



# *Writing Art History: Reading and Writing*

14.30 - 18.00, Friday 13 November (with registration from 14.00)  
10.00 - 18.00, Saturday 14 November (with registration from 9.30am)

Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, The Courtauld Institute of Art  
Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN

## ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

**Charles Miller (University of Manchester)**

*Rotten Sun*

'Creative writing' implies a writing that foregrounds metaphor or imagination, in contradistinction to rational discourse. No language, however, can exclude these terms, and indeed the metaphysics of creation, metaphor and imagination has assumed the sun as its inaugural figure. Correlatively, across the Picasso literature, a heliopoetics sheds its rays. Time and again, the figurative language – the belle lettrisme – of the reception has turned towards the sun. This solar rhetoric is bound up with the conventions of Romanticism: with the heroism of Prometheus and Icarus; with the absolute Artist. While most such inscriptions pose the solar metaphor as majesty, phallus, life, one text in particular mobilises its negativity, anality, excess – its death drive.

Charles Miller is talking about 'Soleil pourri' ('Rotten Sun'), the short piece Georges Bataille contributed to the 1930 'Homage à Picasso' issue of that 'war-machine against received ideas,' documents. It is an eccentric entry in the historiography, a brief flash where the solar metaphor and its excess decentres Picasso's name to the furthest edge, the last word. It is an example of Bataille's 'mythic anthropology': cosmological, against reason, meshing mythemes and philosophemes, anthropology and psychoanalysis to inscribe an apocalyptic operation of transgression. Miller would say that it were well-known, if its sunstroke did not lay low the act of knowing. Oft-cited, then. Oft-cited, but often off site, out of sight. Either interned in the mausoleum of the Picasso empire, falsely imprisoned in the logocentrism of iconography; or reactivated in deconstruction by the early Derrida and later the Kraussian informe: radical elaborations both; but suppressions too – of the text's relation to Picasso.

Bataille's double sun mobilises a set of oppositions: vision/blindness, intelligible/sensible, metaphorical/literal, ideal/real, reason/madness, beauty/ugliness. The movement is deconstructive, in that it privileges the subordinate term (the blinding sun), which itself undoes or transgresses the very structure of opposition. In this essay Charles Miller extrapolates the Derridean and Freudian intertexts of Bataille's exorbitant, anti-metaphoric metaphor, and interrogates its place in the theory of the avant-garde. What might this solar fiction imply about Picasso's function in the vanguard narrative? At issue is not only the

philosophical motif of the dialectic, but a certain mythic or psychoanalytic problematic of paternity, twisted around the perverse figure of a prodigal father.

*Charlie F.B. Miller is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures at the University of Manchester. He was previously Research Forum/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at The Courtauld Institute of Art. He has published essays and articles about Picasso, surrealism, and Documents magazine, and worked on exhibitions about Documents, and 1920s Paris. He is writing a book about Picasso and the interwar avant-garde, and co-curating an exhibition, provisionally entitled Picasso/Dalí: Dalí/Picasso, at the Museu Picasso, Barcelona, and Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg, Florida. He is also currently advising on a BBC1 TV series about modern art.*

### **Barbara Penner (Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL)**

*X is for An Expert on Bathrooms: Alexander Kira & Peter Greenaway's 26 Bathrooms*

Hayden White once noted, 'Every discipline [is] constituted by what it forbids its practitioners to do.' This talk adapts White's statement to argue that disciplines are equally constituted by what they allow practitioners to speak about or how they are allowed to speak. Bathrooms and toilets test the boundaries of disciplinary limits like no other subject. Toilets are not invisible in art and design discourse – far from it – but they are spoken about in very particular ways in order to contain their taboo aspects.

The first part of this talk considers the ways in which toilets have been 'cleansed' within architecture, specifically through the modernist language of formalism and graphic standards. In the second part, Peter Greenaway's 1985 film, *26 Bathrooms* will be discussed. The film wittily (but always sympathetically) exposes the restrictions of this cleansed discourse through the figure of the bathroom expert, loosely based on Alexander Kira, whose unique bathroom studies at Cornell University resulted in the 1966 book, *The Bathroom*, which will also be further analysed in this talk.

