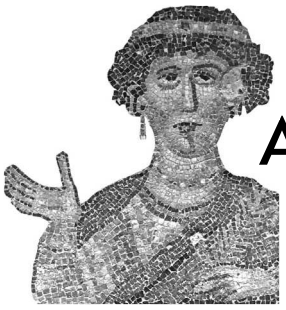
Beyond the Veil: Revealing the Mystery of Curtains



ANANEOSIS

LATE ANTIQUITY
EARLY MIDDLE AGES
BYZANTIUM

Current Research in Archaeology and Art History

VOL. 2 Edited by Franz Alto Bauer and Sabine Feist

The ANANEOSIS publication series aims to publish current research on the archaeology and art history of Late Antiquity and the Western and Byzantine Middle Ages as monographs or edited volumes. The volumes are published in printed form and are also generally accessible as open-access publications.

Corinna Mairhanser (ed.)

Beyond the Veil

Revealing the Mystery of Curtains

SCHNELL + STEINER

Cover: Entrance to the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Annunciation, 1842 – 1862, Athens, Greece. akg-images/ De Agostini/ Archivio J. Lange.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at: https://dnb.de

First edition 2024

Cover Design: typegerecht berlin
typesetting: Satz: 3w+p Typesetting Automation Experts, Rimpar
Printed in EU
funds climate protection measures

ISBN 978-3-7954-3941-5
978-3-7954-3942-2 (E-Book)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61035/3795439422

Further information about our publications can be found under:
www.schnell-und-steiner.de

Contents

Fig. 1 Giorgio de Chirico, L'enigma dell'oracolo, 1909 – 1911, private collection.

Beyond the Veil: Revealing the Mystery of Curtains

Corinna Mairhanser

A glance at the work *L'enigma dell'oracolo* by Giorgio de Chirico, painted between 1909 and 1911, is like a glimpse into ancient spheres or an introduction to past mysteries. Drawn into the ancient world implied by the title, the viewer gazes into a simple brick-walled room that offers an upward view of the sky (fig. 1). The painting reveals two different, if not contradictory, views of the mystery, which are enclosed by curtains.

The left-hand third of the picture is dominated by an arched opening of the interior that reveals a view of a mountainous coastal landscape. Under a cloudy sky, a city stretches out across the plain.[1] The viewer's gaze is given the opportunity to wander out of the room into another pictorial dimension, an open expanse. At this point of transition from the static, motionless interior to the perspectival expanse of the landscape stands a figure. Turning its back to the viewer, the figure is wrapped in a long sheet of fabric, its head tilted downwards, seemingly lost in the view. The title of the work suggests that this could be the medium of the Oracle, the Pythia, or the enquirer. A brown curtain is hung from a rod beneath the arch, which is open towards the left edge of the picture and is cut off by it. The textile draws the viewer's gaze to this area, enclosing and framing the figure and the view, thereby staging them. Just as the open curtain provides insights and views, the Pythia conveys cryptic responses to the questions posed to the deity. Both partially unveil, whether it be a coveted glimpse of something, long-awaited knowledge, or clues to the unknown future – yet they never reveal the complete truth, preserving the mystery by not telling or showing – a deep-rooted feeling that has existed since prehistory, an enigmatic sense of foreboding, as de Chirico himself expressed it.[2]

Demarcated by a plain brick wall that defines the centre, the right-hand third of the picture shows a spatial area that has been shifted further back and is occupied towards the front by a black curtain that appears to cover the entire width of the picture and is suspended from a pole that

1 It is likely that Athens, where the artist spent parts of his youth, served as an inspiration. The city is probably viewed from the Acropolis with the interior representing a temple, perhaps the Erechtheion or the Propylaea, but comparisons are also made with the ensemble of the temples at Delphi. Therefore, see C. Crescentini, *L'Enigma Velato*, Rome, Erreciemme, 2009, pp. 101 – 102; F. Benzi, ›Giorgio de Chirico e la nascita della metafisica. L'»altra« avanguardia italiana, 1910 – 1911‹, in S. Frezzotti (ed.), *Secessione e avanguardia. L'arte in Italia prima della Grande Guerra (1905 – 1915)*, Milan, Electa, 2014, p. 107.

2 Benzi, ›Giorgio de Chirico e la nascita della metafisica. L'»altra« avanguardia italiana, 1910 – 1911‹, pp. 108 – 109; also C. Blümle, ›Das Bild als Vorhang‹, in C. Blümle and B. Wismer (eds.), *Hinter dem Vorhang. Verhüllung und Enthüllung seit der Renaissance – Von Tizian bis Christo*, Munich, Hirmer, 2016, p. 36; Crescentini, *L'Enigma Velato*, pp. 95 – 96, 102 – 105; S. Greene, ›The Pull of the Oracle: Personalized Mythologies in Plath and de Chirico‹, *Mosaic*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1992, pp. 107 – 120.

leaves the upper part of the wall free.[3] This area of the room works with the contrasting means of staging the textile – instead of showing, it conceals and refers to the mysterious. The viewer is given a clue as to what this mystery might be, as the white shining head of a statue can be seen above the curtain. The staging is reminiscent of ancient cult images in temples and refers to the veiled mystery of the existence of a deity or, more generally, of divinity. The head behind the curtain appears distant and detached, creating a historicising reference.

The joints of the uneven paving stones on the interior floor direct the viewer's gaze to the dark curtain, which is the darkest element in the image. The curtain appears as an impenetrable black surface that slowly dissolves, perhaps suggesting movement. The textile closes off the pictorial space, shrouding what lies behind it, but still leaving hints of the divinity and its existence visible in the form of the head, opening up a new, mysterious, sacred sphere.[4]

The architecture acts as a backdrop to frame the picture and provides a stage for the curtains and the two figures.[5] Both elements play with the viewer, as they interact with vision – on the one hand allowing insights, on the other restricting and blocking the view. Both the painting and the curtains therefore function as a metaphysical moment. Their complete perception eludes the viewer in the attempt to see everything, is partially veiled and thus remains inaccessible. This gives rise to a mood inherent to the work, an atmosphere that activates human emotion, intensifies the desire to see and influences perception. The viewer is left with an unfulfilled desire to see and comprehend the invisible veil.[6]

A Glance at the Curtain

When the curtain rises, this moment of opening offers new perspectives. What has previously been hidden is now visible, revealed and staged extraordinarily by the framing textile – a phenomenon that is not limited to the de Chirico example. Across cultures and epochs, humans have always surrounded themselves with curtains. These textiles have been used to consciously influence human perception and direct the gaze to what is between them. There is inevitably something fascinating and exceptional about what is presented in the act of unveiling.

Researchers using exemplanatory approaches highlighted that curtains in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and beyond – apart from their practical functions – were used as a means of staging esteemed persons or venerated objects and of defining transitions between different spheres such as life and death, ruler and ruled, or human and divine. They function as media of presentation, highlighting and marking transitions. At the same time, curtains hide; they activate the viewer's imagination and evoke the unattainable desire to

3 B. Brazeau, ›Building a Mystery: Giorgio de Chirico and Italian Renaissance Painting‹, *The Italianist*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2019, p. 31; A. Görgen-Lammers, ›De Chiricos Be-Stimmung. Zu Einflüssen aus der deutschen Philosophie und Kunst‹, in A. Görgen-Lammers and P. Baldacci (eds.), *Giorgio de Chirico. Magische Wirklichkeit*, Munich, Hirmer, 2020, p. 59.

4 Crescentini, *L'Enigma Velato*, pp. 93 – 96; Benzi, ›Giorgio de Chirico e la nascita della metafisica. L'»altra« avanguardia italiana, 1910 – 1911‹, pp. 108 – 109; A. Görgen-Lammers, ›De Chiricos Be-Stimmung‹, pp. 59 – 60; C. Blümle, ›Giorgio de Chiricos Enigma‹, in S. Egenhofer (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild? Antworten in Bildern*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 2012, p. 222; Blümle, ›Das Bild als Vorhang‹, pp. 36 – 38.

5 A. Görgen-Lammers, ›De Chiricos Be-Stimmung‹, p. 59.

6 Benzi, ›Giorgio de Chirico e la nascita della metafisica. L'»altra« avanguardia italiana, 1910 – 1911‹, pp. 107 – 108; Blümle, ›Giorgio de Chiricos Enigma‹, pp. 221 – 222; Blümle, ›Das Bild als Vorhang‹, pp. 36 – 38; Brazeau, ›Building a Mystery: Giorgio de Chirico and Italian Renaissance Painting‹, pp. 30 – 31; A. Görgen-Lammers, ›De Chiricos Be-Stimmung‹, pp. 51, 59, 63; V. Noel-Johnson, ›Le voyage sans fin. Giorgio de Chirico and Metaphysical Art (1910 – 78)‹, in V. Noel-Johnson (ed.), *Giorgio de Chirico: The Changing Face of Metaphysical Art*, Milan, Skira, 2019, p. 6. On the artistic influences of A. Böcklin, in particular his work ›Odysseus and Kalypso‹, as well as M. Klinger and the philosophical impact of F. Nietzsche and A. Schopenhauer, which also affect the levels of interpretation of the work see Crescentini, *L'Enigma Velato*.

look behind the veil – to gain an insight into what is hoped to lie behind it. Thereby, the curtains movement interacts with fundamental human characteristics, like inquisitiveness and the powerful inner desire for knowledge and insight. The process of opening generates the viewers' attention and intensifies the viewing experience. This interaction between veiling and concealing stimulates the beholder's imagination and consciously draws their attention to the space framed by curtains. Essential to these processes are always the viewers, influences on their visual experience and thus also their perception of the situation.

Giorgio de Chirico exemplified this fascination inherent to curtains through the contrast between the two painted textiles. He established a delicate tension between revealing and concealing, which is expressed above all in the right-hand curtain. The fascination of this curtain lies in the fact that it evokes the need to reveal, the longing to open it and to see what could possibly be hidden behind it – even if it is partly visible. The mere sight and perception of the curtain is thus connected with the need to reveal the unknown, and the fascination with the hidden. This desire to unveil is symptomatic of the perception of veils and curtains. Therefore, curtains themselves are a kind of mystery – the mere sight and perception of a curtain grabs people's attention, activates their imagination, and heightens their expectations through their dynamic as well as performative characteristics.

Veiling, Wrapping, Concealing, and Revealing. Different Perspectives on Curtains

Late Antique, Byzantine, and medieval visual culture was particularly concerned with thresholds, staggered spaces, and delayed sensory experiences – and often curtains are used at these transitions and in liminal situations, marking spaces and thereby distinguishing them. First in this volume, Tina Bawden focuses on liminality in medieval church buildings, an experience that begins at the entrance with the threshold and the curtains placed there. This liminality can also be traced visually within sacred buildings, especially in representations of donors, where it is revealed as a link between representation and experience. Although their spatial qualities are less easy to pin down, the curtains are part of the material topography of the in-between. The textiles convey transformative experiences at thresholds and in liminal spaces, structuring spaces while creating connections between them. Thresholds and transitions present themselves as areas characterised by contrasting principles, related to sacred and cult places, which have a massive influence on the experience. Looking at curtains from the research history of liminality, some problems arise in relation to the original conception of liminality in ritual and religious contexts. The terminology needs to be extended to objects and images. The terms threshold, transitional spaces or passages and the liminal should be used carefully depending on the perspective or question at hand. In this way, they can develop their potential to integrate material evidence and perspectives on historical perception and experience.

While curtains, when closed, shield the viewers' gaze, and evoke their desire to see through visual withdrawal, when opened, they reveal, frame and present what one expects to see. Curtains capture people's attention, stimulate their imagination, and heighten their expectations through the fabric's dynamic and performative qualities. This staging and the experience involved are particularly intense when what is hoped to be seen is a sacred image, of which the open curtains offer only the illusion of a glimpse. Corinna Mairhanser examines how curtains in Late Antiquity, through their function of directing the gaze and influencing visual perception, helped to establish sacred images, to express concepts of the numinous and the arcane sacred, and to mystify and enchant what they framed. As the veneration of icons became established, the demands placed on them changed over the centuries up to the Middle Byzantine period. Curtains continued to help authenticate

the sacredness and stage faith in the spheres that unfold around and within the image. Central to this are the viewers and their multi-sensory experience, perception, and interaction with the images, both as individuals and as part of a community and social experience. Miracles and physical changes in icons refer to an invisible divinity, intensify the perception of those present and lead the visual perception to a higher level of spiritual vision and religious feeling.

The afterlife and the long history of the connection between the staging of sacred images with curtains and the associated ritual are suggested by Matko Marušić in his observations of altar retables in Dalmatian churches of the Early Modern period. Curtains and draperies made of stone or marble framed and staged the older medieval sacred images placed in the most prominent position in a church. Due to their age and style, these so-called *imagines antiquae* referred to the authenticity of the portrayed saints. They were complemented by various religious concepts and stories of supernatural powers and miracles, which pointed to the enduring Christian identity of the communities that venerated them. The animated, moving textiles carved in stone enshrined these images and offered them to the faithful for veneration, drawing the spectator's attention to the dialogue with them in the ritual of concealment and revelation, which could only be hinted at by the materiality of the curtains.

Curtains not only play with the human eye and visual perception, they also utilise acoustics to create spaces on a holistic physical and emotional level, influencing people's perception and sensibilities. Friederike Kranig looks beyond the purely visual staging of curtains to the acoustics between Modernity and Late Antiquity. The staging possibilities of sounds and curtains were utilised in various acoustic productions, especially at the imperial court in Constantinople. In silence as a deliberately used acoustic dimension, sound signals as acoustic stimuli activate interest in what is shown and refer to the staging of the event. The sound, consisting of alternating choirs and organs flooding the space, intensifies the experience and spans different temporal and spatial levels, acting between proximity and distance, as well as past and present. The curtains lend a distant, entranced mysterious sound that can also become very present through the performative character of the textiles.

