Research Article

Erika Doss*

American Art Matters: Rethinking Materiality in American Studies

https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2019-0007
Received August 24, 2018; accepted October 23, 2018

Abstract: The "material" turn has steadily gained currency in cultural studies and the humanities, with scholars increasingly attentive to theorising things and examining their presence, power, and meaning in any number of fields and disciplines. This essay stems from the keynote lecture given at the conference *MatteReality: Historical Trajectories and Conceptual Futures for Material Culture Studies*, held on March 23, 2017, at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Freiburg. Focused in particular on the meaning of materiality in American art history and American Studies today, it opens with an examination of the factors of monetisation and mobility and segues to a consideration of more efficacious ways to assess, theorise, and critique the material turn. Two areas that are particularly relevant in terms of rethinking, and mediating, materiality in American art and American Studies are those of technological process and affect: how things are made and how things make us feel.

Keywords: materiality, monetisation, mobility, capitalism, modernism

How does American art matter today? For many who have asked that question recently, answers have been found in terms of art market economics, or the financial ebb and flow of material culture in modern capitalism. In *Cultures of Financialisation*, theorist Max Haiven examines the "increased power of the financial sector in the economy, in politics, in social life, and in culture" today: the steady creep of financial ideas, metaphors, narratives, measurements (what university administrators and management consultants call "metrics") and values that are used to quantify and qualify contemporary society and culture (Haiven, Cultures of Financialisation 1). Money matters, in other words, and plays an enormous role in terms of how audiences, from the general public to historians, collectors, and curators, think about art and materiality today.

Mobility also matters, both as a metaphor for the fast pace of change in modern times and more literally as a recognition of how works of art, including objects and images in multiple media and styles, "travel" through space and time especially because of their potential for modern monetisation. In 1962, for example, American Pop artist Andy Warhol painted *One Dollar Bill (Silver Certificate*), a six-foot-wide canvas of the kind of currency that was official legal tender in the United States from 1878 to 1964 (so named for being initially redeemable for its face value in silver dollar coins). Warhol hand-traced a projection of a one dollar bill onto the canvas, an image he derived from his friend Edward Wallowitch's photograph of three separate one dollar bills, and then cropped, altered, and monumentalized the design (Catalogue Note).

The last of Warhol's hand-painted canvases (he soon switched to silkscreen techniques) and the first of his many pictures focused on the mundane and rarely examined objects and images of everyday American life (such as his *Soup Can* paintings, which were also made in 1962), *One Dollar Bill* was originally owned by Frederick Hughes, Warhol's longtime business manager. Hughes, who was also the publisher of Warhol's magazine *Interview*, was appointed an executor of Warhol's estate when the artist died unexpectedly in

***Corresponding author: Erika Doss,** Department of American Studies, University of Notre Dame, 1043 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556, E-mail: doss.2@nd.edu

1987. For many years, *One Dollar Bill* hung in Hughes's office in the Factory, the fluctuating Manhattan studio (it moved three times between 1962 and 1984) where Warhol and his assistants made paintings, movies, and more. Sometime between 1988 and 1992, *One Dollar Bill* was acquired by Galerie Bruno Bischofberger in Zurich. In 1997, it was purchased by Swiss billionaire Urs Schwarzenbach, a currency trader and hotelier who often displayed his private art collection, including works by Joan Miró, Salvador Dali, Takashi Murakami, Henri Moore, and Warhol, in his five-star properties. In 2015, Warhol's *One Dollar Bill* was sold to an anonymous telephone buyer at Sotheby's London for $32.8 million (Reyburn "At Art Auctions"). Both in terms of its art world valuation and its ownership history, *One Dollar Bill* attests to the mutability and mobility of material culture in modern capitalism, and how the meaning of things today is typically embedded in market economics.

Likewise, consider the travelogue of Abstract Expressionist artist Jackson Pollock's first major large-scale painting, titled *Mural*. In July 1943, art gallery owner Peggy Guggenheim commissioned Pollock to design a large painting—eight feet tall and twenty feet long—for the entrance hall of her five-story townhouse in New York, at 155 East Sixty-First Street. Hoping to keep the artist motivated on the project, Guggenheim paid Pollock a stipend of $150 a month. Pollock worked on the large painting through the summer and fall, and by early November, *Mural* was installed in Guggenheim's apartment. Pollock later remarked that the dynamic, wildly painted, and vividly coloured canvas represented "a stampede . . . [of] every animal in the American West, cows and horses and antelopes and buffaloes. Everything is charging across that goddamn surface" (Naifeh 468). Pollock was born in Cody, Wyoming in 1912, and *Mural* was both a personal tribute to his "wild West" upbringing and a public declaration of his brash determination to create a new, physically assertive kind of "action" painting that would put him, and mid-century American abstraction, on the modern art map. Indeed, as the influential art critic Clement Greenberg later recalled, "I took one look at it, and I knew Jackson was the greatest painter this country had produced" (Naifeh 472).

