picture-internal effect that does not involve viewers, does not intrude into their world, nor engages them physically. It is purely a game of optical deception aimed at the sense of sight and plays with the cultural expectations of artistic representation within a social and spatial context – that of a museum – in which one must reckon with such effects.

3. Eye Vases and Metaleptic Effects in the Symposium

Visual metalepses like the one in Feuerbach's *Gastmahl des Platon* that transgresses the picture frame and calls into question – or even negates – the illusion of a coherent, autonomous pictorial space with its own reality are quite frequent in ancient art.[30] I will confine myself to examples that show with particular clarity how these forms of optical transgression of the pictorial space are connected to social practices and rituals and are thereby also reacting to cultural expectations and attitudes that frame the 'consumption' of these images and objects and make the visual metalepses a central element of the same socio-cultural experiences. The effect of the metaleptic images cannot be imaged without the dispositive in which the images – and the vases on which they appear – are seen; nor is the reading of these images separable from

29 The motif of the vase painting of a seated woman is not in the older version of the painting in Karlsruhe. It must have been a second thought of the artist that adds another semantic layer in the Berlin version, an additional mystification of the pictorial object, and a self-assured reference to the artist's virtuoso mastery of deception. If I am not mistaken, the interpretation of the seated woman as Diotima has not occurred in the literature; Keisch 1992, pp. 31f. interprets her, with reference to Keisch 1992, pp. 81f., Cat. No. 84, as Ariadne, But the fact that this motif of a seated woman dressed in an ancient style repeatedly occurs in similar form in Feuerbach's work, both as Ariadne or Iphigenia, shows clearly that the motif cannot be identified with one particular figure. On the painted frame as a trompe-l'œil effect and its function as proof of artistic mastery, the fundamental work is still Stoichita 1999, pp. 53–99.

30 Metalepsis in visual media from classical antiquity has so far been hardly studied or – it seems to me – not understood correctly; thus, the vase paintings that Lorenz 2007 examines are not cases of visual metalepsis, i.e., of the transgression of the diegetic narration by a change to a metaleptic narrative perspective. Instead, they belong in a category of images that occur on the same vehicle and interact with one another through various visual narrative perspectives, so that various interpretative perspectives become open. In the same way, the Pergmon frieze seems to me to also lack metaleptic elements; see section 4 below. Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux 1995 has analyzed many metaleptic effects without using the concept; cf. also Stähli 2021.

the performance of the vessels' users, who by handling them increase the effect of the metalepses and make it an element of their physical performance. The Attic vase paintings presented below make demands on their viewers quite different from those of Anselm Feuerbach's museum piece; they challenge not only viewers' visual habits and 'reading competence' for understanding the picture's theme, iconography, and illusionistic methods of presentation, but stimulate them to interact physically with the images, to incorporate them as it were and make them into an element of their own body language.

The advantage of the vase paintings from Athens analyzed here is that their social context and use within it are relatively well-known.[31] These are images that circulated within a fairly exclusive social context and served the self-dramatization of a privileged group – a group that is, however, difficult to identify more precisely (Fig. 3).[32] The symposium was a social ritual that could be used by various circles as an expression of their elite self-consciousness. Within a closed framework accessible only to men, the symposium celebrated ritualized behaviors and manners that showed off specifically elitist and typically male qualities. But important was not just the perfect performance of poses and gestures that demonstrated confident mastery of etiquette; in the discourse of the symposium, precisely as shown in the vase paintings, what was most important was to manifest the physical ability to enjoy pleasure, an ecstatic and at the same time controlled development of physical competencies in the enjoyment of food and wine, song, music and dance, and not least in the satisfaction of the body's sexual needs with hetaerae and boys. The enactment of the body in the pictures can plausibly be linked to the physical discourses, practices, and forms of interaction and self-presentation that played a role in the context of the social group that consumed these images during their drinking session. The pleasures of the symposium were indeed primarily of a physical nature. They are realized as a lavish intercourse with one's bodily needs and presuppose the mastery of specific physical techniques and practices: a knowledge of how to recline elegantly on the *klinē* ("eating couch"), the cultivated position during intercourse with

31 In what fallows after Stähli 2009, pp. 17–34, here pp. 18f. The literature to the Greek symposium is vast; fundamental on pictures of symposiums on vases is Lissarrague 1990; Vierneisel / Kaeser 1990; on eye vases at symposiums from the present perspective of praxeology and visual metalepsis, see further above all Martens 1992, pp. 284–359; Frontisi-Ducroux 1995; Steinhart 1995; Hedreen 2007; Rivière-Adonon 2011, pp. 245–277; a catalogue of eye vases is in Rivière-Adonon 2008, an unpublished doctoral thesis from the Université de Montpellier III Paul Valéry, of which I have a copy. Cf. further in general on the social function of the Attic symposium above all Murray 1990; Catoni 2010 (English trans. forthcoming 2026); Wecowski 2014; Filser 2017, pp. 127–277.

32 Fig. 3: Attic red-figure cup by the painter Duris (c. 480 BCE). London, British Museum, E 49; BA 205096. – In what follows, the abbreviation "BA" and an individual number identify the vase in question in the online catalogue of the Beazley Archive, Oxford, which offers a continuously updated bibliography and photos of all the objects: www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/carc/pottery.

Fig. 3. Attic red-figure cup by the painter Duris (c. 480 BCE). London, British Museum, E 49.

a boy or a hetaera, the stylish pose while vomiting, and not least the deft, effective manipulation of the drinking vessels that make the pictures speak. All of these arts of the body, the conventionalized stock of poses, movements, and gestures, become in the dispositive of the symposium elements of a symbolic presentation of masculinity that are also a sign of belonging to a social elite.