From the Byzantine imperial court and the curtains hung in the palace, the focus shifts to the Ottoman court and its tents as an integral part of it. Drawing on the example of the Grand Vizier's tent from the mid-seventeenth century, a trophy of the Ottoman wars gained by the Bavarian Prince Elector Max Emanuel, Priscilla Pfannmüller points to the very ability of this special object. Like curtains, tents have a performative character and can be transformed from a place to sleep into a garden pavilion by raising and lowering the tent curtains. The various panels of the tent, the so-called hazine, and the curtains share the same basic functions and uses, as well as the same aspects of staging – they screen and conceal, they reveal in the next moment, they stage and represent, they divide, demarcate, and define spaces and spheres. Etymological connections also underline these similarities. Analogies between tents and palaces represent the highly artificial and philosophical Ottoman concepts of power associated with tents, whose transformation was reflected in their changing design in the late 17th century. There is an intentional discrepancy between the unimpressive, uniform, shielding exterior of the tent and the highly decorated, lavish heavenly garden that is revealed inside. However, this contradiction can be resolved by opening up the tent's panels and blurring the boundaries between inside and outside, between war and paradise.

These previously considered forms of staging were inspired by and modelled on various forms of curtains in antiquity. Eva Christof analyses the omnipresence of these textiles from Late Hellenistic to Roman Imperial imagery. Archaeological findings provide clues to places and forms of attachment, while representations in various media shed light on diverse areas of life they framed and their facets – from births, marriages, celebrations, visits to the theatre, very intimate and

private moments, and ultimately to death. As two-dimensional painted or carved illusions, curtains open up spatial perspectives and visual references to different pictorial levels between foreground and background or interior and exterior space, thus giving depth to the pictorial representations. They can also span temporal levels in the visualisation of narratives or, beyond this expressive content, be reduced to their purely ornamental status.

How do curtains interact with people and their perception? What staging mechanisms do they use to influence them? What are the challenges they confront them with? Franz Alto Bauer deals with this question and the processes that take place behind the curtain, in people's minds. Over the centuries, changing demands and forms of expression have increasingly blurred the boundaries between realities, worlds and people, as visual media shows. Plays, books, newspapers, pictures, or films interact with viewers on different levels within their genre and present them with tasks and challenges. Visual perception is central to this, as are the associated processes and a visual literacy that serves to absorb and interpret what is seen. Curtains act over time as a subdividing and staging framework for the process of perception, which takes place as an integral part of the individual's mind.

A Glimpse Behind the Curtain

A comparative look back at de Chirico's *L'enigma dell'oracolo* reveals how curtains interact with the mystery on different levels. They conceal and reveal at the same time, directing the viewer's gaze, deliberately staging views and content. In the process of concealment, the object or abstract idea hidden behind the curtain may include religious beliefs and content that are difficult to depict and make tangible. This mystery is concealed in the shadow, wrapped in several layers of textiles. Its true meaning and what it consists of is left to the viewer's perception and imagination. Because of this individual component, these mysteries will never be fully revealed, and that is not the aim of this volume.

These glimpses behind the curtain and the attempt to reveal some of their secrets were only possible with the help of a few people and institutions, to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude. First of all, there are the many helping hands that contributed to the success of the workshop that preceded this volume on 19 – 20 May 2022 in Munich. I would also like to thank Franz Alto Bauer and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich for making this possible in the first place. Moreover, I am grateful to the Verein für Spätantike Archäologie und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte e.V. for the financial support of the workshop and to the MZAW – Münchner Zentrum für Antike Welten and its doctoral candidate seminar Promotionsprogramm Altertumswissenschaften for their grants for this volume. Special thanks goes to Elise Tacconi-Garman, who undertook the English-language editing of the contributions. Without the support of all these people and institutions, it would not have been possible to take a closer look behind the curtain at its mysteries.

Figure Credits

Fig. 1: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024; picture from A. Görgen-Lammers, ›De Chiricos Be-Stimmung. Zu Einflüssen aus der deutschen Philosophie und Kunst‹, in A. Görgen-Lammers and P. Baldacci (eds.), *Giorgio de Chirico. Magische Wirklichkeit,* Munich, Hirmer, 2020, p. 61 fig. 38.

Bibliography

Blümle, C., ›Das Bild als Vorhang‹, in C. Blümle and B. Wismer (eds.), *Hinter dem Vorhang. Verhüllung und Enthüllung seit der Renaissance – Von Tizian bis Christo*, Munich, Hirmer, 2016, pp. 30 – 39.

Blümle, C., ›Giorgio de Chiricos Enigma‹, in S. Egenhofer (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild? Antworten in Bildern*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 2012, pp. 220 – 222.

Brazeau, B., ›Building a Mystery: Giorgio de Chirico and Italian Renaissance Painting‹, *The Italianist*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2019, pp. 20 – 43.

Greene, S., ›The Pull of the Oracle: Personalized Mythologies in Plath and de Chirico‹, *Mosaic*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1992, pp. 107 – 120.

Benzi, F., ›Giorgio de Chirico e la nascita della metafisica. L'»altra« avanguardia italiana, 1910 – 1911‹, in S. Frezzotti (ed.), *Secessione e avanguardia. L'arte in Italia prima della Grande Guerra (1905 – 1915)*, Milan, Electa, 2014, pp. 92 – 109.

Crescentini, C., *L'Enigma Velato*, Rome, Erreciemme, 2009.

Görgen-Lammers, A., ›De Chiricos Be-Stimmung. Zu Einflüssen aus der deutschen Philosophie und Kunst‹, in A. Görgen-Lammers and P. Baldacci (eds.), *Giorgio de Chirico. Magische Wirklichkeit*, Munich, Hirmer, 2020, pp. 50 – 65.

Noel-Johnson, V., ›Le voyage sans fin. Giorgio de Chirico and Metaphysical Art (1910 – 78)‹, in V. Noel-Johnson (ed.), *Giorgio de Chirico: The Changing Face of Metaphysical Art*, Milan, Skira, 2019, pp. 3 – 27.

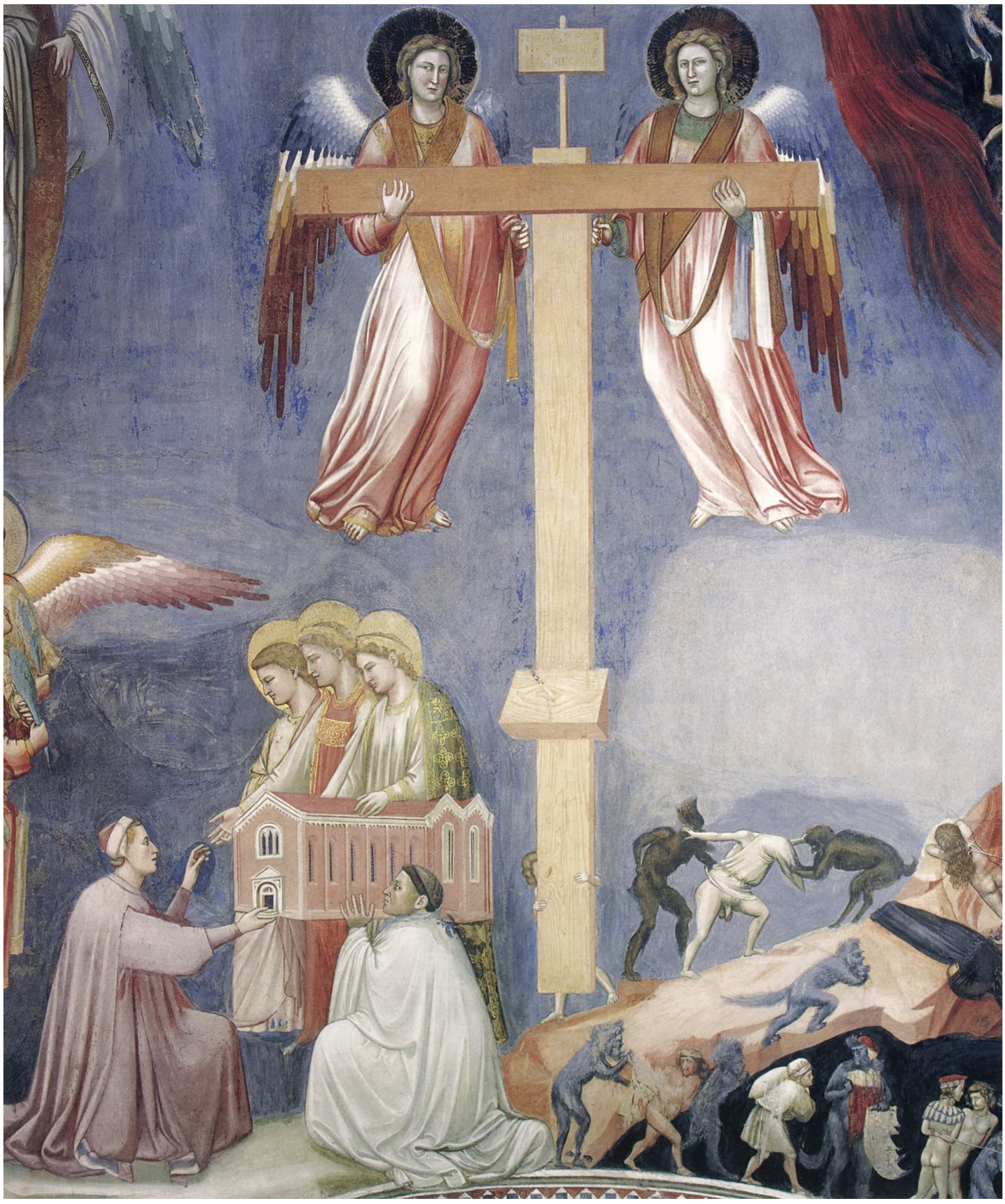


Fig. 1 Enrico Scrovegni with a model of the Arena Chapel, Cross held by two angels, and entrance to hell. Fresco by Giotto, West wall, 1303 – 1307, Arena Chapel, Padua.

Curtains in the Context of Thresholds and Liminal Spaces in Medieval Art

Tina Bawden

This article explores the shift in perspective that focusing on the threshold as a specific if multi-faceted space means for the study of those objects and images placed there. Sculptures, doors, ironwork, reliefs, carvings and, more recently, textiles have tended to attract attention within the history of art according to semantic content, material and genre rather than placement. Considering them in the location they were viewed in brings out not only functional contexts impacting imagery and questions of sensory address, but also material aesthetics prized here. Hardly ever extant in situ, textiles are particularly difficult to firmly associate with a historical threshold or boundary. Their appeal for the construction and characterization of spaces both materially and visually, however, has often been noted.[1] Drawing on the relatively recent interest in evidence for curtains in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages and the scholarship this has produced, I ask more generally how they integrate into the visuality and materiality of the threshold and the idea of liminal spaces. A first part demonstrates the way in which entrances of sacred buildings function as connectors of representation and experience of space by looking at donor images. A second part explores the terminology surrounding the liminal and liminality, and the way in which these concepts have been used in the last decade to draw out their potential for the topic. A third and a final fourth part then touch upon how textile aesthetics and extant curtains might be further studied as part of the threshold as a visual and material space.

Engaging with Buildings

The façade of the painted model of the Arena Chapel in Padua contains a very small threshold – the threshold of a building within a painting within a building (fig. 2). Built for Enrico Scrovegni between 1303 – 1307, the chapel houses the famous fresco decoration by Giotto. The chapel model in the image is held by its patron, who curls

1 On material evidence, see: J. W. Stephenson, ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, pp. 3 – 31; S. de Blaauw and K. Doležalová, ›Constructing Liminal Space? Curtains in Late Antique and Early Medieval Churches‹, *Convivium: Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean*, special edition *The Notion of Liminality and the Medieval Sacred Space*, suppl. 2019, pp. 11 – 66. E. D. Maguire, ›Curtains at the Threshold: How they hung and how they performed‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 217 – 244; S. de Blaauw, ›Architektur und Textilien in den spätantiken Kirchen Roms‹, *Contextus: Festschrift für Sabine Schrenk*, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Ergänzungsband 41, 2020, pp. 144 – 163. P. Blessing, E. Dospěl Williams, and E. L. Shea, *Medieval Textiles across Eurasia, c. 300 – 1400*, Cambridge, Cambridge Press, 2023. Two important monographs buttress the topic of the depiction of curtains in art: J. K. Eberlein, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis. Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 1982; C. Blümle: *Schauspiele des Halbversteckten: Eine Bildgeschichte des gemalten Vorhangs*, Paderborn, Fink, 2019.