In 1947, Pollock's colossal painting was pried from the walls of Guggenheim's apartment and transported to the 42nd Street studios of *Vogue* magazine. There, it was photographed by Herbert Matter, a friend of the artist who was an innovative graphic designer and whose work with motion studies is considered a major influence on Pollock's development of Abstract Expressionism (Landau 22). Matter shot several promotional photos of the painting, including some with Pollock posing on the right side, before *Mural* was moved to New York's Museum of Modern Art, where it was shown in the exhibit *Large Scale Modern Painting* from April 1 to May 4, 1947. That summer, Pollock's big painting went to Yale University, where it was exhibited for a few months in the university's art gallery. In 1948, shortly after she moved to Venice, Guggenheim donated *Mural* to the University of Iowa. She had originally offered it to Yale, but George Heard Hamilton, an art historian who was the Associate Director of the Yale University Art Gallery at the time, remarked that "student interest" in *Mural* was "conspicuous by its absence" during the months the painting was on view, and the university was not moved to accept Guggenheim's gift (Hamilton qtd. in Doss, "Arrival and Afterlife" 118). In October 1951, Pollock's *Mural* arrived in Iowa City, where it was displayed for many years in the art department classrooms of the University of Iowa.

In the mid-1960s, the painting was relocated to a more public and prominent location in the main university library, and in 1969, it was moved to the University of Iowa Museum of Art, where it became the celebrated centrepiece of a public gallery housing some 14,000 works of art. In June 2008, however, more than one-sixth of the Iowa City campus was flooded, destroying the art museum and forcing staff to move the entire art collection to various off-site and remote locations. *Mural* was moved to the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, Iowa, an hour's drive from the university. Some Iowa state politicians proposed selling *Mural*—then worth an estimated $150 million dollars—to offset the costs of flood damage on the campus, and to underwrite student scholarships. The university's president, along with students, faculty, and the governor of Iowa angrily protested the idea of the sale, insisting that Pollock's painting remain in Iowa as part of the state's modern art treasures.

Their demands were convincing, but Pollock's painting was also taken out of circulation: sent in July 2012 to the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles for extensive cleaning, conservation, and re-stretching. In spring 2014, *Mural* was re-installed at the Getty Center in a four-month exhibit, titled *Jackson Pollock: Mural*. In 2015, the painting travelled to Venice where it was installed at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection

and displayed during the 56th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale. After the Biennale, *Mural* went on a high-profile and very well attended tour to museums in Berlin, Malaga, London, and Bilbao—where, at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, it drew more than 356,000 people. In 2017, *Mural* returned to the United States and began a two-year national tour, placed on display at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Columbia Museum of Art in South Carolina. Museum staff at the University of Iowa anticipate that *Mural* will soon return to the state and be re-installed in the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, a new building whose cost is being underwritten in part by a generous donation from Richard and Mary Jo Stanley of Muscatine, Iowa. However, state funding cuts for higher education have deferred many building projects, and it is likely that groundbreaking for the new art museum, and the return of Pollock's painting, are still in the distant future.

The story of *Mural*'s mobility and monetisation describes the afterlife of many works of modern American art. As critic Andreas Huyssen observes, assumptions that modernism is characterised by a "great divide" between fine art and mass culture are mistaken. An economy of exchange between modern art and the market has been well in place since the nineteenth century and has "proven to be amazingly resilient," suggesting that "perhaps neither of these two combatants can do without the other, that their much-heralded mutual exclusiveness is really a sign of their secret interdependence" (Huyssen 16).

Indeed, the monetisation of Jackson Pollock's *Mural* in 2008, and then again in 2011, when Iowa legislators proposed for a second time a plan to sell the painting to cover some of the state's revenue shortfalls, suggests that American art is largely considered on fundamentally financial terms today. Traditionally, the fields of art history and material culture have tended toward defining specific styles, addressing how objects and images are designed, made, and used, and discerning the variances of craftsmanship, quality, and value. These disciplinary practices are linked to attendant understandings of regional and national identities, which are typically attached to particular geographies. But as scholars including Patricia Johnston, Caroline Frank, and Lisa Lowe explain, art and material culture are often transnational and transcultural: emerging from more fluid, flexible, and creative circuits of transmission, adaptation, reinterpretation, and transformation. Moving from the studio to the gallery, museum, or auction house, art objects are rarely inert. In the capitalist societies of modern times, they are often agents of economic exchange.