*Barbara Penner is Senior Lecturer in Architectural History at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. She is author of Newlyweds on Tour: Honeymooning in Nineteenth-Century America (UPNE, 2009) and co-editor of Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender (Temple University Press, 2009) and Gender Space Architecture (Routledge, 2000).*

### **Stephen Melville (Ohio State University)**

*Stephen Melville is Professor Emeritus at Ohio State University. His areas of expertise are contemporary art, theory and historiography. He has published widely on contemporary art as well as on issues in contemporary theory and historiography. Amongst such publications are Seams: Art as a Philosophical Context (1996); As Painting: Division and Displacement, with Laura Lisbon and Philip Armstrong (2001); and the essay A Thought on Photography in the exhibition catalogue Louise Lawler: The Tremaine Pictures (2007). He is the co-author, with Margaret Iversen, of the forthcoming book Writing Art History. He has been active on numerous committees for the American Society for Aesthetics and has been on the editorial board for both the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism and the Oxford Encyclopedia of Aesthetics.*

### **Gavin Parkinson (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Sublime Art Historical Experience*

Taking its cue from the historian Frank Ankersmit's *Sublime Historical Experience* (2005) and recent writings on experience by Martin Jay among others whilst drawing on some of the key texts on the sublime – mainly those of Burke, Kant, Derrida, and Lyotard – this paper argues neither for a return to a Romantic aesthetic nor to a traditional understanding of the sublime in nature or art, but for the working out in art history of a 'textual sublime' initiated by the art, philosophy, poetry, and fiction of twentieth century modernity. It maintains that writing in art

history can claim to be 'realist' in only a very particular sense, because the record it makes is that of the ideal, individual, unitary subject, not the changeable, palimpsestic, assortment of persons and roles we all know ourselves to be and play. Alternative styles of writing should be invented to bring inconsistent, embodied subjects into accounts given of experience in the vicinity of works of art. Following examples set by Virginia Woolf, Francis Ponge, Georges Bataille, Samuel Beckett, and others, the 'textual sublime' would seek to recognise and adapt to the failure of meaning and jamming of narrative, long understood as significant features of art in modernity from Manet to Rauschenberg. But it would recognise and inscribe this 'unnameable' and 'unspeakable' not simply through its content (argument) but more specifically in its form (performance); that is, it would not step back and analyse 'non-meaning' and 'anti-narrative' but reproduce them. Through its rendering of disruptive textual models for recording the complexity of encounters with modern art and the 'modernist event,' this paper also asks if art history as a discipline or discourse can stand the destabilising of its writing that close attention to experience demands.

*Gavin Parkinson is Lecturer in European Modernism at The Courtauld Institute of Art. He lectures and writes on European art and visual culture of the twentieth century, and has had a special interest in the connection between art and science in French art, 1900-1939. His two books are Surrealism, Art and Modern Science: Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Epistemology (Yale University Press, 2008) and The Duchamp Book (Tate Publishing, 2008). His latest writing is concerned with the interpretation of modernism by mainly French writers from the 1950s to the present day, turned towards a discussion of linguistics and the development of the writing of art history.*

### **David Joselit (Yale University)**

*David Joselit is Carnegie Professor of the History of Art at Yale University. As a scholar and a critic, he has worked on pivotal moments in modern art ranging from the Dada movement of the early 20th century to the emergence of globalisation and new media over the past decade. His latest book, Feedback: Television Against Democracy (MIT Press, 2007) addresses television as a closed circuit that video artists and media activists have broken into in a variety of ways since the 1960s. Joselit's first book, Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910-1941 (October Books, MIT Press, 1998), positions Duchamp's art at the intersection of a waning industrial world and the emergence of consumer culture in the late teens and twenties. American Art Since 1945 (Thames & Hudson, 2003) is a synthetic survey that grows in part out of Joselit's years as a curator at The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston during the 1980s, and his longstanding practice as a critic for such publications as Artforum and Art in America. In addition to his main areas of research Joselit has a strong interest in gender, queer, and feminist studies.*

### **Nicholas Chare (University of Reading)**

*Cracking Prehistoric Figurines: In Pursuit of the Senses*

Drawing on Douglass Bailey's *Prehistoric Figurines* (Bailey, 2005), William Golding's *The Inheritors* (Golding, 1961), Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) and Michel Serres' *Five Senses* (Serres, 2008) for inspiration, this paper will provide an interpretation of prehistoric figurines that is not restricted to a consideration of their status as representation but focuses instead on giving an account of their sensorial aspects. Archaeological and art historical approaches to the study of figurines are frequently still governed by predetermined questions surrounding form (and, by extension, chronology and typology) and signification which render them incapable of accounting for a beholder's encounter with the underlying materiality of figurines. The problem of acknowledging the physical experience of these objects is, however, more deep rooted as language in general can be understood to constitute an impediment to their appreciation. Serres writes that language 'anaesthetises all five senses' (89). It acts as a kind of sensory deprivation.