Fig. 2 Detail of Enrico Scrovegni with a model of the Arena Chapel. Fresco by Giotto, West wall, 1303 – 1307, Arena Chapel, Padua.

his hand under the entrance steps and places the thumb of his right hand upon its threshold. The scene is part of the Last Judgement covering the entire west wall of the building. It is placed just to the left of the central axis upon which Christ as Judge presides over proceedings, and adjacent to the cross, instrument of the Passion held aloft by angels directly beyond the enthroned Christ. Scrovegni kneels opposite a cleric in the same posture as him, who is supporting the model of the chapel on his shoulder. He raises his left hand towards Mary, who is flanked by St John and St Catherine, the patrons of the two side altars. Saint Catherine has placed one hand upon the roof of the chapel model to signal acceptance of his gift. Upon closer inspection, we see that the door is quite detailed, with a tympanum with figures, and what looks to be one half of the two doors shut and one open to reveal the signature blue of the frescoes' backgrounds inside.[2]

2 The West wall was among the last parts painted. The transept in the model points to a historical plan for the east end of the chapel, and the cleric acts as a custodian: M. V. Schwarz, Giottus pictor, Cologne, Böhlau, 2008, vol. 2, pp. 26 – 36. The body of literature on the Arena Chapel and Enrico Scrovegni as historical person is vast. A. Derbes and M. Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008; H. C. Lange, *Giotto's Arena Chapel and the Triumph of Humility*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. The image of Scrovegni's

The gesture combines several main functional contexts of church entrances in the Middle Ages, from the socially binding to the legal, and from the ritual to the spiritual. By touching the threshold, Scrovegni is demonstrating that the chapel is his to give. As pars pro toto, the doorway here stands for the whole building. It was customary to take ownership of a house by touching a part of its doorway in the Middle Ages.[3] Likewise, the threshold was where oaths were sworn, and socially binding contracts were made. Church asylum, formally introduced at the Council of Orange in AD 441, meant that sanctuary seekers presented themselves and were defended at the door.[4] Physical interaction with the threshold was moreover part of one of the central liturgical rites of the church, the dedication and consecration of a church, which included the bishop knocking on the closed door and touching his crozier to the posts or threshold, as well as performative acts of lustration and marking.[5]

By placing his thumb here, at the threshold to a sacred space, Scrovegni's ownership gesture is coupled with the hope that his donation will lead to his being saved at the end of time. This is underscored by the placement of the image, on the corresponding side of the Last Judgement, the side of the elect (fig. 1). The support and tactile acceptance of the saints acting as intercessors on Scrovegni's behalf likewise contributes to the hopeful outlook. Nevertheless, this is also a rendering of a liminal situation. It is a meeting of heavenly and earthly representatives, »betwixt and between« in the well-known description of the liminal stage formulated by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner in 1964.[6] The donation image and its immediate surroundings are not even really part of the Last Judgment, but neither are they of the here and now of the earthly building. Existential parameters are affected by this liminal stage: for Scrovegni and for viewers of the fresco, judgment has not yet been cast and everything is possible. There are pictorial traces of this indeterminacy and suspension: Gravity does not seem to apply equally across the scene, matter and tangibility are contrasted with weightlessness, physical touch with airy reach. Thus, for example, Scrovegni's gentle touch does not contribute visibly to lightening the cleric's heavy burden.[7] The cross, which is clearly rendered as being made of thick wood, hovers, held aloft by floating angels. At the same time, it is physically connected to the ground by a small soul desperately clinging to its shaft, while devils physically drag and push the damned souls in the direction of hell opening up beneath. The represented objects – the miniature chapel and the cross – are a model and a sign respectively, and yet their rendering makes them fluctuate between the insubstantial and the tangible, the represented and the palpable.

interaction with the church model is usually treated briefly, however, and has interested scholars mainly in terms of what it reveals about the character of his patronage or Giotto's approach to portraiture, rather than what it reveals about thresholds.

3 Usually the ring: *Traditio per anulum.* Cf. H. R. Hahnloser, ›Urkunden zur Bedeutung des Türrings‹, in W. Gramberg, C. G. Heise, and L. Möller (eds.), *Festschrift für Erich Meyer zum sechzigsten Geburtstag. Studien zu Werken in den Sammlungen des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*, Hamburg, Hauswedell, 1959, pp. 125 – 146, with sources. U. Mende, *Die Türzieher des Mittelalters* (Bronzegeräte des Mittelalters, 2), Berlin, Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1981, pp. 161 – 167.

4 W. Chester Jordan, ›A Fresh Look at Medieval Sanctuary‹, in R. M. Karras, J. Kaye, and E. A. Matter (eds.), *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe,* Philadelphia, 2008, pp. 17 – 32.

5 B. Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era,* Lewiston NY, Mellen, 1998; H. P. Neuheuser, *Mundum consecrare.* Die Kirchweihliturgie als Spiegel der mittelalterlichen Raumwahrnehmung, in E. Vavra (ed.), *Virtuelle Räume. Raumwahrnehmung und Raumvorstellung im Mittelalter*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2005, pp. 259 – 279.

6 The essay ›Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage‹, was turned into a chapter in V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1967. Turner had first presented the paper in March 1964, after reading Arnold van Gennep's book, which had recently been translated into English: A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* translated by M. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960 (First publ. *Les rites de passage,* Paris, 1909). Cf. A. Szakolczai and B. Thomassen, *From Anthropology to Social Theory: Rethinking the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, chapter ›Victor Turner: Liminal Experiences as the Grounding of Social Theory‹, pp. 176 – 195, here p. 182.

7 P. C. Claussen, ›Enrico Scrovegni, der exemplarische Fall?‹, in H.-R. Meier, C. Jäggi, and Ph. Büttner (eds.), *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn: Stifter und Auftraggeber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, Berlin, Reimer, 1995, pp. 227 – 246, here p. 230.

It seems significant in this context that the doorway of the painted Arena Chapel – centre and nexus of the gestural transactions of donation, saintly intercession, offer and acceptance in the business of the soul – is half open and half closed, expressing the ambivalence it holds, the decision not yet known or made until the end of days. Promise, anxiety, a sense of urgency, temporal suspension as well as anticipation are folded into this scene.

Giotto's version of mise-en-abyme, the telescoping of time and space by way of putting real and depicted places and their connotations into play, in fact, has a long tradition. Further south and three centuries earlier, the church of Sant'Angelo in Formis was enlarged and decorated under the patronage of the abbot of Montecassino, Desiderius, between 1072 and 1087. He had his donor picture added to the apse, where he offers a model of the church to the archangel Michael. The model is recognizably that of the complex here with the same wide porch. Again, it is the façade which is one of the most important parts. Raising his model with his left hand holding up the steps, he places the fingertips of his right hand across the central entrance of the porch, likewise indicating that it was especially significant to be physically engaged with this area. Among the frescoes adorning the interior of the same Sant'Angelo in Formis is a precursor of Giotto's Last Judgement on the interior west wall of the church.[8] While the reference to the economy of salvation is not quite as plainly formulated in terms of the Last Things, therefore, localization and intercession are likewise fundamental themes.

Another five hundred years earlier and further east, a mosaic image of bishop Eufrasius shows this donor presenting a model of his basilica in the actual church in Croatia's town of Poreč.[9] In contrast to Desiderius and Scrovegni, he is presenting the model of his church with his arms veiled. As in the later donor images, however, the model is angled in such a way that the façade with the entrance of the church is closest to the donor and facing the viewer. Here, there is a white curtain with red dots and visible loops half drawn back as if by the bishop's mantle, which pictorially formulates the accessibility of this church.[10] This is another invitation, for the depicted threshold relates to a real one, which those viewing these images have already crossed and yet might think back to. Small hooks are extant at the major entrance of the Euphrasian Basilica, supporting the notion that the actual entrance was also equipped with a curtain. In Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, door curtains were often an addition to, not a replacement of, permanent doors.[11] Pictorially focusing on curtains in this image heightens the sense of the building's openness. Within the history of images, curtains swept to one side predate the depiction of open doors. On occasion, these motifs were therefore used to signal outdoor in contrast to indoor settings of a scene.[12]

8 I. Grötecke, *Das Bild des Jüngsten Gerichts. Die ikonographischen Konventionen in Italien und ihre politische Aktualisierung in Florenz*, Worms, Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997, p. 14.

9 For an accessible photo, see fig. 2 in E. D. Maguire, ›Curtains at the Threshold: How they hung and how they performed‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 217 – 244.

10 Maguire, ›Curtains at the Threshold‹, p. 219; Eberlein, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis*.

11 For curtains even in smaller churches in the Byzantine context, see B. Caseau, ›Objects in Churches: The Testimony of Inventories‹, in L. Lavan, E. Swift, and T. Putzeys (eds.), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, pp. 551 – 580. Textual evidence for door curtains in the early medieval West and East is provided by Isidore of Seville and Jerome, for example (see below). A prominent example of an historiated door with an additional curtain is Santa Sabina in Rome: Extant holes in the doors' frames have been suggested as bearing something to support a curtain: Cf. I. Foletti, ›Singing Doors: Images, Space, and Sound in the Santa Sabina Narthex‹, in B. V. Pentcheva (ed.), *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination in Medieval Art*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 19 – 35, here p. 31.

12 Cf. Byzantine examples in M. G. Parani, ›Curtains in the Middle and Late Byzantine House‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 145 – 164.

The list of examples could be extended to include donor images from further regions in the Middle Ages,[13] but the three discussed here suffice to make the point: Evidently, the entrance and its mechanisms of architectural and material accessibility through porch, portal, door and curtain mattered. They no doubt mattered differently in different places and at different times, but the staging of the entrance areas in these three pictorial conceptions of individual churches suggest that there are some communalities which transcend the iconographic type of ›donor with model‹. All these building models spanning 800 years of Mediterranean visual culture refer to the church in question itself, its accessibility, and its role as a mediator of salvation by way of directing attention to the entrance. They therefore also relate to viewers' experiences. The extent of physical interaction between the donor and the hardware of the entrance is treated quite differently: While Desiderius and Scrovegni touch the entrance area with their bare hands, and only Scrovegni's fingers appear to actually engage with a modelled object, Eufrasius' mantle and the curtain merely overlap, his covered hands expressing the reverence for the sacred building. The drawn curtain and the half-open door both signal accessibility, but they draw attention to the different ways in which thresholds are constructed, managed and claimed as spaces. While all three donors' gestures proclaim proximity and engagement, they can also be located within a web of roles, meanings and differences performed and produced at medieval entrances, and demonstrating that space is always constructed socially.[14] Touching the door curtain with his hands would not have been an appropriate gesture for Desiderius: The visual record suggests that opening door curtains was an act performed by servants in late antique culture, and iconographies such as those of the Annunciation and Visitation continue this association.[15] In the context of churches, curtains were managed by the *ostiarius*, a variable role and often office established over the course of the early Middle Ages.[16] A letter by Jerome implies that it was one of the doorkeeper's tasks (here *ianitor*) to ensure that the curtains were put up in the doorway;[17] doorkeepers were also expected to regulate admittance, excluding those not allowed in the church.[18]

13 E. g. Mals, St Benedikt, fresco ca. 800 of Bishop Remedius on the Eastern wall. Twelfth-century capital from Saint-Lazare, Autun, with layperson and cleric holding a model of the church with apse. The portal is represented on the aisle wall of the model, so that it faces forward and is seen by viewers. Donor image of Guglielmo da Castelbarco holding a model of San Fermo Maggiore, Verona, with four fingers placed across the door opening, fresco in the chancel arch from the first half of the fourteenth century.

14 Cf. M. Löw, *The Sociology of Space: Materiality, Social Structures, and Action*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. vii: »The constitution of space is a performative act. […] How we perform the synthesis between objects, how we span the space between things and people is a highly conventionalized, objectified practice«.

15 See Elizabeth's house in the scene of the Visitation in the Eufrasian Basilica in Poreč, Croatia. A key example is the curtained doorway adjacent to Theodora and her entourage in the wall mosaic of San Vitale, Ravenna, AD 547. The figure in the doorway was further developed into the figure of witness in many instances, e. g. Annunciation of the Genoels-Elderen ivory diptych, late 8th c., Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire. Annunciation scene on the front of a portable altar from Melk, walrus tooth, oak, porphyr, c. 1050 – 1075. Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Acc. No. Kg 54:221. On these figures, see: R. Deshman, ›Servants of the Mother of God in Byzantine and Medieval Art‹, *Word and Image,* vol. 5, 1989, pp. 33 – 70; most recently B. Roux, ›La parole observée: Figures de témoins dans des Annonciations médiévales‹, in H. Gründler, A. Nova, and I. Sapir, Berlin (eds.), *The Announcement: Annunciations and Beyond*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 55 – 73. The woman spinning in the porch of the Apparition to St Anne in Giotto's Arena Chapel is a further instance of these witness figures.

16 J. Day, The Status and Role of Doorkeepers in the Early Medieval West, *Studies in Late Antiquity*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2022, pp. 148 – 173. On the Byzantine context: V. A. Karras, Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church, *Church History,* vol. 73, no. 2, 2004, pp. 272 – 316.

17 Jerome, letter 60.12 (Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 54: 563): »Erat ergo sollicitus, si niteret altare, si parietes absque fuligine, si pauimenta tersa, si ianitor creber in porta, uela semper in ostiis, si sacrarium mundum, si uasa lucentia.«

18 Day, ›The Status and Role of Doorkeepers‹, pp. 169 – 170.

Notes on Terminology

Key concept within social and cultural studies for some time now, ›threshold‹, just like the German ›Schwelle‹ and French ›seuil‹, signifies an actual or metaphorical boundary zone beyond which lies something else.[19] Even if these terms in their respective languages have been used slightly differently and have had a different development and impact within cultural theory, the threshold is the most concrete principle in the semantic realm of the liminal. A threshold most simply creates a here and a there at the same time as dividing them. It sets an obstacle or hindrance, be it high or low. We therefore speak of pain thresholds or sensory thresholds. It can also hold a temporal sense, an event can take place »at the threshold to the 21st century,« for example. The term always implies a double perspective, keeping things apart as much as it joins them together. Janus is a paradigmatic figure for this, with his two faces looking in opposite directions.[20] The ancient god remained part of the iconography of January in the Middle Ages, one of his faces looking ahead into the new year, while at the same time the other looks back at the old. The figure demonstrates another key aspect of what characterizes a threshold: Though angled forward and back, directed beyond from either side respectively, the threshold additionally constitutes a third, a self-sufficient moment or place between the two spaces or times it separates and connects. This aspect is of particular interest to those working on material and visual culture, because of the way in which the threshold can become a figure, can be conceived of as a localized material object or group of objects, or indeed as a place.