Most of the vessels we will be discussing were in fact used as drinking cups at symposia or gesture fictively toward such usage. The symposium itself is one of the more frequent themes of these pictures, which thereby become for the participants a mirror of their own behavior. There is a strong connection between the symposium and the vase paintings vis-à-vis their reception, which is fundamental to understanding them. The communication and interaction shared by the participants was symbolically charged with significance through contemplation of the pictures, a significance that in turn influenced their actions and self-conception. The practices of self-dramatization and the reading of the images that was integrated into these practices meshed and produced a specific performance. The participants communicated with and *through* the images: by using the drinking vessels, they quasi made themselves actors of the representations on the vessels.

Metaleptic effects in visual media often go hand-in-hand with a highly stylized performance that facilitates – or even makes possible in the first place – the reading of metaleptic graphic elements. One must pick up and turn a vase in order to see the entire picture that runs around its body and drink from it in order to uncover the picture hidden in its interior. Or one must turn it in such a way that one's drinking companions can see the pictures on the vessel's underside. Such performative situations are self-ref-

Fig. 4. Attic black-figure *stamnos* by the "Michigan-Painter" (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, County Museum, Inv. No. 50.8.2, Side A.

erentially depicted on the vases themselves (Fig. 4).[33] A *stamnos* by the Michigan-Painter, now in Los Angeles, shows symposium participants in a *kōmos*, the ritual dance after communal drinking that could wend its way out of the house and into the street. They deploy their drinking vessels as a medium for self-metamorphosis. One man holds his cup against the back of his head, transforming himself into a double-headed vase, so to speak (Fig. 5). The backward 'face' that he holds by the 'nose' of the cup's footing is turned toward the dancing woman who follows him. Another dancer on the same vessel holds a so-called eye vessel, the same form of drinking cup as the one the previous dancer holds toward the woman, but with a special decoration (Fig. 6) – large eyes that seem to be watching one's fellow drinkers as soon as one raises it to his lips to drink, with the result that the longer one drinks from it and tips the vessel more and more, one's own face gradually disappears behind it.

33 Figs. 4–6: Attic black-figure *stamnos* of the "Michigan-Painter" (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum Inv. No. 50.8.2; BA 301903.

Fig. 5. Attic black-figure *stamnos* by the "Michigan-Painter" (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, County Museum, Inv. No. 50.8.2, Side B, Detail.

Fig. 6. Attic black-figure *stamnos* by the "Michigan-Painter" (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, County Museum, Inv. No. 50.8.2, Side B, Detail.

These eye cups are especially numerous among symposium drinking vessels and apparently were meant as a visual demonstration of a participant's increasing inebriation through the Dionysian transformation of his features, under the influence of the god of wine, into drunken, staring eyes.

Just a few strokes to represent the mouth and nose transform the eyes into a complete face that the drinker can bring to life while drinking by raising and moving the cup

Fig. 7. Chalcidian black-figure cup by a painter from the "Group of the Phineus-Painter" (c. 540/520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.65.

(Fig. 7).[34] Occasionally even ears were included and frame the face; a strongly stylized bud-like and probably vegetable element stands for the nose, and the foot of the cup – turned toward one's companions across the table while drinking – seems to resemble an open mouth (Fig. 8).[35] From the participant's point of view, it is doubtless a performative act; through the act of drinking from the cup, the drinker makes himself the implement that effects his inebriation. But of course, the eye cups also function, without their performative manipulation by the participants, simply as 'seeing' objects capable of communicating through gazes, of gazing themselves, as if participating in the symposium as independent observers. But they produce their especially sophisticated effects above all when one grasps them as metamorphic apparatuses, instruments that dissolve the difference between images that represent something – i.e., offer something to the eyes – and images that gaze themselves.

The metaleptic effect is especially obvious in cups that replace the nose and sometimes also the ears with mythological or other figures that interact with each other between or around the eyes, as if these eyes did not exist. Athena appears as a nose (Fig. 9),[36] hoplites fight as noses, warships that could pass as ears set sail (Fig. 10).[37]

34 Fig. 7: Chalcidian black-figure cup by a painter from the "group of the Phineus-Painter" (c. 540/520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.65.

35 Fig. 8: Attic black-figure eye cup (c. 520/510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.50; BA 13328.

36 Fig. 9: Attic black-figure eye cup of the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 540 BCE). Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Inv. No. 1970.99; BA 1167.

37 Fig. 10: Attic black-figure, Chalcidian eye cup (c. 520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.36. BA 302630.

Fig. 8. Attic black-figure eye cup (c. 520/510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.50.

Fig. 9. Attic black-figure eye cup by the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 530 BCE). Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Inv. No. 1970.99.

Often it is the figure or only the face of Dionysus, the wine god himself, or a satyr that sits as a nose between the eyes and from there gazes at the viewer.[38] But sometimes it is

38 Figure of Dionysus or on the opposite side a satyr face between the eyes: Attic black-figure amphora by the "Antimenes-Painter" (c. 530/520 BCE). Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, 8518; Inv. No. BA 320150.