The paper will argue, however, that the style of writing adopted by Golding in *The Inheritors* demonstrates that it is possible to communicate something of the sensuous within language. Golding's handling of words will be used as a model for the concluding part of the paper

which will describe the sensual qualities of figurines and suggest that this aspect of them is fundamental to furthering our understanding of the substance accorded to these objects in prehistory.

*Nicholas Chare is currently a lecturer at the Department of History of Art and Architecture at the University of Reading. He is also a visiting tutor at the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths. He is the principal investigator on a research project funded by the Elisabeth Barker and the British Academy which examines the importance of the Scrolls of Auschwitz as Holocaust testimony. His recent publications include articles in Angelaki, Art History, Convergence, Cultural Critique, Southern Review: Communication, Politics and Culture, and Visual Culture in Britain.*

### **Charlotte de Mille (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*'Sudden Gleams of [F-] Light': Intuition as Method*

Examining the moments when Virginia Woolf lays bare her method of writing, this paper treats her fiction primarily as an example for criticism. On numerous occasions in letters and diary entries, Woolf describes the role of intuition as an inspiring force behind her writing, which enables her to write, as it were, from a different part of consciousness. The charge is that this interior vision is both more direct and less teleological: the narrative resolution is barely known until the text is completed. Woolf aims to write from beneath any assumed sense of identity, instead utilising what Henri Bergson was to call 'durational consciousness'. Bergson describes this mental state as one of disinterest, in which we are 'actually placed outside ourselves' so that 'we touch the [interior] reality of the object in an immediate intuition.' For Bergson however, intuition is a process. As the initial vision rises to the surface of cognition, it assumes a more definite shape which nonetheless is at the expense its full meaning. This Bergson describes as a transposition from the 'virtual', or potential completeness that is momentarily grasped, to the 'actual', or what is remembered ['pictured'] of that intuition afterwards.

Correspondingly, Charlotte de Mille finds two ways in which Woolf's writing might inform art critical writing. The first is the manner in which she attempts to grasp the object of her enquiry directly. Roger Fry famously described her as a 'visual writer' by which he meant that passages of visual description seem unmediated by any subjective response to them: this is primarily ekphrastic writing. Second, de Mille uses Woolf's method to unpack the question of possibility in the capturing of a subject – the moment of insight prior to any given subject's selection, when instead there is a plurality of potential [virtual] perceptions that could be shuffled as a hand of cards. Woolf's writing raises issues of subjectivity, association, and representation in a non-analytical manner, which in its intuition is both disinterested – disembodied – and deeply subjective. For this reason, de Mille argues that Woolf's writing offers a way around the distance between the critic's response to a given work of art and the objective text produced. Encouraged by the long tradition of analytical scholarship, academic writing too often leaves this gap un-bridged, negating the initial excitement that governs the critic or historian's choice of subject. De Mille does not wish to oppose objectivity, but to raise greater consciousness of the author's critical process. Writing with such awareness is demanding, and paradoxically can inhibit the sudden visionary 'flights' experienced by Woolf. Spontaneity and connectedness can never be outwardly sought, never be expressed in language that is overtly – or falsely - super-imposed.

Be this as it may, this paper will move towards an experiment in intuitive writing. The paper has a tripartite structure: first, an explanatory analysis of Bergson's most thorough exposition of intuition as method; second, the paper will consider this in regard to Woolf's writing; lastly, in accord with a recent shift in contemporary French philosophy towards 'immanence', the paper will return to Bergson's intuition through the work of Gilles Deleuze. Following the example of Deleuze's Francis Bacon, the paper will take flight with an attempt at re-reading Vanessa Bell's *Studland Beach*, 1912.

*Charlotte de Mille completed her doctoral thesis Bergson in Britain c. 1890-1914 in 2009. Current research activities include an exploration of the possibilities and limitations of intuition as a method for Art History through the work of Henri Bergson and Virginia Woolf*

with the Research Forum's 'Writing Art History' group. With the Research Forum and the RMA, Charlotte was convenor of 'Music and Modernism', held in May 2009, from which she will be editing a volume of essays. With Public Programmes for The Courtauld Gallery, she is co-ordinating a series of lecture-recitals that seek to draw together music and fine art, and has also commissioned new music in conjunction with The Courtauld's East Wing VIII exhibition of contemporary visual art. Charlotte is Visiting Lecturer for the academic year 2009 – 2010.