A threshold does not only contrast and connect two states of being, spaces or times into relation and possibly conflict with one another; it is also a moment or space of transition, enabling and channelling a path leading though it. In the way that it structures time, space and experience, there are two different ways of understanding a threshold: a hodological one which focuses on the permeability of the threshold, and a dialectical one in which the threshold is a ›third space‹, characterized by indeterminacy and negotiation processes.[21]

Both aspects – the hodological and the dialectic – equally come together in the concept of liminality. The term, derived from the Latin *limen*, was first used conceptually in a cultural context in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep as a classification of all existing rites.[22] He considered transitions as important within any society, and identified rites of passage as a category subdivided into three stages: rites of separation, transition rites and rites of

19 The following adapts and develops – in light of recent publications – the chapter on the theory of the threshold in my book: T. Bawden, *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter: Bildort und Bildmotiv*, Cologne, Böhlau, 2014, pp. 20 – 32. Unlike in 2010, however, when I completed my thesis, a concise overview over publications in medieval art history which take as central in theory or topic the conglomerate of terms around thresholds, passages, transitions, barriers, veils, screens and the liminal no longer seems possible to me. These terms have become ubiquitous in studies on Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages in the last decade. As this has meant that they are used more loosely and interchangeably, their distinctive meaning has on occasion been watered down. I will outline here why I regard a careful use of terms as necessary. For a critique of an over-use of ›liminal‹ and ›liminality‹, see also V. Bedros and E. Scirocco, ›Liturgical Screens, East and West: Liminality and Spiritual Experience‹, *Convivium: Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean*, special edition *The Notion of Liminality and the Medieval Sacred Space*, suppl. 2019, pp. 68 – 88.

20 Cf. Isidore of Seville, Etymologies, 5.33.3, in I. of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville,* ed. and trans. S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and O. Berghof, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 128.

21 This has been one of the key aspects – a term taken over from Frederic Jameson – for Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity in postcolonial theory, one of the fields for which the spatial metaphors of threshold processes have become important: H. K. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, ch. 11 »How newness enters the world«.

22 A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris, 1909.

incorporation.[23] A ritual space or phase of transition is a phase in which a person is no longer what they were, but is not yet what they will be. Van Gennep called the middle stage in a rite of passage a liminal period. In his book, he already acknowledged that rites of passage often go together with spatial changes. For early Christian rituals, for example, we might point to the site of baptism, which was often located at the western end of a sacred building; to the atrium as the place of catechumens in Late Antiquity; to marriage rites celebrated at the portal or the readmission of a new mother after giving birth, as well as burial in the porch or *ante limina.* The spatial aspect, however, was not important at first for cultural anthropologists building on van Gennep's theory, especially Victor Turner in the 1960s, who followed van Gennep's focus on the liminal. Instead, behaviour, experience, cultic, social and political transformation were at the centre of consideration. In English, the use of the compound noun »liminal space« has only become ubiquitous in the last decade or so.[24]

In fields concerning not only religion and ritual conceptually,[25] but dealing with objects and images, these terms and concepts acquire different kinds of potential. Especially in fields involving concrete visual and material studies (e.g. Art history, Archaeology, Architectural history), we do well to think about carefully distinguishing between thresholds, transitional spaces or passages, and the liminal. In its most concrete definition, ›threshold‹ describes an architectural feature, the step crowned by a door's frame, even though it is also used more broadly to mean the door opening extending above this step, which anyone entering passes through. To stress this aspect of crossing from a subjective point of view and to describe the hodological structure of a threshold and the way in which it implies movement, we may further consider it a transitional space or passage,[26] which presupposes its use as such. On the other hand, ›liminal‹ is not a formally descriptive term for tangible structures and objects. Instead, it adds a potential, setting spaces or stretches of time in relation to experiences and practices. To describe a church porch as a liminal space, for example, usually means viewing it in terms of the rituals enacted there, or in terms of spiritual preparation associated with it. When inquiring into historical spaces and built environments, the notion of liminality implicitly introduces the element of experience, thereby multiplying the types of historical sources to consider. A curtain or the valves of a door are not in and of themselves liminal – or rather this would not be a very useful application of the term –, but their placement, use or potential use could ensure that they contribute to a liminal space or a liminal experience, for example. At the same time, a barrier or threshold does not need to be physically transgressed in order to function in a liminal rite.[27] A historiated door in this sense would need to open and close to function as a door primarily, but it could be liminal in the sense that it suggests something about that which lies behind. This experience does not necessarily rely on the door's function.[28]

23 The sequential structure of rites is considered van Gennep's »central theoretical innovation«: A. Szakolczai and B. Thomassen, *From Anthropology to Social Theory: Rethinking the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, chapter »Arnold van Gennep: Liminal Rites and the Rhythms of Life«, pp. 23 – 43, here p. 25.

24 Cf. Bawden, *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter*, p. 11.

25 An important early position is that of M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask, San Diego, Harcourt, 1959 (first publ. *Le Sacré et le Profane*, Paris 1957).

26 This aspect of transition is much more inherently part of the German term ›Schwelle‹ than it is of ›threshold‹, which makes working with these concepts across different languages challenging.

27 Cf. Bedros and Scirocco, ›Liturgical Screens, East and West‹, p. 85.

28 Cf. Linda Seidel, writing on Moissac, »doors don't actually have to function at all in order to make suggestions to spectators about their roles«: L. Seidel, ›The Moissac Portico and the Rhetoric of Appropriation‹, in H. Beck and K. Hengevoss-Dürkop (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte der europäischen Skulptur im 12./13. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols., Frankfurt am Main, Henrich, 1994, pp. 287 – 302, here p. 291.

With textiles, there is a similar focus on possible vision and projection in their dialectic of concealing and revealing.[29] Compared to the example of doors just mentioned, this is encapsulated less by the objects' mechanical and spatial range than by material affordances of coverage, transparency, mobility and easy manipulation. Textiles were certainly employed at key moments in liminal rites, so that their potential of concealing and revealing something beyond themselves could be used to aid transformative experiences without these necessarily being best described in spatial terms.[30] Issues of visibility, ritual and space intersect at the threshold and images can add to this complex situation. It is useful to therefore adjust terms along with the focal points of inquiries that move between describing an object, discussing image functions and characterizing spaces, especially in historical contexts.

Pliable Borders: The Last Judgement as a Threshold Image

One of the paradigmatic threshold iconographies, the Last Judgement, demonstrates that in addition to structure and visual range, examining threshold materialities is important. Chosen for church portals in the medieval West from the 12th century onwards, its iconography and structure was developed increasingly in tandem with the morphology of threshold design in the Middle Ages.[31] This is significant, because it points to the role that sensory experience and affect play in spaces of transition. Whether chosen, as it was in Sant'Angelo in Formis in the 11th and Padua in the 14th century, to adorn the west wall on the inside of the church,[32] whether it served as a sculpted image above the central entrance, as it was in Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals and churches in Western Europe, or indeed as a wooden tympanum filling the chancel arch of late medieval English parish churches: The association of the topic of the Last Judgement with a transitional space is what these examples have in common. As highly frequented areas, thresholds guaranteed visibility and enabled impact, providing powerful preconditions for address: Those going into the church, those approaching the chancel and sanctuary, and those leaving the church might be reminded of their fate and consider their actions within the larger frame of the judgment awaiting all of them at the end of days according to salvation history.

The small soul clinging to the shaft of the Cross in Padua is, as Peter Cornelius Claussen put it, the »strongest offer of identification« for a viewer.[33] I would add that it is not just the significance of the Cross, but its position on the central axis of separation of the damned and the elect, which contributes to this. The Last Judgement is an image describing – from the perspective of the pious viewer – an either/or. The binary structure is one that many Last Judgement images capitalize on. However, hope and the potential of being saved,

29 On these principles of visibility as premodern paradigms, see: H. Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Enthüllen und Verbergen in der Vormoderne / Revealing and Concealing in the Premodern Period*, Paderborn, Brill, 2021.

30 For a more detailed discussion of the principles – I called them coordinates – characterizing the threshold in the German sense of Schwelle, see Bawden, *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter,* pp. 24–32: ambivalence (*Ambivalenz/Ambiguität*), concealment (*Verborgenheit*), promise/invitation (*Verheißung/Aufforderung*), transformation (*Verwandlung*), and mediation (*Vermittlung*). Scholars have, of course, also explored the cluster of terms for other fields within art history, for example aesthetically as a particularly fruitful term for images, as in K. Krüger, *Bildpräsenz – Heilspräsenz: Ästhetik der Liminalität*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2018.

31 Cf. Y. Christe, *Jugement derniers*, Saint-Léger-Vauban, Zodiaque, 1999.

32 Iris Grötecke lists over 70 monumental depictions of the Last Judgment in Italy, with S. Angelo in Formis being the oldest. I. Grötecke, *Das Bild des Jüngsten Gerichts.*

33 P. C. Claussen, ›Enrico Scrovegni, der exemplarische Fall?‹, in H.-R. Meier, C. Jäggi, and Ph. Büttner (eds.), *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn: Stifter und Auftraggeber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, Berlin, Reimer, 1995, pp. 227–246, here p. 232 (»das stärkste Identifikationsangebot, welches das Bild des Weltgerichts einem Betrachter bietet«).

essential elements for the moralizing and transformative potential of the image, could be integrated into the narrative by reference to the place it is set in. Hints of the not-yet decided ambivalence of an in-between were also created in pictorial and sculptural ways. A compelling example is the Romanesque tympanum at the abbey church of Ste Foy in Conques, positioned on the pilgrimage route Via Podiensis to Santiago de Compostela.[34] Completed in the second quarter of the 12th century and over six meters wide, the binary structure of heaven on the right of Christ and hell on the left is visible at first glance (fig. 3). Further complexity is achieved by the division into registers which add a narrative component to this particular Last Judgment.[35] The relief combines several visual functions of portal imagery, which often fuses the locally specific and viewer-relevant with an iconography bound to the overarching Christian world view. The Conques Last Judgment refers to this specific place and its saintly patron Sainte Foy, who is depicted above the structure of the heavenly city over the left doorway, and has risen from her throne to lie prostrate as an intercessor on behalf of souls before the hand of God above (fig. 4). Scholars have many times noted that the throne takes the form of that of Ste Foy's famous reliquary sculpture held at the abbey with its prominent rock crystal spheres, so that her representation on the tympanum can be seen as an animation of the reliquary.[36] Furthermore, the throne is placed in front of an altar, a position the Book of miracles of Sainte Foy, its first parts famously written between 1013 and 1025 by Bernhard of Angers, mentions for the reliquary.[37] Shackles and chains, votive gifts left at the abbey by the many prisoners the saint was famous for releasing, hang on a beam over this area, backing up – spatially as well as causally – her intercession on their behalf. This image therefore does not only localize the relevance of the Last Judgment by offering a preview – as it were – of the church interior, it distinctively connects the physical experiences of pilgrims with the experience of the church interior: Here, they would have bent down to venerate Ste Foy in the same posture she assumes in the image to make a bid for their souls.[38] Gesture and body position, seen and remembered images could mutually support and enhance the idea that by visiting this church and its famous relic, pilgrims become themselves by their physical movement a link in the chain of intercession. At a time of heightened sensory experience, such as during pilgrimage, which was analyzed as an extended liminal state by Edith and Victor Turner in 1978, the conditions for this kind

34 The following draws on my analysis of the tympanum in the context of threshold imagery, in Bawden, *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter*, pp. 211 – 227.

35 On the Last Judgement image more generally as a structure used for pictorial argument, see Grötecke, *Das Bild des Jüngsten Gerichts*, e. g. pp. 2 – 3. Influential (structuralist) analyses of how the diagrammatic structure of the tympanum in Conques specifically enables narrative syntax in inscriptions and pictorial content: C. Altman, Conques and Romanesque Narrative, *Olifant*, vol. 5, 1977, pp. 5 – 28; J.-C. Bonne, *L'Art roman, de face et de profil: le tympan de Conques*, Paris, Le sycomore, 1985; A.-M. Bouché, *Vox Imaginis:* Anomaly and Enigma in Romanesque Art, in J. E. Hamburger and A.-M. Bouché (eds.), *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton Univeristy Press, 2006, pp. 306 – 335; S. Büttner, *Die Körper verweben. Sinnproduktion in der französischen Bildhauerei des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2010, pp. 227 – 312; E. Garland, ›Le conditionnement des pelerins au moyen-âge: l'exemple de Conques‹, *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, vol. 29, 1998, pp. 155 – 176.

36 W. Sauerländer, ››Omnes perversi sic sent in tartara mersi'. Skulptur als Bildpredigt. Das Weltgerichtstympanon von Sainte-Foy in Conques', *Jahrbuch der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, 1980, pp. 33 – 47, here p. 46; Garland, ›Le conditionnement‹, p. 166. On the reliquary statue and the fundamental questions it raises for early medieval sculpture: B. Fricke, *Fallen Idols – Risen Saints: Sainte Foy of Conques and the Revival of Monumental Sculpture in Medieval Art*, transl. A. Griebeler, Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, vol. 7, Turnhout, Brepols, 2015.

37 Bernhard of Angers: *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, ed. Luca Robertini, Spoleto 1994 (= Biblioteca di Medioevo latino 10), Book I, chapter 31, p. 137. English translation: Sheingorn, P., The Book of Sainte Foy. Translated with an introduction and notes, The Song of Sainte Foy transl. by R. L. A. Clark, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

38 E. g. *Liber miraculorum* I, 15; I, 28.

Fig. 3 West façade portal tympanum, second quarter of the twelfth century, Sainte Foy Abbey church, Conques.

of transformative viewing experience were increased, while at the same time they were not dependent upon any specific element of portal architecture.[39]

As in Padua, the central axis in the Conques tympanum is exploited to create the possibility of an in between: A shallow post concludes this axis at the bottom of the image, separating the antechambers of heaven and hell respectively (fig. 5). An angel and a devil regard one another across the front of this post; above them, St Michael weighs souls. Behind the devil trying to influence the outcome by pushing on the scales with his finger, a damned soul falls headfirst into the space below, narrowly missing a blow by the mace-swinging devil beneath. Standing in front of the left portal reveals just how mobile and malleable the bands dividing the registers are, only in this area: Caved in to give a good view of the scales above the angel's head, pushed back by the devil's mace and forward by the soul falling behind, they express formally, according to Jean-Claude Bonne, »the tensions staged in this area«.[40] There is a strong sense that it is here, on this axis (marked on the bands above by crosses), that things are malleable, changeable. The treatment of the stone also engages thought of what might be beneath the surface, in the depths of the wall – a thought that the small figures framing the tympanum and peering out from behind a narrow band likewise

39 V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978. M. Abel, ›Intellectual Projection, Liminal Penetration: Programmed Entry and the Tympanum-Less Portals of Western France and Northern Spain‹, in S. Blick and L. Gelfand (eds.), *Physical and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, vol. 2, *Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, Leiden, Brill, 2011, pp. 421 – 466.