Fig. 10. Attic black-figure Chalcidian eye cup (c. 520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.36.

a painted drinking vessel that specifically refers to Dionysus.[39] This uncoupling or toggling of individual pictorial elements from their diegetic function in a visual narrative and instead giving them a metaleptic function that suspends or comments ironically on the illusion of a consistent narrative appears frequently on eye cups and other vessels that include the motif of eyes – far more frequently than on any other genre of drinking vessel. Merely with their gaze, the seeing eyes of the vessels seem able to dissolve into thin air the mimetic and illusionistic consistency of visual narratives and transform them into free-floating visual signifiers that interact with one another. Thus, two warriors in a battle scene that wraps around a cup hide from their opponents 'behind' the cup's eyes (Fig. 11),[40] a youth sitting between the eyes as a nose handles branches that transform into eyebrows,[41] another youth as a nose juggles the eyebrows between which he sits (Fig. 12),[42] and the eyes become the stylized avian bodies of two sirens gazing at each other (Fig. 13).[43]

39 *Kantharos* between the eyes: Chalcidian black-figure eye cup (c. 540/530 BCE). Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. No. F 144.

40 Fig. 11: Attic black-figure cup of the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 540/530 BCE). Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 86.AE.169; BA 14600.

41 Attic black-figure mastoid cup (c. 500 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 41.162.173; BA 13406.

42 Fig. 12: Attic black-figure amphora by the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 520 BCE). Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 68.AE.19; BA 340404.

43 Fig. 13: Attic black-figure hydria by the "AD-Painter" (c. 500 BCE). London, British Museum, Inv. No. B 342; BA 301821.

Fig. 11. Attic black-figure cup by the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 540/530 BCE). Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 86.AE.169.

Like the staring eyes, original plastic applications can also lead to surprising visual effects and unusual tactile experiences while handling a drinking vessel. Such effects are always related directly to the enjoyment of wine and the sensory delusions of inebriation (Fig. 14).[44] The ambiguity of images and the plastic design and décor of the drinking cups are the rule here; the phallus in place of the foot of this cup could also be read as the jutting nose between the cup's ear-like handles and below the painted eyes.[45] There are boundless variations in the deceptive metaleptic play. A nude female participant lifts a drinking cup with a phallic foot to her mouth (Fig. 15) on a cup that, if manipulated in the same way she handles hers, would present to the watching drinkers not only the image of the female drinker but also the 'open mouth' of the cup's foot – certainly an appropriate addition to the woman's cup along with its appropriate obscene associations that are definitely typical of the pictorial repertoire of the symposium.[46] No wonder, then, that the phallus too can become the nose between a cup's eyes.[47] Often

44 Fig. 14: Attic black-figure cup by the "Andokides-Painter" (c. 530/520 BCE). Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. No. 1974.344; BA 396.

45 In a similar case, the plastic phallus in place of the foot of a comparable cup points as literally as possible to one of the two image fields that show couples copulating on a *klinē* between the cup's eyes. Attic black-figure eye cup (c. 520 BCE). Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. No. F 2052; BA 14936.

46 Fig. 15: Attic red-figure palmette eye cup (c. 510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.61; BA 200402.

47 Attic red-figure cup of Oltos (c. 520/510 BCE). Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. No. 08.31d; BA 200261.

Fig. 12. Attic black-figure amphora by the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 520 BCE).
Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 68.AE.19.

Fig. 13. Attic black-figure hydria by the "AD-Painter" (c. 500 BCE).
London, British Museum, Inv. No. B 342.

Fig. 14. Attic black-figure cup by the "Andokides-Painter" (c. 530/520 BCE). Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. No. 1974.344; BA 396.

Fig. 15. Attic red-figure palmette eye cup (c. 510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.61.

a vessel's plastic attachments – like the phallus feet on the two cups just mentioned – can play an active role thanks to the participants' manipulation of the vessels and even contemplate themselves during the use to which these objects are put. A female head on the handle of a jug at first seems to look at the viewer who picks it up. Then, as the user tips the jug to fill a cup, she declines her face toward the liquid as though wanting to drink it – or look at her own reflection.[48] Finally, a metaleptic structure can duplicate

48 Corinthian black-figure olpe by the "Tydeus-Painter" (c. 560/550 BCE). St. Louis (MO), Washington University Gallery of Art, Inv. No. 3267. Moon 1979, pp. 44f., Nr. 28.

itself; for example, a picture of a chest painted on a box – i. e., a picture within a picture, a miniaturized chest – gazes with metaleptic eyes at the viewer.[49]

Finally, a jug now in Berkeley represents a pinnacle of visual metalepsis. On the presentation side (Fig. 16),[50] we find the familiar eyes with which the vessel gazes at the viewer. Behind them is a typically Dionysian scene: Dionysus in ecstatic motion, flanked by two satyrs bent under the weight of the huge wineskins they carry on their backs. And paradoxically, these wineskins are coextensive with the olpe's staring eyes – even the characteristic cuff-like openings of the pigskin containers have a precise equivalent in the eyes' tear ducts. It is simply impossible to decide which of the two visual narratives is an ironic commentary on the other. Are the satyrs carrying the olpe's gazing eyes out of the picture like wineskins, or are the wineskins metamorphosing into eyes with which the vessel can look out of the picture, thanks to a magical Dionysian transformation? The important thing is that both visual narratives, intertwined in a hybrid manner, are metaleptically interrelated. They call each other's narrative consistency into question and cast doubt on each other's status as a graphic representation. At the same time, the materiality of the object itself on which the depictions are located is both negated (the olpe appears to be only a vehicle for the picture) and strongly emphasized; it is a seeing subject that communicates with the viewer. The reverse side of the jug (Fig. 17) condenses the metaleptic arrangement – as complex as it is paradoxical – into a succinct motif that often appears on vases but hardly ever with such precision; it is a visual commentary on the picture on the obverse side, realized using extremely reduced artistic means, showing nothing less than a single eye with which the olpe returns the gaze of the viewer. The hybridity of a vessel could not be more simply reflected; it is both a material jug handed around by the symposium's participants and the vehicle of an image that also functions independently as a seeing entity that watches the participants. Without a doubt, this vessel would have pleased Genette.[51]

The connection between metaleptic visual strategies and a praxeology of aesthetic experience should be obvious. Handling the drinking vessels is part of reading the images. Through their shape and metaleptic effects, the vessels provide the participants with scripts of physical behavior, guide their gestures and optical perception, and promote habits of movement when using the objects that are themselves basic to the

49 Attic red-figure box (5th century BCE). Athens, Agora Museum, Inv. No. P 23897; BA 21736.

50 Fig. 16 and 17: Attic black-figure olpe by the "Painter of the Jena Kaineus" (c. 550/530 BCE). Berkeley, Museum, Inv. No. 8.3379; BA 320471.