Despite the economic crisis that began in 2007, money's dominance in American culture—as an arbiter of artistic value, as an incentive among contemporary artists, and as the material stuff of art itself—has never been stronger or more visible. German conceptual artist Hans-Peter Feldmann made this abundantly clear in a 2011 installation at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, where he cashed in the $100,000 he received as the winner of the museum's Hugo Boss Prize in 2010 (a biennial award given for significant achievement in contemporary art) and pinned the money, all in $1 dollar bills, to the walls and columns of the museum's second floor Tower Gallery. In 1975, Warhol remarked, "Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art." He added: "I like money on the wall. Say you were going to buy a $200,000 painting. I think you should take that money, tie it up, and hang it on the wall. Then when someone visited you the first thing they would see is the money on the wall" (Warhol 92, 133-34). Riffing on Warhol's oft-quoted quips about the connections between art and money, Feldmann's installation—titled *The Color of Money*—succinctly expressed the contemporary fetishisation of cultural capital. In 2004, for example, the song "For the Love of Money," which was originally recorded by the O'Jays in 1973 and featured the refrain "money money money money MONEY," became the theme song for the reality TV show *The Apprentice*, hosted by real estate developer Donald Trump. "We're going to make America wealthy again," Trump bragged on the presidential campaign trail in 2016. "You have to be wealthy in order to be great" (Stokols).

Presumptions about the totalizing "greatness" of financial wealth are blatantly on display, Haiven remarks, in the "economics of fine art financing, insurance, and auctions" (Haiven, "Art and Money" 43). The substantial prices paid for certain American paintings at art auction houses, such as more than $44 million for Georgia O'Keeffe's *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1* at Sotheby's New York in 2014 (the highest price ever paid for a work by a female artist), almost $82 million for Warhol's *Triple Elvis* at Christie's New York in 2014, and $37 million for Jean-Michel Basquiat's *The Field Next to the Other Road*, also at Christie's New York in 2015, epitomize the "spectacle of excess" dominating today's art market. In May

2015, Christie's New York sold over $1 billion dollars U.S. in contemporary art in three days. In 2014, art auction sales around the globe totalled €24.6 billion euros, or 48% of the entire art market (De Aenile). New technologies encourage art sales to be as mobile as art itself: online art sales grew from $3.6 billion U.S. in 2014 to $4.2 billion U.S. in 2017 (Freeman).

"A new class of buyer has entered the market and they're prepared to pay staggering sums for trophy pictures," observes art consultant Abigail Asher, referencing the "new tech" moguls such as Paul Allen and Bill Gates, and other billionaire businessmen, who are buying and selling American art today (Asher qtd. in Reyburn, "Christie's"). Art has been "a very, very good investment for me," remarks Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft (qtd. in Kazakina). Indeed: in 2007, Allen purchased *Untitled (Red, Blue, Orange)*, a 1955 painting by American Abstract Expressionist artist Mark Rothko, from Christie's New York for $34.2 million dollars. In 2014, he sold the painting for $56 million at Phillips New York. In 2015, in a private sale, hedge fund billionaire Ken Griffin, founder of the investment firm Citadel, paid $500 million for two Abstract Expressionist paintings: Jackson Pollock's *Number 17A*, a 1948 drip canvas, and Willem de Kooning's 1955 canvas *Interchange* (Crow). Griffin loaned the paintings to the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is on the Board of Trustees. Of course, based on speculation and subject to little or no financial oversight (few New York's galleries, for example, post their prices, or disclose how they assign value), the art market is fickle. During the worst years of the Great Recession, from 2007-2009, art sales plunged 35% at the major auction houses.

Some contemporary American artists focus on revealing and critiquing the social and political power of money: this has been Conceptual artist Barbara Kruger's creative strategy for some forty years. Other artists endeavour to show the collusion between art and money, often embracing fiscal relationships with mercenary enthusiasm. This is surely an apt description of Jeff Koons's artistic practice for the past forty years. In 2013, Koons's twelve-foot stainless steel sculpture *Balloon Dog (Orange)* broke records to become the most expensive work of art by a living artist to be sold at auction. The price paid: $58.4 million dollars. Still, whether their art practices are critical or complicit, the work that both Kruger and Koons produce circulates in the top tier of the art market. In 2011, for example, Kruger's 1985 photograph *Untitled (When I hear the word culture I take out my checkbook)* sold for $902,500 at Christie's New York, more than $552,500 above the auction house estimate of $250,000 to $350,000.

In 2016, the art world was shaken by the leak of the so-called "Panama Papers," some eleven million documents exposing the shady offshore wheelings and dealings of the law firm and "corporate services provider" Mossack Fonseca (based in Panama). The leaked documents revealed the firm's management of a "secretive global network of wealth circulating undeclared and untaxed" which included many prominent art world figures and auction houses (Sutton and Voon). On the one hand, materialist revelations of the murky pecuniary conditions of art matters are rather refreshing: they blatantly expose the hidden economics of a largely unregulated and invisible art world. On the other hand, however delicious these scandals, however spectacular and sensational, these exposés can be limiting and reductive, mostly reinforcing cynicism about art market corruption, insider trading, and money laundering while yielding few insights about how and why certain things are valued higher than others, or how and why the operations of social labour and human resources work within this hyper-financialized capitalist culture.