40 »les tensions dont cette région est le théâtre«: Bonne, *L'Art roman*, p. 101.

Fig. 4 West façade portal tympanum, side of the elect, second quarter of the twelfth century, Sainte Foy Abbey church, Conques.

Fig. 5 Central lower register of Conques west tympanum, seen obliquely from left doorway.

raise, reduced to eyes and hands as they are. Like the finger-shaped hooks above the door in Hagia Sophia, they elicit the idea that there might be something within the density of the church walls reaching out or drawing in.[41]

The angels rolling back the firmament – resembling a thick layer of gesso – above Giotto's Last Judgement in the Arena Chapel likewise point out the insistence upon layers and the ›beyond‹ often found at thresholds and their images. They reveal the gem-encrusted golden walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. Pictorial inventiveness has often been noted and attributed to masons and painters for Conques and Padua, but there is something to be said for acknowledging that some of the impetus for ideas like these is due to the place of an image. One of the qualities of textiles in an architectural setting is their potential to mobilize the outer surface of a wall or building, moved by air currants and those passing by. Softening stone surfaces and making them appear pliable was a concern of threshold design throughout,[42] and the historical role of textiles within this aesthetic requires more research. Indisputably, their visuality was valued for the interior.[43]

The following shows that when curtains can be connected to a specific place and function within built space based on their material characteristics, their imagery does at times parallel that of other material threshold contexts. Understood as attempts to integrate door and intercolumnar curtains into threshold visuality, these thoughts need to be expanded further in future.

Two Points of Threshold Aesthetics: Place-bound Pictorial References, and Material Breaks Used for Bridging Imagery

The early 11th century bronze doors commissioned by bishop Bernward of Hildesheim present a total of 16 scenes across two valves.[44] The narrative starts on the left door at the top, and finishes at the top of the right door; its logic contrasting the fall of man on the left with renewed hope through the birth of Christ on the right. Included as a pictorial motif, the door emphasizes this logic: While the Old Testament wing contains only one, the New Testament wing has 5 door motifs.[45] The notion of promise or anticipation is therefore strongly connected with the door, and, in facing a door themselves, the viewers are introduced into this logic of promise and anticipation.

A textile fragment formerly in the Museum of Byzantine Art in Berlin and missing since World War II demonstrates that we might also consider

41 There are also finger-hooks in situ above the Poreč basilica entrance, cf. B. Caseau, ›Experiencing the Sacred‹, in C. Nesbitt and M. Jackson (eds.). *Experiencing Byzantium: Papers from the 44th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Newcastle and Durham, April 2011*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 59 – 77. One bronze example wearing a cross like a ring, dated to the 6th c. in the Malcove collection at the Art Museum of the University of Toronto.

42 P. Blessing, ›Draping, Wrapping, Hanging: Transposing Textile Materiality in the Middle Age‹, *The Textile Museum Journal*, vol. 45, 2018, pp. 2 – 18. On the interpretation of a late medieval portal in Bristol as a curtain: S. Dohe, ›Vorhang auf! Zur Neudeutung des Hauptportals von St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol‹, *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch,* vol. 78, 2017, pp. 11 – 39.

43 See, for example, K. Böse, ›Vorhang auf: Entgrenzung und Transzendenz in den Wandmalereien in der Kirche San Julián de los Prados (Oviedo)‹, in D. Wagner and H. Wimmer (eds.), *Heilige. Bücher – Leiber – Orte: Festschrift für Bruno Reudenbach*, Reimer, Berlin, 2018, pp. 229 – 241.

44 Early publications include F. Dibelius, Die Bernwardstür zu Hildesheim, Strasbourg, Heitz & Mündel, 1907; A. Goldschmidt, Die deutsche Bronzetüren des frühen Mittelalters, Marburg, Verlag des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars, 1926. More recently, M. Brandt, *Bernwards Tür*, 2nd edn., Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner, 2016; H. Hofmann, ›Frame, Plasticity and Movement: The Dynamic Visibility of the Hildesheim Bronze Doors‹, in H. Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Enthüllen und Verbergen in der Vormoderne / Revealing and Concealing in the Premodern Period*, Paderborn, Brill, 2021, pp. 201 – 221. I. Weinryb, *Die Hildesheimer Avantgarde. Kunst und Kolonialismus im mittelalterlichen Deutschland*, Imhof, Petersberg, 2023.

45 For an analysis of the scenes with the door motif and its respective roles: S. Bogen, ›Türen auf Bildertüren. Zum Ort, Medium und Selbstverständnis christlicher Bilderzählung‹, in F. Crivellari (ed.), *Die Medien der Geschichte. Historizität und Medialität in interdiszipinärer Perspektive*, Konstanz, UVK, 2004, pp. 239 – 261. See also Bawden, *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter*, pp. 250 – 260.

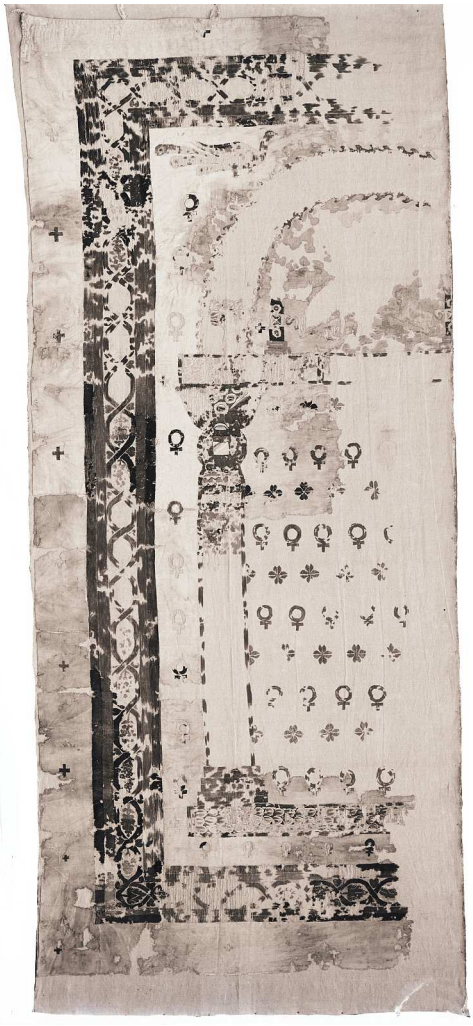


Fig. 6 Curtain (missing since WWII), verbal date: fifth/sixth century, Egypt (Faijmun or Achmim). Linen and wool, 371 cm x 162 cm, SMB, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin, Ident. Nr. 4832.

this aspect of place-bound significant motifs for curtains (fig. 6).[46] Dated to the 5th or 6th century, this is a very long piece of cloth with visible ties attached to the upper end. Its imagery consists of a frame with twist ornament surrounding an arch with an architrave. There is a peacock visible in the spandrel, while the lunette contains a smaller column and some animals. Crux ansata, crosses and rosettes are placed at regular intervals across the whole textile. Because of its size, the cloth was probably used to hang between columns. Here, it would have echoed the stone forms that characterize the space it was intended for, scaling down and translating architectural structures into a different medium and material.[47] The description by H. Swoboda written before the textile went missing mentions further ties at the bottom left edge, indicating that the curtain could have been fixed to something at the side.[48] This idea adds to the potentially stationary dividing function of a curtain hanging in an intercolumnium, where it served to structure space within the church building. Depending on placement, it could create a space within another, potentially separating the clergy from the lay people or the men from the women.[49] Further general functions included limiting visibility without prohibiting auditory participation or hindering the distribution of light. Repetition of forms is a common principle of the visual culture of screens and divisions, which is significant for the experience of a space. As well as the citation of forms and their material translation, layering and doubling of spatial references might be something to consider further, as Patricia Blessing, Elizabeth Dospěl Williams and Eiren L. Shea have noted recently: »The design logic of these textiles suggests a taste for layering textiles

46 Curtain fragment (missing), 5th or 6th c., linen and wool, 371 x 162 cm. Berlin, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Ident. Nr. 4832. https://id.smb.museum/object/2275787/vorhang; H. Swoboda, ›Ein altchristlicher Kirchenvorhang aus Ägypten‹, *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte,* vol. 6, 1892, pp. 95 – 113. C. Fluck, ›Spätantike Textilien mit *crux ansata* im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst‹, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, vol. 59, 2017, pp. 15 – 26. P. Linscheid, ›Die Textilien von Theodor Graf, vormals im Besitz des Kunstgewerbemuseums Berlin‹, in C. Fluck, P. Linscheid and S. Merz, *Textilien aus Ägypten, Teil 1*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Bestandskataloge, Band 1, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2000.

47 On the interaction between textiles and architecture, see P. Blessing, ›Draping, Wrapping, Hanging‹, pp. 2 – 18.

48 Swoboda, ›Ein altchristlicher Kirchenvorhang aus Ägypten‹, p. 96. On ties, see: K. Colburn, ›Loops, Tabs, and Reinforced Edges: Evidence for Textiles as Architectural Elements‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 187 – 216.

49 Caseau, ›Experiencing the Sacred‹, pp. 60 – 64.

over real architectural elements like columns, walls, and arcades, perhaps for special occasions or celebrations to impress guests.«[50]

Dauterman Maguire has recently discussed a door curtain pair which accords very well with her term for curtains, »soft architecture«,[51] because it originally had a sort of textile lintel with a pair of flying Victories holding a medallion with a jewelled cross, below which the two halves could be parted. A red cord with which the two halves could be knotted together is playfully held in the beaks of two green birds on either side of the gap, demonstrating, according to Maguire, that »whoever assembled the curtains, by the evidence of this juxtaposition, was humorously sensitive to the imagery«[52] – and to their intended place, we might add. The arrangement allows passing underneath a victorious image, flanked by cloth pulled to either side. An aesthetic of separation and encounter, of parting and joining is core to threshold practicality and materiality, so it is not surprising to see it taken up in imagery in different media throughout the Middle Ages. To introduce a cultural geographical area not yet integrated into the argument here, an early example is from the 7th century porch post in Wearmouth in Northumberland, where two squat adjacent columns are supported by a base with a shallow relief of two birds whose beaks interlace directly below the gap between the columns.

As an aesthetic possibility building on object affordance, forging continuity across the opening of historiated doors is something artists experimented with on several monumental doors. Among these are the Hildesheim doors, where the architecture of the gate of paradise from the Expulsion and the temple of Christ's Presentation in the Temple merge visually across the divide of the two doors, because these are the only neighboring scenes, which conclude with architectural structures towards the middle of the portal. Mary presents the infant to Simon outside of the temple, the door motif connecting the two scenes with the gabled architecture mirroring the figural group around Jesus and thus making clear, underscored by the connecting motif of the door, that the place of action is just as much the altar inside. The pictorial narrative technique of overlapping two sequential images by means of a door motif ensures that we are granted an unhindered view into the altar space of the temple – marked of course in wider theological significance with a cross as Christian church.[53] A cortina motif therefore serves here to add a sightline into the depths of the door for a change from the directions of pictorial narrative, which run parallel to the surface of the doors. Designed in this way with the potential to lift the building conglomerate from its narrative web, it is even possible to read it as one continuous church building, with the first sinners approaching the entrance at the west, and a calm view into the east end on the right. As Scrovegni's donor image demonstrates, physically touching the threshold was a gesture giving expression to anticipation, and Adam and Eve are likewise in a liminal situation: They have been expelled but have yet to cross the threshold. While Adam faces and pushes against the door, Eve turns back in anguish, their bodies together forming the Janus-faced stage of transformation and change.[54]

Art historical attention has mostly been reserved for figural and narrative imagery like that of the Hildesheim doors, favouring approaches of reading. The less narrative, more ornamental and

50 Blessing, Dospěl Williams, and Shea, *Medieval Textiles across Eurasia*, p. 63, Fig. 55, referring to a large hanging with large columns framing a garden space. Egypt? Fourth century. Materials: Wool, linen. Dimensions: L. 213.40 × W. 117.00 cm. The Textile Museum Collection, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1925, inv. no. 71.18.
51 Maguire, ›Curtains at the Threshold‹, p. 223.
52 Maguire, ›Curtains at the Threshold‹, p. 223.
53 Cf. B. Mohnhaupt, Beziehungsgeflechte: Typologische Kunst des Mittelalters, Vestigia Bibliae vol. 22, Bern 2000, p. 100.
54 See H. Stahl, ›Eve's Reach: A Note on the Dramatic Elements in the Hildesheim Doors‹, in E. Sears and Th. K. Thomas (eds.), *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2002, pp. 163 – 175.

structural imagery of curtains may alert us to more fundamental visual aspects: The contrasting principles of entanglement and neighbourhood, touch and distance, merging and parting may always have peaked the interest of those visitors and viewers experiencing thresholds, and in particular those thresholds bearing relation to sacred or cult spaces. Shifting our attention to place may draw attention to these principles, formulated in terms of object materiality, ornamentation or indeed visualized in figural scenes.