### **Suzannah Biernoff (Birkbeck)**

*Suzannah Biernoff is a lecturer in the Department of History of Art and Screen Media at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research has spanned medieval and modern periods: she is the author of Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages (2002), while her recent work pursues the themes of corporeal history and visual anxiety in the context of First World War Britain. In 2007 she began a new project on the cultural history of disfigurement, funded by the Wellcome Trust.*

### **Olivia Horsfall Turner (Trinity College Dublin)**

*Different Muses: Hierarchy, Theory and Practice in Architecture and the Fine Arts*

This paper considers the changing historical relationship between architecture and the 'fine arts' by focusing on the portrayal of 'Architecture' in a range of allegorical images from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries: from the representation of architecture as an central figure among the artistic muses, to a technical disciplinarian whose practical concerns had little in common with the inspirational origins of painting.

Allegorical representations of the arts articulated fundamental ideas about the nature and hierarchy of Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Music and Poetry. This study explores the structures of intellectual thought that on the one hand imagined architecture as one of the fine arts, but which on the other hand identified inherent differences in their natures. These differences allowed for distance to open up between Architecture and her sister Arts to the degree that their former characterisation as siblings has almost been forgotten: a change that has played an important role in determining the theory, practice, and study of each.

Through a consideration of these allegorical images, sometimes esoteric, sometimes narrative, this paper considers how ideas about the principles that underpinned architecture and the arts have changed over time and led to their separation. Evaluating these developments in a historical light not only charts the development of the disciplines of architectural history and art history but also prompts us to re-consider the prevalent division of art and architecture in the art-historical narratives of contemporary scholarship.

*Olivia Horsfall Turner is a post-doctoral researcher at Trinity College Dublin, working on the fortunes and misfortunes of Irish medieval churches during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Her doctorate (University of London) analysed perceptions of medieval buildings in England during the period c. 1640 to c. 1720. Her research interests include architectural writings and representations, antiquarianism, and print culture.*

### **Stephanie Porras (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Bruegel's Masks*

Nearly forty years after Pieter Bruegel the Elder's death, Karel Van Mander's 1604 biography would primarily characterise the artist by his disguises, both as a peasant and a proto-ethnographer, a painter of peasant life. From Van Mander onwards, the metaphor of the mask would remain at the heart of Bruegel's art historical identity, an image utilised by art historians as a way of dealing with the oddities of Bruegel's work: his strange pictorial style, his inventive and innovative iconography, as well as his mysterious biography. This paper seeks to investigate the trajectory and the history of this recurrent theme of writing on

Bruegel, to understand what the image of the mask allows art historians to say about Bruegel, as well as what it obfuscates. Focussing on three art historical texts on Bruegel – that of Van Mander, Hans Sedlmayr and Joseph Koerner – Stephanie Porras will explore the ways the metaphor of the mask shifts from object to activity, from mask to unmasking, incorporating both the perceived ethnographic impulse of the artist and the art historian's own manipulation of the ethnographic gaze.

*Stephanie Porras is the Leibniz-Gemeinschaft Postdoctoral Fellow at The Courtauld Institute of Art, funded by the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. Her PhD was completed at The Courtauld in February 2009, under the supervision of Joseph Koerner and was entitled The Peasant as Pagan in the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Her current research is on the drawing practice of the young Albrecht Dürer and the emergence of autonomous drawing in Northern Europe. She has taught courses on Northern Renaissance and Dutch genre painting at University College London and has worked as a researcher at the British Library and the J. Paul Getty Museum.*

### **Charles Ford (UCL)**

*Charles Ford is a Senior Lecturer at University College London. His research concerns the emergence of painting as a commodity in the early-modern period and the debates on value which enmeshed its new forms. This research is focused principally, but not exclusively, on the production and consumption of paintings and commentary in the Low Countries between 1550 and 1720. His publications include numerous articles on the artists of the Low Countries and the historiography of Dutch art, including articles on Rembrandt historians and on the writing of Karel van Mander.*

### **Philippa Kaina (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Brides Stripped Bare*

Philippa Kaina's paper seeks to reassess the art-historical identity of Edgar Degas (the hermetic bachelor-misogynist), by exploring the problematic interrelation of the artist's subjectivity and the sexual politics at stake in his imagery of the female body. While this debate has largely focused on the Suite de Nus exhibited at the eighth Impressionist exhibition of 1886 and the primary critical discourse they generated, most notably that of Joris-Karl Huysmans, Philippa Kaina will trace the historical origins of this project of female degradation.