As the organisers of the 2017 conference *MatteReality: Historical Trajectories and Conceptual Futures for Material Culture Studies* assert, we are "witnessing a material turn in cultural studies not merely thematically, but foremost theoretically." The examples I have discussed suggest the art market's rapacious appetite today for exchanging things, and for doing so at increasingly higher prices. This is contextualised by a global economic turn toward material entitlement, no matter the costs. How, then, can scholars who work on the stuff of material culture most productively thematise and theorise the material turn? What are the most efficacious ways to assess, and critique, the material culture of late modern capitalism?

Capitalism, Haiven reminds us, "is a system of material relationships whose ultimate horizon is its own replication." It is an especially dynamic and mutable system, "constantly transforming in response to internal crises and external challenges." It is not, in other words, simply or only a "pure system" of materialist accumulation but one that continually mediates "institutions, social structures, systems of value, and processes" that are pertinent to its sustained reproduction (Haiven, "Art and Money" 50). Two

areas that I think are particularly relevant in terms of rethinking, and mediating, the complexities and contradictions of materiality in American art and American Studies are those of technology and affect: how things are made and how things make us feel.

Consider the affective materiality, for example, of temporary memorials. These are typically public sites of trauma and tragedy which people visit to express grief and sorrow, and where they leave material offerings that embody their feelings (Doss, *The Emotional Life*). At the gates in front of Kensington Palace in 1997, at Columbine High School in 1999, on the streets surrounding the devastated Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in 2001, on the sidewalks near the artists collective in Oakland, California where a fire killed 36 people in 2016, visitors left flowers, candles, teddy bears, cards, and other objects to convey their sorrow. Some argue that temporary memorials are overwrought displays of bad taste, of "conspicuous compassion" and "mourning sickness" (West). Yet their global popularity suggests how much "things matter," as material culture theorists from Daniel Miller to Jules Prown argue (Miller 6, Prown). Temporary memorials especially matter in terms of how they mediate the psychic crisis of sudden, devastating loss and corresponding feelings of pain, grief, and sorrow. Today's "memorial mania" is deeply grounded in the intersections of materialist practices and affective response. Temporary memorials further matter in terms of how they "evoke memories, sustain thoughts, constitute political conditions, and conjure states of being," how they perform or function, like other kinds of commemoration, as "memory aids" (Doss, Memorial Mania 71-72). Their widespread visibility, and similarity, reveals the mobility of things (and their motivating capacity) throughout modern capitalism: we can buy the things they are made of at stores all around the globe. Their affective "thing-ness," in other words, is eminently and easily recognisable and reproducible.

Consider, by extension, the emotional dynamics of the production and reception of the paintings and magazine covers of American illustrator Norman Rockwell. In 2010, the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) in Washington, D.C. mounted an impressive exhibit of Rockwell's illustrations for the popular twentieth-century magazine *Saturday Evening Post*, as well as paintings owned by George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, Hollywood directors who are avid fans and major collectors of the artist's work. Both directors acknowledge Rockwell's influence on their films, and explain that his affective nuances lie at the heart of their movie-making interests and objectives. "He is painting to emotionally connect with an audience, which is what we do in the movies," Lucas observed in 2010 (qtd. in Trescott). Lucas explains that audiences want movies that are "not only entertaining" but touch "the emotional side of a human being." As he notes, "I make movies that way. Steven makes movies that way. A lot of people think it should be a cerebral exercise. We don't. We believe that it's an emotional connection between the viewer and the artist" (Lucas qtd. in Mecklenburg 20). Both directors have also paid some of the highest prices for Rockwell's paintings. In 2013, Lucas paid $46 million dollars for Rockwell's 1951 painting *Saving Grace*, more than double its pre-sale estimate at Sotheby's (Boucher). In April 2018, he bought Rockwell's 1950 painting *Shuffleton's Barbershop*, the centrepiece of a fierce legal battle over the deaccessioning of forty works in the Berkshire Museum of Art, for an estimated $30 million dollars.

In the catalogue that accompanied SAAM's 2010 exhibition, museum director Elizabeth Broun observed, "Norman Rockwell's art is loved in a way that transcends simple analysis of his subjects and style. The affection people have for his paintings" remains "unshaken" and "endures today." "To understand why," she added, "we need to consider how [Rockwell's] stories have found their ways into our hearts" (Broun 10).