51 In recent times there have been several references to comparable artistic utensils and objects that paradoxically oscillate back and forth between their utilitarian form, their material design as useful objects, and their function as a vehicle for images, carrier of a visual representation; I will mention only Roman bronze or clay oil lamps with human or animal figures as attachments that gaze into the flame, are illuminated by it, and seem to be set into motion by its flickering or keep it alive by blowing on it. On these objects, see Bielfeldt 2014a, pp. 195–238; Bielfeldt 2014b.

Fig. 16. Attic black-figure olpe by the "Painter of the Jena Kaineus" (c. 550/530 BCE). Berkeley, Museum, Inv. No. 8.3379; BA 320471.

perception of the images and their narrative. Visual effects such as staring vases that communicate with the participants or – functioning as masks – transform them and direct their performance; vases as masks, deployed as mediators of subjective physical experiences and of the transformation into another person; and pictures of symposiums that promote self-reflection, serve as models of behavior, and provide the participants with examples of roles are all part of a praxeology of acquiring and practicing schemes of behavior and physical movement, initiated and guided by images as well as by the body language of the participants themselves. In the end, the dispositive of the symposium is the paradigmatic scenario of the physical acquisition and rehearsal of Bourdieu's habitus.

With the symposium's highly ritualized and stylized forms of incorporating practical knowledge described above, one could call it a dispositive in Foucault's sense. But in this

Fig. 17. Attic black-figure olpe by the "Painter of the Jena Kaineus" (c. 550/530 BCE). Berkeley, Museum, Inv. No. 8.3379; BA 320471.

context, I suggest instead referring to its *parapictoriality*, a somewhat narrower concept that more clearly emphasizes the point of view under discussion here: the praxeological framework of aesthetic experience through interaction with images, artworks, and other objects.[52] This term carries forward thoughts I developed on the concept of a

52 On parapictoriality, see the extensive discussion in Stähli 2022a, including its derivation from Genette's concept of a paratext: Genette 1997a. For about ten years I have used the concept of parapictoriality in teaching to provide students with a handy concept that makes plain and allows them to define the contextual, discursive, and praxeological framework for every form of perception of – and interaction with – images (or art). At a 2017 congress in Edinburgh, I took the congress's theme, the change of visual media in antiquity (e.g., from vases to architectural friezes), as an opportunity to identify parapictoriality as the factor that steers the translation and adaptation of images from one medium to another, even before all iconographical, typological, motivic, stylistic, or other adaptations.

Bildakt.[53] Parapictoriality comprises and defines the totality of forms of practices and discursive knowledge, the interaction and communication of subjects, their ritualized gestural and physical forms of expression and behavior, but also the spatial and material preconditions as well as the temporal conditions under which a social event like the symposium takes place and is integrated with objects in a way that enables aesthetic experience. Of central importance is that artworks (or more generally all things or events that become objects of aesthetic enjoyment) are only perceivable as art (or more precisely as objects of aesthetic experience) under the precondition of a parapictorial situation, because only then does a 'context of agreement' exist that makes them perceivable as pictures and enables a meaningful attitude toward them as pictures. To exaggerate: outside the parapictorial situation, a painted vase is merely a storage vessel or a cinerary urn and only becomes an image under specifically parapictorial conditions.

4. The Viewer as Dionysus: The Immersive Experience of Sculpture

Not every violation of a picture's space or frame is metaleptic. Not long ago it was suggested that the reliefs along the staircase stringer of the Pergamon Altar in Berlin could be interpreted as an intentional metalepsis (Fig. 18).[54] There is general agreement that on the southern stringer of the northern *Risalit*, at the point where the broad stairway leading up to the altar's courtyard reaches the height of the frieze and from there on seems to sever the frieze's narrative continuum, one of the giant figures appears to be climbing the stairs on his knees, as if he were himself taking part in the ritual offering. This is a well-known phenomenon that has become a standard part of introductory courses in archeology as well as guided tours of the museum. Whether this justifies calling it an example of metalepsis – an extension of the frieze's figures into our reality and an interrogation of the consistency of its diegetic narrative and illusion-

53 Stähli 2002 (cf. also Seja 2009, pp. 114–119), following Assmann 1985; cf. Bräunlein 2004. On the origin of the *Bildakt* concept in language-theoretical philosophy, see Seja 2009, pp. 68–112. – Bredekamp 2010 develops a quite different concept of the *Bildakt* that is hardly compatible with my pragmatic thoughts on images. To the accusations first, that his notion of the *Bildakt* is merely a revitalization of the obsolete concept of 'pictorial magic,' and second, that it provides no theory at all but only examples, Bredekamp responded with a new edition under a different title: Bredekamp 2015. In this book the concept of the *Bildakt* survives only in its title, probably to ensure his interpretive prerogative to the concept, and in a new foreword written for this edition, pp. 9–19, the author not only responds to the accusations but also compares himself to Wölfflin, who was at first unrecognized but later celebrated by his contemporaries. The English translation (Bredekamp 2021) renders the title as *Image Acts*.