*Scène de guerre au moyen-âge* marked Degas' long awaited public debut at the Salon of 1865. This picture – in which a series of prostrate semi-naked female figures litter a ravaged landscape – stages a galling scene of feminine abjection. But it is in the slew of preparatory drawings for this work where the rhetorics of female debasement are mobilised in all their force. Illustrating various attitudes of 'deshabillement', the brutal process of 'stripping bare', to which these disheveled figures have been subjected maps onto the broader degradation of the Nude written across mid-nineteenth century artistic culture (and in whose idealised rhetorics – as Kaina will demonstrate – Degas had a profound investment). While the protracted desecration of the female body enacted in the temporal sequence of these drawings seems ostensibly to participate in the irrevocable demise of the Nude, Kaina also seeks to account for the ways in which Degas' own subjectivity is implicated in the systematic destruction of this time-honoured body. The artist-subject 'Degas' – deliquescent amidst the deluge of this feminine membra disjecta – both complicates and problematises the misogynistic terms through which his engagement with the female body has hitherto been written.

*Philippa Kaina is a Visiting Lecturer at The Courtauld Institute of Art and the Department of History of Art and Architecture at the University of Reading. She completed BA, MA and PhD (2009) in the History of Art department at University College London. She has published an article in Object ('Illegible Bodies: Edgar Degas' Young Spartans Exercising, 2007) and book and exhibition reviews in Object, The Art Book and Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide.*

*Philippa is currently developing her PhD research on the early work of Edgar Degas into a book manuscript.*

### **Linda Goddard (University of St. Andrews)**

*'Scattered Notes': Authorship and Originality in Gauguin's Diverses choses*

'Scattered notes, without sequence like dreams, like life all made up of fragments; and because others have collaborated in it.' Gauguin's description of *Diverses choses* (1896-7) – the appendix to his 1893 Tahitian memoir *Noa Noa* – demands that we take the text seriously as a contribution to the fin-de-siècle debate about collective authorship and non-consecutive modes of literary composition. Despite this, scholars have dismissed as mere plagiarism Gauguin's method of adapting and reiterating passages of text from other sources, including his own work. Editors have dealt with his fragmentary narratives by restructuring them into an imagined whole, distorting their original effect and obscuring his engagement with contemporary theories of aesthetic synthesis and collective consciousness.

This paper seeks to recuperate the distinctive process of fragmentation and repetition in *Diverses choses*. Analysing Gauguin's 'collage' technique as a form of 'visual' writing, Linda Goddard shows how it parallels the manipulation and synthesis of motifs long recognised in his paintings, and purposefully calls into question conventional notions of authorship and originality. Gauguin's claim, in *Diverses choses*, that his own ideas are mysteriously linked with those of thousands of others is expressed thematically in the content of his 'borrowed' material (including, for example, Wagner's celebration of the 'total art work' and Poe's concept of the imagination as all-encompassing). It is also enacted stylistically through the juxtaposing of citations, misquotations, anecdotes and aphorisms with passages of his own writing falsely attributed to alternative authors (both real and fictional). For Gauguin, this principle of interrelatedness, which shifts the focus of creativity from the expression of personal ideas to the inventive recombination and transformation of existing fragments, is specifically painterly. It replaces the successive, temporal logic of the professional critic with the synthetic, intuitive vision of the painter, enabling an authentic and creative form of art criticism.

*Linda Goddard is a lecturer in Art History at the University of St Andrews. She specialises in the relations between visual art and literature in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France. Her book, Aesthetic Rivalries: Word and Image in France, 1880-1926 (based on a PhD completed at The Courtauld in 2004) is forthcoming with Peter Lang (2010). As part of the 'Writing Art History' project, she organised a three-day conference on 'Artists' Writings, 1850-present' at The Courtauld, from which selected papers will be published as a special issue of Word & Image (2011). She is currently working towards a book on Gauguin's writings.*