In his influential study *Imagined Communities*, first published in 1983, political scientist Benedict Anderson argued that certain symbols, styles, and cultural practices generate "affective bonds of nationalism" that are as strong and enduring as the bonds of family, region, religion, and/or ethnic and racial identity (Anderson 64). "The cultural products of nationalism," he wrote, "poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts—show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles" (Anderson 141). Norman Rockwell often depicted these "affective bonds" of American nationalism, from ideals of free speech and democratic politics to those of patriotism and fair play. As Lucas observed in 2010, Rockwell's pictures "symbolized . . . what America held most dear . . . society's ambitions and emotions and, as corny as they are, that's what America is" (qtd. in Mecklenburg 19). The "affection" that audiences express for Rockwell's pictures is typically relayed in terms of admiration for his technical mastery of a hyper-realist style that

intimated authenticity, and his mastery (some might argue "manipulation") of different emotional states. Artists who understand the affective dynamics of visual and material culture, from magazine illustrators like Rockwell to movie directors like Spielberg and Lucas, tend to occupy very special places in American "hearts."

Not surprisingly, the Smithsonian's exhibit, which was titled *Telling Stories*, was very well attended, with crowds eager to see and feel Rockwell's paintings. "Living paintings" were even on display at the opening, with actors re-enacting characters in Rockwell paintings such as his 1936 *Movie Starlet with Reporters*. More than once, however, I overheard viewers remark that they did not understand how Rockwell's oil-on-canvas paintings, many measuring three by four feet in size, "became" the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine which measured 11 x 14 inches. Viewers were puzzled, in other words, about technological processes of reproduction: about how Rockwell's paintings were "turned into" magazine covers. Over a fifty-year career spanning the 1910s through the 1960s, Rockwell painted 332 covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Given that it was one of the most widely circulated middle-class magazines of its day, with a peak readership of seven million readers in the 1950s, the *Post* remains a broadly and fondly remembered body of material culture. Rockwell himself was thrilled when his first *Post* cover was printed in 1916, later recalling: "Two million subscribers and then their wives, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, friends. Wow! All looking at my cover" (Rockwell 122).

Rockwell's first *Saturday Evening Post* cover was printed in a two-colour "duotone" process by which two halftone images, one in black and one in another colour, usually red, were superimposed. By the 1920s, the invention of the four-colour separation process permitted the richer, "full colour" covers that became Rockwell's and the *Post*'s trademark, and the stuff of the enduring affection for his artwork today. Unfortunately, connecting the affective responses that audiences have to (and with) Rockwell's art with the technical processes, creative labor, and physical resources that went into making his magazine covers, or explaining how Rockwell's paintings "became" the material reality of a magazine cover, was not explored in the museum exhibit. An opportunity to inform audiences about the mechanics of illustrated periodicals, and to imaginatively and critically push beyond the discipline's privileging of star artists, famous collectors, and high market prices and to assess larger, systematic operations of capitalist materiality was lost.

Several museums making interesting inroads toward these materialist based perspectives are, somewhat ironically, the Fujifilm Square Photo History Museum and the Nikon Museum. Both museums are located in Tokyo, both are free of charge to visitors, and both are organised by their corporate sponsors. Fujifilm's Photo History Museum, which opened in 1983, largely documents the materials of a company that has been engaged in the photography business since 1934. The museum simultaneously showcases rare, antique, and technologically groundbreaking cameras with the different kinds of photographs they generate. It also offers museum visitors opportunities to learn about the evolution of photography and cameras through "hands-on" experiences: visitors are invited to handle collection replicas including a zoetrope (an early motion picture machine), a Kinora (an imaging device that shows a series of photographs in motion), and an eighteenth-century camera obscura.

The Nikon Museum, which opened in 2015, similarly frames cameras and their effects in a sleekly designed setting. Over 600 separate Nikon products are exhibited, including a 130-centimetre long glass ingot which is displayed as the "embodiment" of Nikon's "optical material manufacturing technologies" (Nikon Museum website). Visitors are encouraged to touch, or stroke, this dazzling thing, with the "hope," the company states in wall labels and promotional materials, that they will "appreciate its size, beauty and technological value." If this sort of "hands-on" experience veers toward high-tech porn, there is no doubt that Nikon aims to activate the affection, indeed lust, that museum visitors have for its material products. Camera collectors are an especially passionate breed of consumers, and at the Nikon Museum (and at Fujifilm's Photo History Museum), visitors can shop for the company products they love in on-site stores. Importantly, art historian Kelly Midori McCormick observes, the affective responses of visitors to the Nikon Museum are augmented by informed educational displays on the various "optical material" technologies that Nikon makes, from lenses for SLR cameras to high-end microscopes used in medical imaging (McCormick).