54 Lorenz 2013, pp. 119–147. Fig. 18: Pergamon Altar, west stair stringer: giant (probably shortly after 165 BCE). Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Pergamonmuseum.

Fig. 18. Pergamon Altar, west stair stringer: giant (probably shortly after 165 BCE). Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Pergamonmuseum.

istic image space – is another matter. With their physical volumes, the frieze's figures move consistently, at every point in the frieze, within a clearly circumscribed 'spatial layer,' defined by the tectonic frame of the altar's architecture, and that is also where the giant kneeling on the step moves. At no point does he leave the precisely defined intrapictorial space and really enter our world, but remains part of 'his' pictorial space. He behaves just like the boy in Borrell del Caso's painting *Escaping Criticism*, who seems to be jumping out of the frame into our world[55] – but this is a purely illusionistic effect. In the case of the Pergamon Altar, it also seems to be the case that the giant is not climbing the stairway, but that the frame – the skirting – at this point unfolds into steps, and the giant does nothing but kneel on the floor just like all the frieze's other figures stand, sink down on, or grow out of the floor of the skirting.[56] With realistic effects typical

55 Pere Borrell del Caso (1835–1910): Escaping Criticism, 1874, 76 × 63 cm, oil on canvas, Madrid, Banco de España. See Giusti 2009, pp. 232–233, further references, and Fig. p. 33.

56 Here I follow Kähler's masterfully precise analysis of the relationship between architectural frame and the space of the frieze, unequalled in its clarity: Kähler 1948, pp. 85–95.

for the time, the frieze's lost painting will have heightened the difference between the picture space in which the gigantomachy takes place and the architecture of the altar. Strictly speaking, what we have is an illusionistic device achieved by purely intrapictorial plastic means, not a visual metalepsis that bursts the pictorial reality, unmasks it as an illusion, and suggests the artificiality of art or – as Grethlein might say – underscores art's materiality.

The example seems symptomatic to me. It shows that not every artistic effect, certainly not every illusionistic effect, amounts to the blurring of the border between the artwork and its viewers in order to make them complicit in a mimetic deception. This is all the more true for the immersive experience of sculpture, especially free-standing statuary, a long-recognized and well-researched phenomenon.[57] Immersive experiences of art go beyond illusionistic and trompe-l'œil effects; they are produced by artworks or artifacts that involve viewers, suggestively pull them in with artistic means – above all, the deployment of realism and intrapictorial elements that guide the gaze –, give them the illusion of being themselves part of the image's action, participate actively in what is happening, and become accomplices in the visual narrative. It is especially instructive to look at sculptures that, through their characteristic spatiality, three-dimensional volumes, and size, create physical presence in space. They shape the space that surrounds them and deploy it for aesthetic effect by defining ways to approach them, places from which to observe them, and directions of movement, thereby guiding viewers' gaze, frequently with the goal of creating the illusion of the real presence of a living being and suggesting its authentic life. They use their spatial presence to pretend they are alive and to enable immersive experiences for the viewer, an entrance into the image's narrative, and if possible, an immersion in the imaginary world of the statues.

Especially instructive in this regard is the statue of the sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican Museum, one of the most famous sculptures of classical antiquity, which has been displayed in various places in the Vatican since the 16th century and always in spectacular surroundings (Fig. 19).[58] It is a Roman copy from the 2nd century CE after a Hellenistic original from the 2nd century BCE. Like other Roman copies of the same original, the statue in the Vatican was improperly positioned on its base in modern times, namely, it is tipped up too vertically. One has to imagine the Hellenistic original lying back more, not facing the viewer, i.e., less 'posed' and in a more clearly resting position that strengthens the impression of a woman asleep and unaware of being

57 On the discussion of immersive experience of sculpture, see Kunze 2002; cf. also Stähli 2022b.

58 Cf. on the following Stähli 2001; published thereafter: Wolf 2002, who does not deal with the points of view discussed here, as well as Zanker 2010, pp. 111–118. Fig. 19: Statue of the sleeping Ariadne, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original from the 2nd century BCE. Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Galleria delle statue 11, Inv. No. 548.

Fig. 19. Statue of the sleeping Ariadne, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original from the 2nd century BCE. Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Galleria delle statue 11, Inv. No. 548.

viewed (Fig. 20).[59] Calculated effects in the arrangement of her garment (modelled with unusual virtuosity) guide the gaze toward parts of the drapery that have accidentally shifted during sleep, exposing her body; cascades of cloth draped with equal subtlety obscure the view of – for example – her right breast and invite viewers to step closer and see what they have missed from farther away. Through intentional markers and optical effects, the viewer is led toward the statue and invited to view it from up close; carefully placed folds lead the gaze deeper, or parts of the body at first difficult to see in the shadows of the folds stimulate erotic curiosity and encourage the viewer to enter the pictorial space occupied by the prone figure and put himself into the position of the person we would actually expect here but who happens to be absent, namely, Dionysus. According to the mythological narrative in which we find Ariadne asleep and her beauty unintentionally but all the more effectively on display, the god who discovers the

59 Fig. 20: Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570): cast of the statue of the sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican (1543), Schloss Fontainebleau; after a cast in the Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke München.

Fig. 20. Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570): cast of the statue of the sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican (1543), Schloss Fontainebleau; after a cast in the Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke München.

sleeping Ariadne on Naxos cannot be absent, and in all known iconographic versions of the discovery of Ariadne, Dionysus is in fact a standard part of the composition. In all surviving Roman copies of this statue, however, he is conspicuously absent. In his place, the statue invites the viewer to take the role of Dionysus, to desire Ariadne in place of the absent god and fill the empty space he senses through his knowledge of the mythological narrative to fill the empty space in the visual narrative. The viewer becomes part of the action, enters the reality of the myth. The lost, realistic painting of Ariadne's figure – for instance, with the transparent drapery to be expected on female figures since the Hellenistic era[60] – will have made even clearer the illusion of a living figure and heightened the attractiveness of the sleeper. The viewer will have naturally interpreted Ariadne's monumental size as a sign of her mythological, if not divine, status.