### **Satish Padiyar (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Satish Padiyar trained as an art historian at University College London, where he gained his PhD (1999), working with Helen Weston and Adrian Rifkin. Padiyar taught at the University of Leeds and at University College London, and was the recipient of a J. Paul Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship, before joining The Courtauld Institute of Art as Visiting Lecturer in 2005. He worked as chief curator on The Triumph of Eros: Art and Seduction in 18th Century France, at the Hermitage Rooms, London (2006). He was appointed Lecturer in Nineteenth Century Art at The Courtauld Institute of Art in 2008. His book Chains: David, Canova, and the Fall of the Public Hero in Postrevolutionary France was published in 2007, and, alongside numerous articles, he is author of the essay Shadow of Agency: Derrida, Marx, David, in the volume As Radical as Reality Itself: Essays on Marxism and Art for the 21st Century (2007). He is currently researching and preparing a book on theories and practices of 'free agency' in European modern art, from Fragonard to Twombly, c. 1750 – 1950.*

## **Maria Mileeva (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

*Historiography of Modern Art: A Visual Dialogue between East and West*

This paper will consider the significance of the non-verbal or visual writing of art history. The primacy given to the word in art historical research has led to a negligence of other forms and methods of art historical narratives in the making. The organisation of public and private collections, art institutions, teaching methods, and the art market were all crucial in the process of writing art history of modern Western art of the first half of the twentieth century. The aims of this paper are to investigate a dialogue between Western and Soviet art historical narratives by looking at the diagram as a medium to visualise historical progress. Alfred H. Barr, Soviet Marxist art history and the theoretical diagrams of Kazimir Malevich will act as case studies in Maria Mileeva's discussion of the establishment of a systematic genealogy of artistic creation in the first half of the twentieth century.

*Maria Mileeva is a PhD candidate at The Courtauld Institute of Art where she also runs seminars for graduate students. She read Art History at Jesus College, Cambridge before completing her MA at The Courtauld in 2006. Her doctoral thesis, supervised by Dr Shulamith Behr and Professor John Milner, deals with the subject of import and reception of Western art in Soviet Russia during the 1920s and 1930s. Most recently, Maria worked as Assistant 'Curator of Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970', held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London in autumn 2008. Her research interests include cultural exchange between Russia and the West over the course of the 20th century, with particular focus on the politics of international exhibition design and the construction of art historical narratives as a means of defining national identity and cultural policy.*

## **Jeremy Melius (University of California, Berkeley)**

*Ruskin's Copies*

We are by now used to thinking (however uncomfortably) about the eroticism of pedagogic relations – about the ways that desire circulates between teacher and student through mediating objects of study. But what happens when feeling lodges in the object and will not let go? Such is the case with John Ruskin. This paper addresses the confluence of didacticism and desire in the notorious Victorian critic's watercolour copies after old master paintings. An early enthusiast of photographic reproduction, Ruskin nevertheless relied heavily on painstaking drawings after artworks in his lectures at Oxford's during the 1870s, as well as in less formal educational settings. Highlighting aspects of the work that photographs failed to register (colour, for instance), such copies more importantly served as material relics of Ruskin's attention: memorials to the weeks spent in close contact – as close as he could get – with cherished works of art. Exploring the curious nature of Ruskin practice, the paper focuses on three ruinous copies of young female figures – after Jacopo della Quercia, Botticelli, and Carpaccio – undertaken in the mid-1870s. In doing so, it interrogates the kind of historicity these copies imagine their originals to possess, as well their relation to Ruskin's verbal descriptions. When we take these copies seriously as pictures, a particular set of attitudes comes into focus. Fantasies of submission are staged in passages of self-discipline and humiliating technical failure as the drawings come to embody their dependence on unpossessable sources. Within the economy of Ruskin's practice, this dialectic of likeness and divergence uncontrollably becomes a question of erotic identification and difference. Performing anxieties about pedagogic transmission, aesthetic autonomy, and the historicity of art, these drawings stand stymied at an ontological divide: between copy and original, between self and other, and between the aesthetic and the actual life.

## **Margaret Iversen (University of Essex)**

*Margaret Iversen is Professor in the Department of Art History and Theory at the University of Essex, and a leading international authority in the field of art theory and contemporary art. Publications include Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory (1993); a monograph on the contemporary artist Mary Kelly; an essay on the American painter Edward Hopper, in the catalogue of the 2004 Tate Modern exhibition of his work; and, most recently, the book*

*Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes (2007), which stems from her work in the field of psychoanalytic art theory. Her present and future research is devoted to the overlapping fields of photography and contemporary art. She is co-director of the interdisciplinary AHRC research project 'Aesthetics after Photography' (2007-2010). She is currently working a book on photography and art since the Sixties, entitled Photography Degree Zero, and one called Writing Art History (with Stephen Melville) which proposes the idea of writing in place of methodology.*