A similarly instructive art museum exhibition, one that also engaged the dual themes of technology and affect and especially emphasised issues of materiality in art making, was *Measured Perfection: Hiram*

Powers' Greek Slave, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum from July 3, 2015 to February 19, 2017. Organised by curator Karen Lemmey, the key object in the show was a life-size plaster model of American artist Hiram Powers' 1843 sculpture *The Greek Slave*, among the most famous statues of the nineteenth century. The plaster model is marked with the inscription "March 12, 1843" at its base, recording the exact date of its completion. It was the prototype for the full-scale marble versions of the sculpture that Powers, and the craftsmen he employed in his studio in Florence, Italy, mechanically reproduced between 1844 and 1866. In total, six life-size marble sculptures of *The Greek Slave* were made, two of which can be found in the collections of the Newark Museum and the Yale University Art Gallery, and the plaster model on display in SAAM's exhibition was the template for five of them. (A second full-size plaster model, also acquired by SAAM in the mid-1960s and most likely dating to 1865, was the source for the sixth marble version of *The Greek Slave*, made in 1866 and now in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.) The plaster model was also the source for a contemporary version of *The Greek Slave*: a glass-infused polymer replica that stood at the centre of the exhibit in the museum's Octagon Room positioned under a huge green glass cyclone designed by artist Dale Chihuly. Accompanied by text panels and items in vitrines, the exhibit *Measured Perfection* detailed the popularity and mobility of *The Greek Slave* both before and after the American Civil War of 1861-1865. It also detailed its sculptural iterations, challenging conventional assumptions about distinctions between an "original" and a "copy" and helping viewers recognize that nineteenth-century sculpture, as art historians and Martina Droth and Michael Hatt argue, "was a reproductive art, more akin to photography than to painting" (Droth and Hatt).

Ostensibly the depiction of a Greek woman abducted by Turks during the Greek War of Independence (1821 to 1830), Powers' sculpture gained widespread emotional attachment with nineteenth-century audiences because of its blatant display of the nude female body and its obvious overtures to slavery in the United States. It was constantly displayed, exhibited continuously from 1845 onwards in England, Europe, and the United States. And it was spectacularly displayed. In 1851, at the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations at the Crystal Palace in London, *The Greek Slave* was mounted on a revolving pedestal and sheltered under a red velvet canopy, which cast a rosy, flesh-coloured hue on to its stark white marble. In 1857, when the sculpture went on display at the Düsseldorf Gallery in New York City and was offered as "prize-draw" in a lottery sponsored by the Cosmopolitan Association, the revolving pedestal remained, but the canopy was removed. Although Powers contributed to a brochure on the sculpture (sold for twelve and a half cents) which emphasised that viewers should respond to *The Greek Slave* as a "thing of beauty" with "elevating effect" rather than an erotic fantasy in bondage, such moralising advice was typically ignored (Pohrt).

Nineteenth-century audiences everywhere clamoured to see and own *The Greek Slave*: to buy full-size replicas in marble and small-scale statuettes made in Parian (porcelain developed by English manufacturers in the early 1840s), alabaster, and bronze, or to purchase prints and photographs that featured her image. A nineteen-inch statuette of *The Greek Slave*, made in ceramic with painted metal chains, was found among Frederick Douglass' belongings after his death in 1895 (Korobkin). Indeed, art historians have convincingly established that the widespread display and visibility of *The Greek Slave* in major exhibition halls and in the domestic sphere played a major role in shaping abolitionist sentiment in America. That sentiment corresponded, not a little ironically, to the sculpture's widespread ownership: as a thing and image to be acquired and possessed by multiple parties. Travelling from Italy to England, America, and Europe, *The Greek Slave* epitomises the gaining mobility of nineteenth-century material culture. Powers did his best to keep up with market demand, as a trove of plaster models discovered in his Florence studio in the early 1950s revealed. In a 1952 article, *Life* magazine reported that by the time he died in Florence in 1873, Powers had made more than a half million dollars, much of it from the lucrative global appeal of *The Greek Slave* ("Sculptors Then and Now" 97).

SAAM's exhibition explained how Powers catered to *The Greek Slave*'s popularity, including "cheating" by direct body casting. Lemmey explains that in the nineteenth century, boundaries between modelling in clay and body or lifecasting were "strictly observed." Sculptors "risked their reputations and credibility" if they were suspected of plaster casting the body parts of living models rather than modelling figures in clay (Lemmey "Finding a Nineteenth Century Shortcut"). Nineteenth-century painters who worked from

photographs were similarly accused of degrading their art by placing "photo-realism" and commercialism above connoisseurship, aesthetics, and the learned skills of their profession, including composition and perspective. Anxieties about authenticity were heightened in the nineteenth century, driven by perceptions of the threats that new modes of copying and reproduction posed to originality (or the status of the "original"), and, consequently, worries about fraud. This is not surprising given the innovative technologies of the day that lent themselves to mechanical reproduction, like chromolithography. Powers was an early adaptor of multiple reproductive technologies, including direct body casting. In 1839, he cast the hands and forearms of his six-month-old daughter, Louisa, later using the moulds to make at least two sculptures, including *Child's Hand* of 1851.