The experience of seeing the statue of Ariadne of course presupposes specific cultural knowledge of her myth and, above all, the iconographic tradition of presenting this myth in an artwork. This knowledge makes the viewers conscious of the absence of the god Dionysus, a blank space in the visual narrative, and allows them to imagine their way into the picture instead of Dionysus. They are invited and almost seduced by the material design of the statue, the composition of the reclining figure, the realistic arrangement of her body, her almost tangible drapery – all intentionally created optical tags like the ap-

60 Cf., for example, the suggested recovery of the ancient polychromy of the statue of a woman in robes, known as the *Kleine Herkulanerin*: Brinkmann / Koch-Brinkmann 2020, pp. 214f.

parently accidental revelation of parts of her body that make them step closer and draw them into the action and make them accomplices of the narrative. Cultural knowledge leads to practical action elicited by the materiality of the environment – the sculpture, its placement, and spatial arrangement – and as it were sets them in motion, guides their perception of the image, and forms and defines their experience as aesthetic and also as erotic desire. Immersive aesthetic experiences often demand that viewers move, change position, walk around an object, adopt various perspectives, and compare distanced and proximal views. One must approach a sculpture so closely that one can see 'into' it, grasp the complexity of its spatial order, and even understand its surface texture and be able to discover subtle details, to surrender oneself to its illusionistic charms, allow oneself to be drawn in and immersed in the work. The viewer's involvement is not just presupposed and conceptually calculated in its aesthetic effect but actively compelled by intentionally deployed promises to set in motion visual and – as in the statue of Ariadne – erotic stimuli. The viewer becomes the accomplice of the artist, *actively* participates in the unfolding of the work's aesthetic effect and also in the unfolding of its semantics; the viewers' understanding of the pictorial action only now becomes fully obvious through their movement and active participation and immersion in the sculptural arrangement.

5. The Kinetics of Seeing: The Peripatetic Gaze

Immersive aesthetic experiences like viewing the statue of the sleeping Ariadne presume a large measure of emotional, physical, sensory, and intellectual engagement on the part of the viewer, often including an active, purposeful sensuous attention. However, there are artworks that privilege forms of aesthetic perception that require no – or very little – conscious attention. One could say they are perceived *en passant*, disinterestedly, casually, calmly, without presuming a contemplative or engaged gaze but only the aimless gaze of the flaneur. This is art intended to be perceived casually. It more likely supports social behavior than forces itself on the viewer. For some time, I have been trying to elucidate such experiences, which assume a certain kinetics of viewing, through the example of the 'peripatetic gaze,' an unexcitable, wandering, almost uninterested form of perception, the ancient equivalent of the gaze of Walter Benjamin's flaneur, but which – as also in Benjamin's case – obeys a precisely defined ensemble of social expectations and ritualized ways of moving and interacting and thus generates equally precisely defined aesthetic experiences.[61]

61 'Peripatetic gaze': an expression that surprisingly has not caught on although it describes very precisely a particular form of visual perception, namely, a gaze that follows a wandering but nevertheless precisely calculated path prescribed by the pictures themselves. I first used the concept in a 2006 lecture in Basel and then in the following years in several repetitions of this lecture in Germany, Switzerland, and the U.S., but it seems not to have been more widely adopted.

I choose an example that one might expect to require especially attentive and educated viewers who would inspect every detail of a picture, compare their reading of the image with their literary expertise, and construct relationships between visual information and their own previous knowledge. The work in question is a cycle of pictures in a Roman house that depicts the well-known myth of the fall of Troy. Such pictures with mythological themes are quite frequent in Roman residential dwellings; especially in rooms intended to display prestige, they are the dominant means of expressive interior decoration.[62] In the Roman imperial era, a fixed convention for them emerged: mythological images were placed in the center of the walls in order to attract attention and essentially created the room's ambient impression. But there was a different type of domestic mythic images that was characteristic of the late republican period, the 1st century BCE, before individual mythological pictures became fashionable at the beginning of the Augustan era. These were friezes that narrated an extensive mythic action in a continuous succession of scenes running along a section of wall. And unlike the mythological pictures mentioned above, they refer to a text – as a rule, a Greek epic – which they retell and knowledge of which they presuppose.[63]

Most important, they require to be read in a different way, with attention not to individual scenes and the fields of significance they conjure up but to the successive reenactment of the mythic action from one picture to the next – a causal narrative connection whose significance is revealed only in the knowledge of all the scenes. The longest frieze of this kind ever unearthed, created around 40–30 BCE, was found in a luxurious house in Pompeii, the *Casa del Criptoportico* (Fig. 21).[64] The homeowner's need for lavish display of his wealth was manifest in the subterranean cryptoporticus complex, that gives the house its modern sobriquet. As a cool retreat from the summer heat, the cryptoporticus – a system of subterranean ambulatories with adjoining common rooms – was a typical part of the architectural inventory for the cultivation of elevated leisure in luxurious villas; the homeowner adopted the architectural style from the Roman *villeggiatura* along with the lifestyle it represented. He equipped the subterranean realm constructed beneath the garden in front of his house with a lounge or dining room – an *oecus* – as well as a multi-room bathing wing, both accessible from the *ambu-*

62 On mythological pictures in Roman dwellings, their spatial distribution and effect, and their various forms of being perceived, see the fundamental work in Lorenz 2008; on the social rituals and kinds of movement in Roman dwellings, see esp. Dickmann 1999.