Conclusion: Perspective, Scope and Method

Foregrounding thresholds understood in a concrete sense and spatially has potential with regard to perspective, scope and method. First, in a field accustomed to framing inquiry according to medium or pictorial content, starting inquiry by asking questions about a place, in this case a threshold, and more specifically the entrance to sacred space, shifts perspective. It gives opportunity to consider different media and materials used to equip and adorn this space together, rather than treating them separately according to artistic medium as art historians tend to do. Bronze and wooden doors are usually studied separately, as are stone portal sculptures, friezes, and wall and panel paintings, mosaics, and textiles. Looking at architectural thresholds beyond these categories, we might also include ironwork, fixtures such as door knockers, or (quasi-)autonomous architectural structures such as porches or *Lettner*.[55] Starting with the question of what sort of images and objects we find at thresholds opens things up across divides usually drawn more according to modern rather than medieval categorization of architecture, furnishings and material culture, in addition to art genres such as sculpture and painting.[56] Likewise, by shifting attention to space, there is the opportunity to weigh in on the dimension of perception and experience more heavily. Traditionally, the production side of medieval artworks has been considered more fully, with questions about patronage, iconography and intended meaning preferred over those of reception and use. Indeed, foregrounding senses besides the visual has already proved fruitful for threshold contexts.[57]

The second potential of the group of notions is scope. Across the medieval world and its cultures, there was a range of co-existing, diverse and sometimes related ways of structuring spaces, such as urban, domestic or sacred spaces. It was often the significant thresholds for these spaces that were enhanced by way of colour, structural form, placement of objects or images – and also qualified visibly in their use by practices, gestures or movement patterns. In recognizing that the threshold to

55 Screens in their various regional forms, e. g. as *Lettner* have been analyzed under aspects of experience and space by Jacqueline Jung, see esp.: J. E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200 – 1400*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. On porches and other entrance spaces, see P. C. Claussen, *Chartres-Studien. Zu Vorgeschichte, Funktion und Skulptur der Vorhallen*, Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1975; C. Sapin (ed.), *Avant-nefs et espaces d'acceuil dans l'eglise entre le IV et le XIIe siècle* (= Acres du colloque international du CNRS [Auxerre, 17 — 20 Juin 1999]), Paris, CTHS, 2002; I. Foletti and M. Gianandrea, *Zona liminare. Il nartece di Santa Sabina a Roma, la sua porta e l'iniziazione cristiana*, Rome, Viella, 2015; H. E. Lunnon, *East Anglian Church Porches and Their Medieval Context*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2020. For a strong concern with experience and perception throughout a study on sculpture, see J. E. Jung, *Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020.

56 Equally, liminality as a metaphor has enabled bringing different media together under one topic, see e. g. L. F. Jacobs, *Thresholds and boundaries: liminality in Netherlandish art (1385 – 1530)*, London, Routledge 2018.

57 For sound, see: I. Foletti, ›Singing Doors: Images, Space, and Sound in the Santa Sabina Narthex‹, in B. V. Pentcheva (ed.), *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination in Medieval Art*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 19 – 35. For touch, see T. Bawden, ›Palms, Power, and Polished Metal: Medieval church door knockers up close‹, in *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual,* Special Issue *Bleib mir vom Leib. Ethik und Ästhetik der Distanz,* ed. by A. Degler and J. von Brevern, no. 3, 2023, pp. 363 – 397. For a general shift of connecting thresholds with the sensory see B. Baert, *Interruptions and Transitions: Essays on the Senses in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, Leiden, Brill, 2019, esp. »Introduction or Thresholds«, pp. 1 – 10.

consecrated, sacred space is significant for transmitting the idea of a shift in space and connecting it to bigger religious notions of how to relate to the world, there is potential for comparison. Within the centres of the Christian Middle Ages alone, from Late Antiquity to Byzantine Mediterranean cultures and those of the Medieval West, there are plenty of differences in the treatment of thresholds and their art. These differences are further compounded by a huge diversity of types of evidence for these thresholds. Portals and wall paintings often remain in situ, while the existence of door curtains and those structuring interior spaces is known from textual, archaeological and visual evidence typically disassociated from the extant material.

The third point, therefore, is methodology. While liminality has become an aesthetic concept, it also presents potential to develop approaches to studying medieval experience, sensory and spiritual, from the basis of material culture. With regard to textiles in spatial contexts, important research has been done on Late Antique domestic space, sacred space in Byzantine cultures and more specifically the category of door curtains.[58] A central point for approaching the question of the threshold through extant presumed door curtains is that of material and object affordances and the way they are reflected in the imagery: The object itself gives some indication of the characteristics which make it available for use in particular ways, even if the exact placement is unknown. One key factor has been consideration of the size of textiles in relation to known door openings and colonnades. As argued above, sensitivity to pictorial themes of thresholds or even more basic aesthetics favoured for transitional spaces may provide additional aspects.

Figure Credits
Fig. 1: Courtesy of the Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections; Fig. 2: Courtesy of the Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections; Fig. 3: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections, Frances Terpak Collection; Fig. 4: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections, Frances Terpak Collection; Fig. 5: Photograph by T. Bawden (2007); Fig. 6: Archival photograph, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bernhard of Angers, *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, ed. Luca Robertini, Spoleto 1994 (= Biblioteca di Medioevo latino 10), Book I, chapter 31, p. 137. English translation: Sheingorn, P., *The Book of Sainte Foy.* Translated with an introduction and notes, The Song of Sainte Foy transl. by R. L. A. Clark, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and O. Berghof, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 128.

Jerome, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi opera, Epistulae I–CLIV,* ed. I. Hilberg, 2nd ed. M. Kamptner, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. 54, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996 (1910).

Secondary Sources

Abel, M., ›Intellectual Projection, Liminal Penetration: Programmed Entry and the Tympanum-Less Portals of Western France and Northern Spain‹, in S. Blick and L. Gelfand (eds.), *Physical and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, vol. 2, Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art, Leiden, Brill, 2011, pp. 421 – 466.

58 Caseau, ›Experiencing the Sacred‹, Stephenson, ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, pp. 3 – 31; de Blaauw and Doležalová, ›Constructing Liminal Space?‹. Maguire, ›Curtains at the Threshold‹; de Blaauw, ›Architektur und Textilien in den spätantiken Kirchen Roms‹.

Altman, C., Conques and Romanesque Narrative, *Olifant*, vol. 5, 1977, pp. 5 – 28.

Baert, B., *Interruptions and Transitions: Essays on the Senses in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, Leiden, Brill, 2019.

Bawden, T., ›Palms, Power, and Polished Metal: Medieval church door knockers up close‹, *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual,* Special Issue *Bleib mir vom Leib. Ethik und Ästhetik der Distanz*, ed. A. Degler and J. von Brevern, no. 3, 2023, pp. 363 – 397.

Bawden, T., *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter: Bildort und Bildmotiv*, Cologne, Böhlau, 2014.

Bedros, V. and Scirocco, E., ›Liturgical Screens, East and West: Liminality and Spiritual Experience‹, in *Convivium: Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean. The Notion of Liminality and the Medieval Sacred Space,* 2019, pp. 68 – 88.

Bhabha, H. K., *The location of culture*, London, Routledge, 1994.

Blessing, P., ›Draping, Wrapping, Hanging: Transposing Textile Materiality in the Middle Age‹, *The Textile Museum Journal*, vol. 45, 2018, pp. 2 – 18.

Blessing, P., Dospěl Williams, E., and Shea, L., *Medieval Textiles across Eurasia, c. 300 – 1400*, Cambridge, Cambridge Press, 2023.

Blümle, C., *Schauspiele des Halbversteckten: Eine Bildgeschichte des gemalten Vorhangs*, Paderborn, Fink, 2019.

Bogen, S., ›Türen auf Bildertüren. Zum Ort, Medium und Selbstverständnis christlicher Bilderzählung‹, in F. Crivellari (ed.), *Die Medien der Geschichte. Historizität und Medialität in interdiszipinärer Perspektive*, Konstanz, UVK, 2004, pp. 239 – 261.

Bonne, J.-C., *L'Art roman, de face et de profil: le tympan de Conques*, Paris, Le sycomore, 1985.

Böse, K., ›Vorhang auf: Entgrenzung und Transzendenz in den Wandmalereien in der Kirche San Julián de los Prados (Oviedo)‹, in D. Wagner and H. Wimmer (eds.), *Heilige. Bücher – Leiber – Orte: Festschrift für Bruno Reudenbach,* Berlin, Reimer, 2018, pp. 229 – 241.

Bouché, A.-M., *›Vox Imaginis:* Anomaly and Enigma in Romanesque Art‹, in J. E. Hamburger and A.-M. Bouché (eds.), *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton Univeristy Press, 2006, pp. 306 – 335.

Brandt, M., *Bernwards Tür*, 2nd ed., Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner, 2016.

Büttner, S., *Die Körper verweben. Sinnproduktion in der französischen Bildhauerei des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2010.

Caseau, B., ›Experiencing the Sacred‹, in C. Nesbitt, M. Jackson (eds.) *Experiencing Byzantium: Papers from the 44th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Newcastle and Durham, April 2011*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 59 – 77.

Caseau, B., ›Objects in Churches: The Testimony of Inventories‹, in L. Lavan, E. Swift, and T. Putzeys (eds.), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, pp. 551 – 580.

Christe, Y., *Jugement derniers*, Saint-Léger-Vauban, Zodiaque, 1999.

Claussen, P. C., ›Enrico Scrovegni, der exemplarische Fall?‹, in H.-R. Meier, C. Jäggi, and Ph. Büttner (eds.), *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn: Stifter und Auftraggeber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst,* Berlin, Reimer, 1995, pp. 227 – 246.

Claussen, P. C., *Chartres-Studien. Zu Vorgeschichte, Funktion und Skulptur der Vorhallen*, Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1975.

Colburn, K., ›Loops, Tabs, and Reinforced Edges: Evidence for Textiles as Architectural Elements‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 187 – 216.

Day, J., ›The Status and Role of Doorkeepers in the Early Medieval West‹, *Studies in Late Antiquity*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2022, pp. 148 – 173.

de Blaauw, S., ›Architektur und Textilien in den spätantiken Kirchen Roms‹, *Contextus: Festschrift für Sabine Schrenk*, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Ergänzungsband 41, 2020, pp. 144 – 163.

de Blaauw, S. and Doležalová, K., ›Constructing Liminal Space? Curtains in Late Antique and Early Medieval Churches‹, *Convivium: Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean*, special edition *The Notion of Liminality and the Medieval Sacred Space,* 2019, pp. 11 – 66.

Derbes, A. and Sandona, M., *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.

Deshman, R., ›Servants of the Mother of God in Byzantine and Medieval Art‹, *Word and Image*, vol. 5, 1989, pp. 33 – 70.

Dibelius, F., *Die Bernwardstür zu Hildesheim*, Strasbourg, Heitz & Mündel, 1907.

Dohe, S., ›Vorhang auf! Zur Neudeutung des Hauptportals von St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol‹, *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, vol. 78, 2017, pp. 11 – 39.

Eberlein, J. K., *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis. Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 1982.

Eliade, M., *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W. R. Trask, San Diego, Harcourt, 1959.

Fluck, C., ›Spätantike Textilien mit *crux ansata* im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst‹, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen,* vol. 59, 2017, pp. 15 – 26.

Foletti, I. and Gianandrea, M., *Zona liminare. Il nartece di Santa Sabina a Roma, la sua porta e l'iniziazione cristiana*, Rome, Viella, 2015.

Foletti, I., ›Singing Doors: Images, Space, and Sound in the Santa Sabina Narthex‹, in B. V. Pentcheva (ed.), *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination in Medieval Art*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 19 – 35.

Fricke, B., *Fallen Idols – Risen Saints: Sainte Foy of Conques and the Revival of Monumental Sculpture in Medieval Art*, transl. A. Griebeler, Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages, vol. 7, Turnhout, Brepols, 2015.

Garland, E., ›Le conditionnement des pelerins au moyen-âge: l'exemple de Conques‹, *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, vol. 29, 1998, pp. 155 – 176.

Goldschmidt, A., *Die deutsche Bronzetüren des frühen Mittelalters*, Marburg, Verlag des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars, 1926.

Grötecke, I., *Das Bild des Jüngsten Gerichts. Die ikonographischen Konventionen in Italien und ihre politische Aktualisierung in Florenz*, Worms, Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997.

Hahnloser, H. R., ›Urkunden zur Bedeutung des Türrings‹, in W. Gramberg, C. G. Heise, and L. Möller (eds.), *Festschrift*

für Erich Meyer zum sechzigsten Geburtstag. Studien zu Werken in den Sammlungen des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Hamburg, Hauswedell, 1959, pp. 125 – 146.

Hofmann, H. et al. (eds.), *Enthüllen und Verbergen in der Vormoderne / Revealing and Concealing in the Premodern Period*, Paderborn, Brill, 2021.

Hofmann, H., ›Frame, Plasticity and Movement: The Dynamic Visibility of the Hildesheim Bronze Doors‹, in H. Hofmann et al. (eds.), *Enthüllen und Verbergen in der Vormoderne / Revealing and Concealing in the Premodern Period*, Leiden, Paderborn, Brill, 2021, pp. 201 – 221.

Jacobs, L. F., *Thresholds and boundaries: liminality in Netherlandish art (1385 – 1530)*, London, Routledge, 2018.

Jung, J. E., *Eloquent Bodies: Movement, Expression, and the Human Figure in Gothic Sculpture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020.

Jung, J. E., *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200 – 1400*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Karras, V. A., ›Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church‹, *Church History,* vol. 73, no. 2, 2004, pp. 272 – 316.

Krüger, K., *Bildpräsenz – Heilspräsenz: Ästhetik der Liminalität*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2018.

Lange, H. C., *Giotto's Arena Chapel and the Triumph of Humility*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Linscheid, P., ›Die Textilien von Theodor Graf, vormals im Besitz des Kunstgewerbemuseums Berlin‹, in C. Fluck, P. Linscheid, and S. Merz (eds.), *Textilien aus Ägypten, Teil 1*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Bestandskataloge, Band 1, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2000.