"Creating a finished sculpture," Lemmey remarks, was a "long, laborious process" in the nineteenth century (Lemmey "From Skeleton to Skin"). In addition to being an astute observer of human interests in taboo subjects such as the female nude, and politically potent ones like bondage and slavery, Powers was a material culture innovator. Employing a large workforce of highly specialised craftsmen, Powers used the latest technologies in carving and reproduction to make the sculpture process as efficacious and profitable as possible. These included the pointing machine, a mechanical device that systematically transferred exact measurements from a plaster cast to a marble block (or other sculpture media). Powers also invented and secured U.S. patents for various sculpture tools including a file, metal punch, and vice (Lemmey "From Skeleton to Skin"). SAAM's exhibit amply illustrated how Powers took advantage of new tools and processes which allowed his studio to satisfy burgeoning middle-class appetites for material ownership.

Art historian Jenny Carson observes that exhibits emphasising "materials and process," such as *Measured Perfection*, are "part of a growing trend in museums that suggests increasing interest in behind-the-scenes investigations of the secrets of the artist's studio" (Carson). A video in the SAAM exhibit featuring an artist using a pointing machine while carving a bust of *The Greek Slave* helped demystify those secrets. Indeed, one of the most illuminating aspects of *Measured Perfection* was its focus on the technologies of sculptural modelling and duplication, and its revelation that nineteenth-century sculpture making was complicated and collaborative, dependent on new mechanical inventions and motivated by consumer desires toward mass production practices. Importantly, it challenged assumptions of the single, or unique, artwork, and the mastery of the single artist. Still, as Carson comments, the names of the Italian artisans who worked in Powers' studio remain undiscussed. Closer examination of the labour force that helped Powers make his material culture and his money would further qualify abiding assumptions about unique artistic talents and compel recognition of the multiple players involved in the production of multiple material culture objects and images.

To conclude, I return to Jackson Pollock's *Mural*, that mobile and monetised large-scale painting that was the artist's most significant breakthrough: the canvas that helped position him, and American Abstract Expressionism, at the centre of mid-twentieth century modernism. Its canonical status stems in part from the various myths that have surrounded it. These include, first, extravagant claims that Pollock painted *Mural* all at once—in a single, wild and crazy evening of frenetic paint throwing and dripping, similar to the moments of action painting captured in the photos that Hans Namuth shot of him in his Long Island studio some years later. Second, and more recently, art historian Henry Adams has argued that Pollock spelt out his name on the canvas in giant, if barely visible, letters. "The painting is essentially a big billboard for Jackson Pollock," Adams states. "Once he had written the letters of his name, he then hung the imagery of the painting from them" (Adams 272).

Based on a careful assessment of the object itself, including detailed analysis by conservators and curators of the paints that Pollock and how he used them, the 2014 exhibit at the Getty Center thoroughly disproved these and other "alt-fact" assumptions about *Mural*, and about Pollock's artistic motivations. The only signature Pollock painted on *Mural* was the small one on the bottom left of the canvas. What the Getty Center exhibition demonstrated was that despite appearances to the contrary, Pollock painted deliberately and carefully, albeit with a focused dynamism driven by his particular modern art interests, as he put it, to "literally be *in* the painting" and hence to become one with the material culture he produced (Pollock 79).

The modern conditions—the "matters"—of monetisation and mobility have facilitated the visibility,

and literal physical presence, of American art in galleries, museums, and private collections around the world. Focused inquiries that critique the production, dissemination, and consumption of American art help to explain why. Those that engage its mechanical, technological and affective dimensions help to move material culture studies in especially valuable critical directions.

Works Cited

Adams, Henry. *Tom and Jack: The Intertwined Lives of Thomas Hart Benton and Jackson Pollock*. Bloomsbury Press, 2009).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.

Boucher, Brian. "Was George Lucas the Buyer of Norman Rockwell's 'Saving Grace' at Sotheby's?" *Artnet*, September 1, 2016, https://news.artnet.com/market/george-lucas-norman-rockwell-sothebys-630758.

Broun, Elizabeth. "Foreword." *Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg*. Abrams, 2010.

Carson, Jenny. "Measured Perfection: Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave*." *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* vol. 2, no. 1 (Summer 2016), http://journalpanorama.org/measured-perfection-hiram-powers-greek-slave/.

Catalogue Note. *Contemporary Art Evening Auction*. Sotheby's London, 2015. http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/contemporary-art-evening-auction-l15022/lot.24.html.

Crow, Kelly. "Billionaire Ken Griffin Paid $500 Million for Pollock, DeKooning Paintings." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 2016, https://www.wsj.com/articles/billionaire-ken-griffin-paid-500-million-for-pollock-de-kooning-paintings-1455902545.