63 On the continuous picture friezes of the so-called Second Style in Roman homes of the late Republic, see Scagliarini Corláita 1997, pp. 119–123.

64 On the *Casa del Criptoportico* and the frieze of the *Iliad*: Spinazzola 1953, pp. 435–593; Bragantini / De Vos / Parise Badoni 1990 (I. Bragantini on the house); Aurigemma 1953 (on the *Iliad* frieze in the cryptoporticus). Fig. 21: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), condition around 40/30 BCE.

Fig. 21. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), condition around 40/30 BCE.

latio (Fig. 22).[65] The cryptoporticus received its only light from window shafts sunk from the garden above at an angle; one can imagine that the garden vegetation diminished the light even more, casting subdued illumination into the cool *ambulatio*.

The master of the house could receive his guests for private conversations in the *ambulatio*, invite them to bathe as a group, and later enjoy a festive meal in the *oecus*. The flexibility of use afforded by the cryptoporticus was suited to a multiplicity of social connections and the differing status of the guests. It allowed a variable number of rooms to be visited and different options for what occurred in them. This principle is reflected

65 Fig. 22: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), north wing of the *ambulatio*, late second Pompeii style (ca. 40/30 BCE).

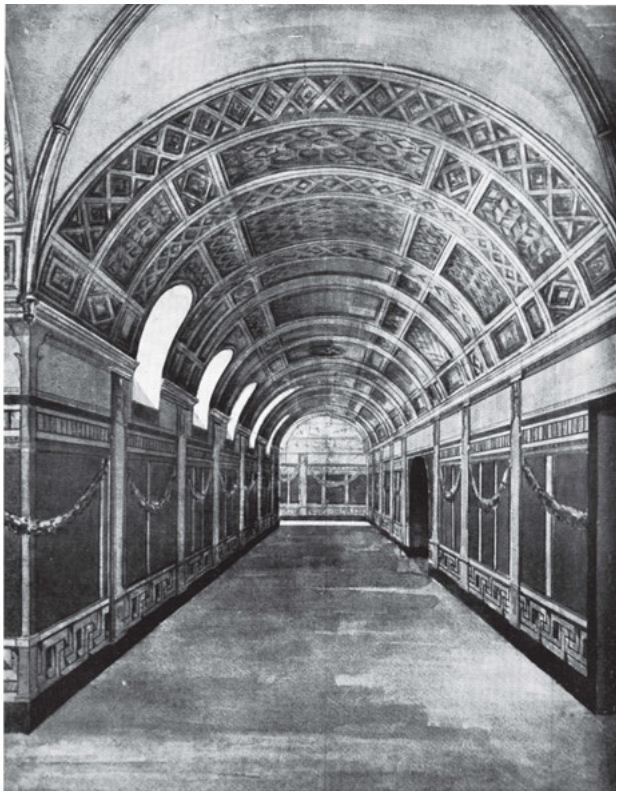

Fig. 22. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), north wing of the *ambulatio*, late second Pompeii style (ca. 40/30 BCE).

in the variety of decoration in the cryptoporticus's rooms. The most elaborate decorations are in some of the relatively smaller rooms of the bathing wing; their walls are painted with complicated architectural prospects that recede into the distance like staggered stage scenery – by far the most sophisticated type of contemporary wall painting. For the adjoining *oecus*, a somewhat simpler decoration was chosen that was typical for banqueting rooms (Fig. 23):[66] an illusionistic colonnade that transformed the space into a ballroom and behind it, a shear wall hung with garlands. The space above the shear wall appears to be open to the outside, but the view is interrupted by small panel paintings with fold-back doors that sit atop the wall.

Only slightly less ornate are the decorations of the cryptoporticus itself (Fig. 24).[67] At first glance, its gallery of herms, satyrs, and maenads resembles that in the *oecus*.

66 Fig. 23: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the north wall of the *oecus:* panel painting with doors folded back above the shear wall.

67 Fig. 24: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the south wall of the north wing of the *ambulatio*.

Fig. 23. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the north wall of the *oecus*: panel painting with doors folded back above the shear wall.

However, the plasticity of the painted architecture is visibly reduced, and most important, the wall behind the herms is painted as a closed surface, not a shear wall allowing a view of the outside above it. Instead, in the corresponding location there is the frieze of figures mentioned above. This is the most detailed and complete transfer of an identifiable literary text into a visual medium that has survived from classical antiquity to today. Its theme is the narrative of the Trojan War and the destruction of Troy. The mythical action follows not some random version of the story but precisely identifiable literary sources. In a total length of 57 or 58 meters, approximately 80 to 90 individual scenes are depicted. About nine-tenths of them show episodes from the Homeric *Iliad*, while the rest are taken from the *Aethiopis* of Arctinus – a sort of continuation of the *Iliad* – and scenes of the capture and destruction of Troy not treated in the *Iliad*. The textual sources for all of these additional scenes have not survived.

Fig. 24. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the south wall of the north wing of the *ambulatio*.

The frieze has a clearly defined beginning (Fig. 25)[68] from which the action unrolls in successive paintings. Beginning in the west wing, it runs along the outer walls of the cryptoporticus across the north wing and into the east wing, where it turns and continues along the inner walls back across the north wing and into the west wing, on whose southern short side it ends. The viewer's gaze is not focused on individual pictures and their interpretation, but on successive recognition of the whole story and merely summary perception of individual episodes while walking past the wall. This 'distracted' perception corresponded to the peripatetic rhythm of the social ritual acted out in the *ambulatio*: the ceremonies of welcoming and accompanying guests, or strolling up and

68 Fig. 25: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the west wall of the west wing of the *ambulatio*: The plague in the Achaean camp.