Löw, M., *The Sociology of Space: Materiality, Social Structures, and Action*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016

Lunnon, H. E., *East Anglian Church Porches and Their Medieval Context*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2020.

Maguire, E. D., ›Curtains at the Threshold: How they hung and how they performed‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 217 – 244.

Mende, U., *Die Türzieher des Mittelalters* (Bronzegeräte des Mittelalters, 2), Berlin, Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1981.

Mohnhaupt, B., *Beziehungsgeflechte: Typologische Kunst des Mittelalters*, Vestigia Bibliae, vol. 22, Bern, Peter Lang, 2000.

Neuheuser, H. P., ›*Mundum consecrare.* Die Kirchweihliturgie als Spiegel der mittelalterlichen Raumwahrnehmung‹, in E. Vavra (ed.), *Virtuelle Räume. Raumwahrnehmung und Raumvorstellung im Mittelalter*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2005, pp. 259 – 279.

Parani, M. G., ›Curtains in the Middle and Late Byzantine House‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 73, 2019, pp. 145 – 164.

Repsher, B., *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, Lewiston NY, Mellen, 1998.

Roux, B., ›La parole observée: Figures de témoins dans des Annonciations médiévales‹, in H. Gründler, A. Nova, and I. Sapir (eds.), *The Announcement: Annunciations and Beyond*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 55 – 73.

Sapin, Ch. (ed.), *Avant-nefs et espaces d'acceuil dans l'eglise entre le IV et le XIIe siècle* (= Acres du colloque international du CNRS [Auxerre, 17 – 20 Juin 1999]), Paris, CTHS, 2002.

Sauerländer, W., ›Omnes perversi sic sent in tartara mersi‹. Skulptur als Bildpredigt. Das Weltgerichtstympanon von Sainte-Foy in Conques', *Jahrbuch der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, Göttingen, Universitätsverlag, 1980, pp. 33 – 47.

Schwarz, M. V., *Giottus pictor*, 2 vols., Cologne, Böhlau, 2008.

Seidel, L., ›The Moissac Portico and the Rhetoric of Appropriation‹, in H. Beck and K. Hengevoss-Dürkop (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte der europäischen Skulptur im 12./ 13. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols., Frankfurt am Main, Henrich, 1994, pp. 287 – 302.

Stahl, H., ›Eve's Reach: A Note on the Dramatic Elements in the Hildesheim Doors‹, in E. Sears and Th. K. Thomas (eds.), *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2002, pp. 163 – 175.

Stephenson, J. W., ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, pp. 3 – 31.

Swoboda, H., ›Ein altchristlicher Kirchenvorhang aus Ägypten‹, *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte,* vol. 6, 1892, pp. 95 – 113.

Szakolczai, A. and Thomassen, B., *From Anthropology to Social Theory: Rethinking the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Turner, V. and Turner, E., *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978.

Turner, V., *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1967.

van Gennep, A., *The Rites of Passage,* translated by M. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960.

Weinryb, I., *Die Hildesheimer Avantgarde. Kunst und Kolonialismus im mittelalterlichen Deutschland*, Imhof, Petersberg, 2023.

Fig. 1 Shrine, Case Romane del Celio under the church SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome.

When the Curtain Rises: Sacred Images and the Staging of Gaze

Corinna Mairhanser

> No one so much as dreamed of
> entering the Holy of Holies and
> looking upon or touching the curtain
> or the mercy seat or the ark.
> Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 20,3[1]

Curtains have always been hung in front of important religious objects or spaces. Many textual sources state that the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem and the Ark of the Covenant within were hidden by a curtain. Gregory of Nazianzus refers to this circumstance as well. He emphasizes the significance of the curtain by stressing that it, like sacred objects, cannot be touched. In his mind, the curtain, like the ark, is a central religious component. The textile plays with contradictions; it is visible but simultaneously conceals something. In other religious contexts, where curtains are of great importance in the staging of spaces and objects, this contradiction is also evident. Even if the curtain is always closed, there is still the possibility that it might open, maybe moved by a breeze. This would allow a glimpse of the covered mystery. When a curtain rises, the moment of opening offers new perspectives. What was previously hidden is now visible and staged extraordinarily by the framing textile. The viewers' eyes wander along the edges of the visible to catch a glimpse of the invisible beyond. The curtain's movement interacts with fundamental human characteristics, like inquisitiveness and the desire for knowledge and insight. The process of opening focusses the viewers' attention and intensifies viewing experiences. This interaction between veiling and concealing stimulates the beholders' imagination and consciously draws their attention to the space framed by curtains. The viewers are always essential in these processes. They are influenced by their visual experience and perception. Therefore, curtains fulfilled a remarkable role in the authentication of sacrality and the staging of belief.

The curtain is part of a grander staging. It surrounds and covers something, whether it is an object or an abstract imagination. Often, in religious contexts, the hidden objects are images. They contribute to the visualisation of abstract concepts through their visual perception and, to a certain extent, to the visual understanding. Thus, the questions arise: How do images and curtains influence each other in these religious contexts? How do curtains interact with the gaze of those looking upon them?

This religious veiling of images with curtains in Late Antiquity and Byzantium will be highlighted by comparing two examples: First, there is a fresco from the fourth century AD. This early depiction

1 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Select Orations*, trans. M. Vison, Washington DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2003, p. 109.

in the so-called Case Romane del Celio in Rome dates back to a time when concepts and beliefs in emerging Christianity needed to be established and, like other religions, communicated clearly and understandably. This is compared to the eleventh-century textual evidence of a miracle concerning an icon in the Blachernai Church in Constantinople. In one of the centres of the cult of the Virgin, the sacred image, the icon of Mary, is given a divergent position underlined by a miracle performed by a curtain.

Entering Sacrality under SS. Giovanni e Paolo

In the Case Romane del Celio, under the present-day Roman church SS. Giovanni e Paolo, an extremely complex archaeological discovery reveals interesting insights, which even after years of research continue to raise questions. Between the first and fifth century AD, a large private estate on the Caelian Hill within the city of Rome underwent multiple phases of expansion and remodelling. Originally consisting of several dwellings and storehouses, it was converted into a multistorey residence. During one of these transformations, probably in the late fourth century, an intimate small room was created in a stairwell leading from an inner courtyard to the first floor.[2]

Upon entering, visitors would have found themselves in a completely different world. They would have been surrounded by a multitude of images that referred to a Christian context and indicated that something or someone was being worshipped there.[3] Almost immediately they would have been confronted with the essential element. A rectangular opening had been cut into the back wall (fig. 1). This window or niche has been known as *fenestella confessionis* since the first excavator, Padre Germano di S. Stanislao, described it. Four partly painted sidewalls of the *confessio* opening are visible, which lead to a shaft that is connected to a room on a lower level. There,

2 F. Astolfi, ›Le case romane dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, *Forma Urbis*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2002, pp. 9 – 13; F. Astolfi, ›La casa celimontana dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, in A. Englen et al. (eds.), *Caelius II. Le case romane sotto la basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2014, pp. 84 – 115; K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 89; H. Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom. Vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Der Beginn der abendländischen Kirchenbaukunst*, 3rd edn., Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner, 2013, pp. 166 – 168; B. Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo. La cristianizzazione di una casa privata‹, *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1995, pp. 170 – 175; B. Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt. Stadt, Land, Haus, Kirche und Kloster in frühchristlicher Zeit*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2003, pp. 84 – 97; A. Colini, *Storia e topografia del Celio nell'antichità*, Vatican, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1944, pp. 135 – 197; J. Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300 – 1200*, Oxford, Clarendon, 2000, pp. 44 – 45; S. Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2007, p. 379; A. Karivieri, ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo: La casa celimontana‹, in J. Hamesse (ed.), *Roma, magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis. Mélanges offerts au Père L.E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire*, vol. 3, Lou-vain-la-Neuve, Brepols, 1998, pp. 204 – 206; R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae. Le basiliche Cristiane antiche di Roma (Sec. IV–IX)*, vol. 1, Vatican, Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1937, pp. 265 – 300; D. Mondini, ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, in P. Claussen (ed.), *Die Kirchen der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter 1050 – 1300*, vol. 3, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010, pp. 69 – 70; A. Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome. A Relic Shrine beneath the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, vol. 15, 2009, p. 8.

3 It is uncertain whether there was a fourth wall separating the room from the stairs. The room itself may not have been in use for long. Only a few decades after its establishment, at the beginning of the 5th c., the basement of the complex was filled in to build a church above it. The frescoes of the upper register were probably damaged by the construction of this church. Therefore, see F. Bisconti, ›Dentro e intorno all'iconografia martiriale romana: Dal »vuoto figurative« al »immaginaria devozionale«‹, in M. Lamberigts and P. van Deun (eds.), *Martyrium. In multidisciplinary perspective*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1995, p. 279; Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, pp. 168 – 169; Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 101; H. Wehrens, *Rom. Die christlichen Sakralbauten vom 4. bis zum 9. Jahrhundert: ein Vademecum*, 2nd edn., Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 2017, pp. 189 – 194.

during further excavations, two cavities or empty tombs were discovered.[4]

Searching for the Saints and the Closeness to Them

Two textual sources provide explanations of who could have been venerated in this shrine. The interpretation of these texts also has implications for the function of the *confessio* and how the faithful interacted with the possible saints. Painted across the walls, impressive images probably depict these saints' lives.

According to the sixth-century Latin text *Passio Iohanis et Pauli,*[5] under the reign of Julian the Apostate, the Christians John and Paul were imprisoned, beheaded, and buried in their own house. The narrative of their martyrdom also includes two priests named Crispus and Crispianus and the noblewoman Benedicta. They were also martyred after visiting the men during their imprisonment. Only a year after the martyrdom, in 363, Emperor Jovian commissioned Senator Byzantius and his son Pammachius to exhume the saints' bones and build a church over them.[6] This story may be illustrated by the upper register of the shrine's side walls. On the right, a woman and two men are depicted, who have raised their right arms as a gesture of speech or attention. From behind, two soldiers identified by their headgear, the *pileus pannonicus*, approach them. They seem to be leading them in the direction of the opening. On the opposite side, these three are shown kneeling with their hands tied behind their backs. Besides them, one soldier's legs and perhaps the tip of a sword can be identified. This most likely represents the moment immediately before they are martyred by execution.[7] Combining this legend with the depictions of the *confessio*, there would have been a direct contact with the tombs of the martyrs through the opening. The sanctuary would have been located directly above the site of the martyrdom and burial of the saints.

The paintings could also be interpreted differently. A Greek legend states that the relics were those of the martyrs Cyprian, Justina and Theoctistus. Sailors brought their relics to Rome and gave them to Rufina. This pious matron, also mentioned in a graffitto in the shrine, was the

4 Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 99. See also C. Leyser, ›»A church in the house of the saints«: property and power in the Passion of John and Paul‹, in K. Cooper and J. Hillner (eds.), *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300 – 900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 143 – 144; Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, pp. 45 – 46.

5 The text of the *Passio Iohanis et Pauli* is preserved in the Vetutissimus of Corbie, dated to around AD 600, probably written in Southern Italy, see Leyser, ›A church in the house of the saints‹, p. 142.

6 Leyser, ›A church in the house of the saints‹, pp. 140 – 149; Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints*, p. 46; C. Ranucci, ›Le pitture della Confessio‹, *Forma Urbis*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2002, pp. 28 – 29; A. Thacker, ›Martyr Cult within the Walls: Saints and Relics in the Roman Tituli of the Fourth to Seventh Centuries‹, in A. Minnis (eds.), *Text, image, interpretation. Studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its insular context in honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, p. 55; S. Stanislao, ›Das Haus der H. Martyrer Johannes und Paulus‹, in A. de Waal, *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 2, Rome, Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1888, pp. 140 – 144; Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 10.

In a 5th c. document, Pammachius and his wife Paulina are mentioned as the founders of the sanctuary. It can therefore be assumed that its construction took place between Pammachius' marriage to Paulina in 385 and his death in 410. The church is first mentioned under Pope Innocent as Titulus Byzantis. It reappears in a synod of 499 as Titulus Pammachii, before being referred to in the 6th c. as Titulus Johannis et Pauli. See Leyser, ›A church in the house of the saints‹, p. 143; as well as Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom,* pp. 164 – 165; Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 10; Thacker, ›Martyr Cult within the Walls‹, p. 56.

7 For the description of the pictures see Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 191, 203; Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, pp. 100 – 101; Colini, *Storia e topografia del Celio nell'antichità*, pp. 180 – 181; V. Gasdia, *La casa pagano-cristiana del Celio. Titulus Byzantis sive Pammachii*, Rome, Federico Pustet, 1937, pp. 498 – 507; Karivieri, ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 209; Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 11; J. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herdersche Verlangshandlung, 1916, p. 639; Wilpert, ›Le pitture della »Confessio« sotto la basilica dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 517 – 519.

sister-in-law of Pammachius. She deposited the relics in the back wall's opening.[8] The founding couple Pammachius and Paulina, as well as her sister Rufina and another family member might be depicted in the lower registers of the side panels. On the right are two women, who, in astonishment, stand facing the central wall. Two men are depicted in the opposite field, one of them holding a conical object in his hand, perhaps a votive offering. This theory is supported by the graffitto naming Rufina. In accordance with the legend, B. Brenk suggests that the *fenestella* was never used as a shaft, but as an inlet of an originally closed storage construction for relics. Accordingly, the chapel would not have been the original place of martyrdom, but rather a private reliquary.[9]

The depictions of two, now headless, men to both sides of the opening, provide another clue. In Padre Germano di S. Stanislao's publication, he suggests that these men are John and Paul, after whom the later church was named. His interpretations go further, leading him to finally assume that relics of John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul were venerated. In other cases, the two depicted men were generally identified as apostles or martyrs.[10]

Some researchers suggest that the *confessio* was originally an enclosed storage place for relics, a niche. Later, the back wall was opened to allow contact with the graves below. The tombs are thought to date to the medieval period when this area under the church was accessible to worshippers. Thus, the opening of the back of the niche would be related to a later cult of saints as well. Consequently, according to this theory, both previously recorded approaches of the veneration of saints would have been present at different times.[11] Regardless, it can be assumed that the opening had a special significance at the time of its construction and the decoration with paintings in the late fourth century.[12]

8 Acta SS. Cypriani, Justinae e Theoctisti MM, *Acta Sanctorum Sept. VII*, 1867, col. 226; see H. Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, 7th edn., Munich, Beck, 2011, p. 93; Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, p. 203; H. Delehaye, ›Cyprien d'Antioche et Cyprien de Carthage‹, *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. 39, 1921, pp. 314 – 333; P. Franchi de'Cavalieri, *Note agiografiche*, vol. 8, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1935, p. 345; C. Hahn, ›Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines‹, *Speculum*, vol. 72, no. 4, 1997, p. 1093; Karivieri, ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 209 – 210; J. Wilpert, ›Le pitture della »Confessio« sotto la basilica dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, in R. Paribeni (ed.), *Scritti in onore di Bartolomeo Nogara: raccolti in occasione del suo LXX anno*, Vatican, 1937, pp. 520 – 522. The graffitto is located in the lower register of the left wall next to the outer man carrying something, see Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 103; C. Ranucci, ›Le fasi decorative tarde della domus‹, in A. Englen et al. (eds.), *Caelius II. Le case romane sotto la basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2014, p. 287.