De Aenile, Conrad. "Sotheby's and Christie's Adapt to Digital Age." *New York Times*, March 11, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/12/arts/international/sothebys-and-christies-adapt-to-digital-age.html?_r=0.

Doss, Erika. *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials: Towards a Theory of Temporary Memorials*. Amsterdam University Press, 2008.

---. *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

---. "Arrival and Afterlife: Jackson Pollock's *Mural* and the University of Iowa." *Getty Research Journal*, no. 9, 2017.

Droth, Martina and Michael Hatt. *"The Greek Slave* by Hiram Powers: A Transatlantic Object." *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* vol. 15, issue 2 (Summer 2016), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/droth-hatt-intro-to-the-greek-slave-by-hiram-powers-a-transatlantic-object.

Freeman, Nate. "The Online Art Market Grew by 12% in 2017." *Artsy*, April 17, 2018, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-online-art-market-grew-12-2017-key-takeaways-2018-hiscox-report.

Haiven, Max. *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Haiven, Max. "Art and Money: Three Aesthetic Strategies in an Age of Financialisation." *Finance and Society* vol. 1, no. 1 (2015).

Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Indiana University Press, 1986.

Irfan, Uamir. "How Delhi Became the Most Polluted City on Earth." *Vox*, November 25, 2017, https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/11/22/16666808/india-air-pollution-new-delhi.

Johnston, Patricia and Caroline Frank, editors. *Global Trade and Visual Arts in Federal New England*. University of New Hampshire Press, 2014.

Kazakina, Katya. "Allen Lures Tech Billionaires to Seattle With Art Fair." *Bloomberg Business*, July 29, 2015, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-29/allen-lures-tech-billionaires-to-seahawks-home-with-art-fair.

Korobkin, R. Tess. "*The Greek Slave* and Materialities of Reproduction." *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* vol. 15, issue 2, Summer 2016, http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/korobkin-on-the-greek-slave-and-materialities-of-reproduction.

Landau, Ellen. "Still Learning from Pollock." *Jackson Pollock's* Mural: *The Transitional Moment*. J. Paul Getty Museum, 2014.

Lemmey, Karen. "Finding a 19th Century Shortcut: The Body Casting of Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave*." *Smithsonian American Art Museum Eye Level*, July 22, 2015, http://eyelevel.si.edu/2015/07/finding-a-19th-century-shortcut-the-body-casting-of-hiram-powers-greek-slave.html.

Lemmey, Karen. "From Skeleton to Skin: The Making of the *Greek Slave(s)*." *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide,* vol. 15, issue 2 (Summer 2016), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/lemmey-on-from-skeleton-to-skin-the-making-of-the-greek-slave.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke University Press, 2015.

McCormick, Kelly Midori McCormick. "The Japanese Camera on Display: History through the Lens of a Nikon." College Art Association Annual Conference, New York, February 15, 2017.

Mecklenburg, Virginia M., ed. *Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg*. Abrams, 2010.

Miller, Daniel, ed. *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Naifeh, Steven and Gregory White Smith. *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga*. Clarkson N. Potter, 1989.

Nikon Museum website, 2018, https://www.nikon.com/about/corporate/museum/exhibitions/index.htm.
Pohrt, Tanya. "*The Greek Slave* on Tour in America." *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* vol. 15, issue 2 (Summer 2016), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/pohrt-on-the-greek-slave-on-tour-in-america.
Pollock, Jackson. "My Painting." *Possibilities* vol. 1, no. 1, Winter 1947/1948.
Prown, Jules. *Art as Evidence: Writings on Art and Material Culture*. Yale University Press, 2002.
Reyburn, Scott. "Christie's Has Art World's First $1 Billion Week." *New York Times*, May 14, 2015.
---. "At Art Auctions, Missed Expectations for Some Big Names." *New York Times*, July 3, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/04/arts/international/at-art-auctions-missed-expectations-for-some-big-names.html.
Rockwell, Norman. *Norman Rockwell, My Adventures as An Illustrator, As Told to Thomas Rockwell*. Doubleday, 1960.
"Sculptors Then and Now." *Life*, September 15, 1952.
Stokols, Eli. "Unapologetic, Trump Promises to Make America Rich." *Politico*, May 26, 2016, http://www.politico.com/story/2016/05/unapologetic-trump-promises-to-make-america-rich-223632.
Sutton, Benjamin and Claire Voon. "Panama Papers Shed Light on the Shadowy Art Market." *Hyperallergic*, April 12, 2016, http://hyperallergic.com/289250/panama-papers-shed-light-on-the-shadowy-art-market/.
Trescott, Jacqueline. "Filmmakers Spielberg, Lucas Share Rockwell's Americana at Smithsonian." *Washington Post*, July 2, 2010.
Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.
West, Patrick. *Conspicuous Compassion: Why Sometimes It Really Is Cruel to Be Kind*. Civitas, 2004.