Fig. 25. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the west wall of the west wing of the *ambulatio*: The plague in the Achaean camp.

down in intimate conversation with business associates or magistrates. The sequential order of the images supported this dynamic, or possibly even guided its direction by the narrative order of the cycle. This was a kind of perception not intended to demand a careful exegesis of each individual picture but to be a rather casual appreciation in which an occasional look at the pictures confirmed what one remembers of the epic content, the Trojan War. As mentioned above, I call this relaxed, rambling, distracted, inattentive, careless, and even indolent perception the 'peripatetic gaze.' It is a wandering gaze that allows itself to be carried along by occasional glances at the progress of the visual narrative, legible without any great hermeneutic effort, a gaze that does not expand knowledge of the frieze or the epic it presents but rather promotes the forward progress of the viewer – that sets him in motion, as it were. Of course, this presupposes cultural knowledge, but that knowledge serves the kinetics of the viewer, not an interpretation of the images.

The wall decorations of the *oecus*, on the other hand, tell a very different story (Fig. 23). The *pinakes* placed between the herms attract attention to their individual

depictions and force a *pause* in the viewer's movement in harmony with the *static* behavior of the banqueters. But the imposing character of the frieze in the cryptoporticus was aimed at an experience of space stimulated by the peripatetic mode of movement and perception. The architectural illusion created by the colonnade of a monumental, palatial space was meant to impress and make palpable the reputation and *auctoritas* of the house's owner. Strolling through the *ambulatio* was like walking in a Greek temple or palace, or at least in a Roman villa that aspired to be one.

In both cases, spatial experience and routines of movement that accompany the rituals of social representation are motivated and guided by two different arrangements of wall decoration for the cryptoporticus and the *oecus,* above all by the decidedly different narrative structure of the most important decorative elements, namely, the *Iliad* frieze and the *pinakes*, that require different modes of contemplation and differing levels of visual attention: a rather static, contemplative mode of reading that leaves time to unravel the not easily interpreted and quite ambiguous *pinakes* and also probably motivated conversation at table; and in contrast, the peripatetic mode of perception for the *Iliad* frieze that is satisfied with occasional checks to confirm that the frieze continues to tell the story of the fall of Troy. To be sure, it also occasionally invited viewers to stop, look more closely at a single picture, perhaps pass judgment on its artistic execution, or decipher the inscription to see whether it matched their own identification of the scene. Primarily, however, it motivated the viewer to keep going and reach the conclusion of the frieze: Aeneas's flight from Troy.

6. Summary

Can the project of reconstructing an ancient aesthetics of sensory experience, as exemplified by the two pioneering studies by James Porter and Jonas Grethlein discussed above – but also by a series on the senses in classical antiquity edited by Mark Bradley and Shane Butler[69] – become the starting point for an alternative to modern theories of aesthetics? Is it capable of founding a new aesthetics that leads away from a classical theory of the beautiful, foregrounds alternative forms of aesthetic experience, and establishes a theory of sensory experience?

In the current discussion of ancient art, Grethlein is the leading critic of the supposed dominance of hermeneutical and semiotic interpretive approaches, maintaining that they should be replaced by an aesthetics of sensory attention to materiality and tangibility. But Grethlein ends up being theoretically vague with regard to images and artistry, and as his analysis of ancient examples shows, he cannot do without the very

69 See Squire 2016, as well as the volumes by Bradley 2014; Butler / Purves 2014; Purves 2017; Rudolph 2017; Butler / Nooter 2018.

hermeneutical approach to images that he would like to exorcise. By contrast, I prioritize a praxeological model of images and art that relies on Sophia Prinz's analyses and ultimately the work of Bourdieu and Foucault. This model works primarily with the phenomenon of the incorporation of discourses and thus supplements a semiotic or hermeneutical reading of visual narratives with first, a non-cognitive, visual, sensuous, and aesthetic dimension of experience accomplished by physical performance, action, and interaction with objects; and second, with the concept of the dispositive (or parapictoriality, my preferred term) that constitutes the spatial, social, and cultural contextual frame (or horizon) in which praxeological aesthetic experiences are enabled and take place. The advantage of the praxeological approach lies above all in this concept of a parapictorial dispositive that defines and controls the cultural codes that guide the social practices as well as the unconscious practices of incorporation, thereby making available a scenario that situates praxeological aesthetic experiences in their specific historical, social, cultural, and spatial context and does not rob them of this context – as does Grethlein's "seeing-in," for him a fundamental and ahistorical cognitive condition of visual perception.

Another advantage of the model of a praxeological aesthetics developed here is that it was developed using the interpretation of ancient artifacts within the cultural context of their use and their aesthetic consumption itself, with attention to their material shape and their design for the specific conventions of their use (including their decoration with images), and not by applying a presumed aesthetic theory that precedes the reading of these artifacts and guides their aesthetic perception. The examples discussed above can be regarded as paradigmatic cases of the flexible concept of aesthetics that is the aim of the CRC *Different Aesthetics*, a new calibration of what aesthetic experience means, which makes the objects themselves as well as the ritualized daily practices and situations of their use the elements and showplaces of the development of aesthetic perceptions. It is precisely the strangeness of premodern aesthetic experiences and their integration into performative practices of interaction with objects in specific, culturally and socially defined spaces or dispositives that open up opportunities for the new, alternative aesthetics envisioned by the CRC *Different Aesthetics*.

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