9 Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 191 – 192; Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 99. It was not uncommon for relics to be found in private households within Rome in the 4th c. Well-connected, wealthy Roman Christian aristocrats of the time were at the centre of an exchange network and thus had easy access, see Bowes, *Private Worship*, pp. 84 – 85.

10 Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, p. 168; Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 100; Gasdia, *La casa pagano-cristiana del Celio*, pp. 494 – 497; S. Stanislao, ›The House of the Martyrs John and Paul Recently Discovered on the Coelian Hill at Rome‹, *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1890, pp. 270 – 274.

11 Parts of the Roman house complex were filled in for the construction of the church in the 5th c. However, amphorae findings that can be dated to up to the 9th c. prove that some rooms were still in use. There are also paintings on a narrow staircase leading down from the church, dating to the 8th or 9th c. Archaeological findings, frescoes as well as architectural remains indicate that the Roman house complex was at least partially accessible between the 10th and 12th c. See Bowes, *Private Worship*, p. 89; Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, p. 197; C. Goodson, ›Archaeology and the Cult of Saints in the Early Middle Ages: Accessing the Sacred‹, *Mélanges de l'École français de Rome. Moyen Âge*, vol. 126, no. 1, 2014, http://journals.openedition.org/mefrm/1818, (accessed 12 February 2023); Karivieri, ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 208, 211; V. Nicolai, ›A proposito di Caelisus II. Ancora sul santuario martiriale dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo al Celio‹, *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, vol. 95, 2019, pp. 281 – 326; A. Prandi, *Il complesso monumentale della basilica celimontana dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo*, Vatican, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1953, p. 124.

12 The dating of the shrine's paintings is mainly based on stylistic comparisons with catacomb painting and sarcophagus sculpture. B. Brenk takes a rather early dating approach and places the date of the paintings between 340 and 380/90, see Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 105. Most researchers, however, prefer a later date and place the frescoes between 380

Fig. 2 Detail of the central panel of the shrine, Case Romane del Celio under the church SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome.

Between Decoding and Communication

Epiphanically revealed and separated from the other images by the curtains, the depiction just below the *fenestella* occupies a prominent position within the oratory. This image was likely one of the first things that the viewer saw upon entering the room.

Attached to the upper edge of the confining red frame of the image, symmetrically opened curtains

and 400, see Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, p. 168; A. Ghetti, ›Problemi relative alle origine dell'architettura paleocristina‹, *Atti del IX congress internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana. Roma 21 – 27 Settembre 1975*, vol. 1, 1978, p. 495; J. de Witt, *Spätrömische Bildnismalerei. Stilkritische Untersuchungen zur Wandmalerei der Katakomben und verwandter Monumente*, Berlin, Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1938, p. 58; H. Mielsch, ›Zur stadtrömischen Malerei des 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.‹, in *Bullettino dell'Institut Archeologico Germanico Sezione Romana*, vol. 85, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1978, pp. 193 – 197.

were knotted at the outer edges (fig. 2). Lines indicate the drapery of these painted, light-coloured *cortinae*, each decorated with a pair of rectangular *tabulae*. Creating the illusion of a carefully conceived spaciousness, they frame and provide an exquisite perspective of the three people. The space between them is mainly filled by an orant standing frontally with his arms raised. He is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic with *manicae* and a wide *colobium* decorated with delicate *segmenta*. No further identification of him or his social position can be deduced based on his clothing or hairstyle.[13] His head turns slightly to the right, but his gaze does not follow this direction of movement; his eyes are directed forward. He is looking out into an area where an observer might have been kneeling. He is focused on the person in front of him. It seems as if he is trying to make contact in a very individual, intimate way. Two people are kneeling at his feet, prostrating themselves in adoration.[14]

The representation combines three elements. Each of them has its individual meaning, which was probably understood by those who viewed it. Combined, the individual image's elements create its extensive meaning. First and foremost is the central *orans* with his arms raised. This posture is traditionally interpreted as a gesture of prayer. Since Republican times, it has symbolized the personified virtue of *pietas* or *εὐσέβεια*. The original meaning of this virtue of dutiful, pious and reverent behaviour towards the family and its ancestors was expanded to include duty towards the gods, the fatherland and the emperor. It was understood as a gesture of contact between the people and a god or the deified emperor. Probably in the third century AD, the motif found its way into the early catacombs and subsequently became a popular theme in funerary art. Since the depictions cannot be assigned to a specific tomb or were combined with other motifs, it can be assumed that they do not represent individual deceased persons, but rather symbolize a general piety and faith. Probably at the beginning of the fourth century, the concept of the motif changed. By naming the orants or including them in scenes from their lives, it can be assumed that they represent specific deceased individuals and thus refer to ideas of a possible afterlife. In the post-Constantinian period, some saints, martyrs, and finally Mary also appear in this posture. Regarding the meaning of orants, without temporal or individualistic differences, it is difficult to make statements about their exact meaning without an additional inscription. The general assumption is that the gesture is still a reference to prayer, stimulating worship at the same time.[15]

13 Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, p. 169; Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 100; Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien*, p. 638; Wilpert, ›Le pitture della »Confessio« sotto la basilica dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, p. 518.

14 The gender of the two people bowing is not clear. Researchers have interpreted them differently. Some define them as the founding couple Pammachius and Paulina, see Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 99; and Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 15; Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien*, p. 638.

15 F. Bisconti, ›Il gesto dell'orante tra atteggiamento e personificazione‹, in S. Ensoli (ed.), *Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città Cristiana*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000, pp. 368 – 372; Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, p. 185; J. Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab und Wort. Untersuchungen zu Jenseitsvorstellungen von Christen des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts*, Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner, 2010, pp. 38, 326; J. Dresken-Weiland, ›Orans‹, in K. Wessel and M. Restle (eds.), *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 2013, pp. 529 – 533; J. Engemann, *Deutung und Bedeutung frühchristlicher Bildwerke*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997, pp. 360 – 361; T. Klauser, ›Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst II‹, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 2, 1959, p. 130; M. Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, pp. 115 – 116, 120; M. Sotomayor, ›Notas sobra la orante y sus acompañantes en la arte paleocristiano‹, *Analecta sacra tarraconensia*, vol. 34, 1961, pp. 8 – 9. Through the orans frontality and open posture, the figure often comes into contact with an imaginary counterpart, the viewer. As a comparison for our male orant, there is a representation of a female orans, preserved in the Sala dell'Orante of the Case Romane del Celio that should probably also be considered. Due to its inclusion in the imagery surrounding this depiction, as well as a difference in dating, the context of these two orants differs.

The meaning of the orant is supplemented through a second pictorial element: The two people kneeling provide another clue. Their gesture, called *proskynesis*, is based on a long tradition. In ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia, kissing, bowing, or touching the ground or feet in front of elaborate people or objects of higher power was considered an act of worship. Over the centuries, *proskynesis* took on various forms, from a slight bowing of the head to complete prostration. In Hellenistic and Roman times, the gesture was partially adopted for the imperial cult. It was mainly used in the context of triumphal themes, were the defeated and subjugated are depicted kneeling before the emperor. It could also be a way for the nobility to pay their respects to the emperor. Modes of *proskynesis* are also mentioned by the Church Fathers as a sign of humility and supplicatory prayer. During the fourth century, the gesture found its way into Eucharistic prayer and hymnology. While in the beginning only God was to be honoured with this gesture, later, it was also used to pay honour to Christ, Mary, the saints, relics, icons, and the altar. Thus, depending on the context, the meaning varies between defeat, submission, veneration, sacrifice, greeting and prayer.[16] Consequently, it emphasizes and at the same time honours the orant, distinguishing him from the people portrayed around him. Based on this gesture, which would otherwise have been directed at the emperor or a god, it can be assumed that the orant is not just a civic person. It indicates that his official status is special, if not sacred, which makes him stand out among those surrounding him.[17]

The expressive content of the orans and the two individuals in *proskynesis* is extended by the third element, the symmetrically arranged curtains, the so-called *cortinae*. They highlight the orans in a stage-like manner, distinguishing him and staging his dignity, sublimity, and venerability. The curtains frame and stage, thus becoming a means of distinction that indicates the privileged sacred status of the orant. Long before this fresco, divine or holy figures were staged and venerated through veils. Written sources attest to the use of veils in front of statues of gods in temples.[18] Despite the different uses and concepts of these textiles, they all served to separate and stage the deity, thus enhancing its numinous aura.

Although these curtains aren't real but painted textiles, they serve the same purpose. Through their shape and placement, they manage to direct the viewer's eye in a specific way. Thus, the arrangement of the curtains and the composition of the painting construct a triangle, creating an eye-catching effect and illustrating a visual axis. Beginning with the two kneeling figures, one's gaze increases towards the orant, which seems to mediate between them and the shrine above. In this way, he links the earthly and the tangible holiness represented by the relics in their repository, which also form the apex of the triangle. Therefore, the orans assumes an intercessory position for the two kneeling figures, transmitting their prayers, wishes,

16 The word proskynesis itself means ›kissing something‹ or ›throwing a kiss‹, see S. Alexopoulos, ›Proskynesis‹, in C. Hornung et al. (eds.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 28, Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 2018, pp. 361 – 369. See also G. Bravo, ›El ritual de la proskynesis y su significado político y religioso en la Roma Imperial. Con especial referencia a la Tetrarquía‹, *Gerión*, vol. 15, 1997, pp. 178 – 181; Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 15; I. Spatharakis, ›The proskynesis in Byzantine art. A study in connection with nomisma of Andronicus II Palaeologue‹, *Bulletin antieke beschaving: annual papers on classical archaeology*, vol. 49, 1974, pp. 191, 202.

17 Belting, *Bild und Kult*, pp. 93 – 95.

18 According to written sources, curtains were placed in front of the statues of the gods in Greek and Roman temples and were opened on certain occasions to set the scene. Curtains were also used in ancient Egyptian temples and in the cult of Isis and Mithras. Despite different uses and conceptions of the curtain, their common ground is that they served to separate and stage the deity and contributed to increasing its numinous aura, see C. Brøns, *Gods and garments. Textiles in Greek Sanctuaries in the 7th–1st Centuries BC*, Philadelphia, Oxbow Books, 2017, pp. 74, 397 – 398; J. Stephenson, ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, p. 7. H. Belting also points out that the cult of heroes can probably be seen as a precursor to the cult of the saint in the sepulchral area, and that curtains also played an important role in concealing and revealing works of art, see Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 95.

and requests to the saints above.[19] The symmetrically placed curtains orchestrate and intensify this visual axis. They develop into a means of distinction that emphasizes the elaborate position of the orant and provides an indication of his special, possibly sacred status. In this way, the curtain directs the beholders' gaze and carries their attention away to the representation in another sphere.

Thereby, the curtains define various spheres. These textiles clearly distinguish between the viewers' sphere outside and that of the orant in the painting. At the same time, they blur the boundaries between these spheres, create a kind of line of communication between them, and convey the impression of a temporal determination of the view of the orant that they enclose. The curtains are ready to cover the image again at any time, thus withdrawing it from view. They therefore give the believers the illusion of a glimpse into what is depicted. This creates the impression of a brief and limited glance into another world. The curtains are the link between the elusive realm, the concept of the sacred and the human, and thus symbolize the transition between them. H. Belting points out that this image marks a transition between the commemoration of a deceased person and the cult of a saint. This iconic image combines many traditions and genres that once also depicted gods, emperors, or portraying the dead.[20]

In the attempt to picture this paradox of the religious image, which seeks to make the invisible visible, the curtain occupies an important position. In this early example, the curtains gained their significance through the combination of well-known pictorial themes and general principles of perception. The position of the veil in this particular context determines the meaning of what is shown.

Sacrality of Images

The individual pictorial elements, the entire arrangement of the paintings, as well as their central position, give the orans representation a unique significance.

On the one hand, the picture functions as a kind of ›instruction manual‹. The viewers stood in front of the representation and were guided in how it was to be worshipped. Furthermore, by combining familiar pictorial forms, the viewer becomes aware of the orans' position. The deliberate staging of the gaze and the focus on the *confessio* explicitly link the depiction to possible relics and imply an intercessory function of the saint.[21]

On the other hand, the overall expressiveness of the image makes it seems worthy of veneration. The image appears like a votive offering to the saints. It is a request addressed to them. In this way, the orant himself is given a sacred status, which takes this panel back to the beginnings of sacred imagery. The depiction of the orant could have been an authentication of the relics, indicating the active presence of the saints in the shrine, revealing their role as a contact person in Christian faith. However, the orans elevation is also a reference to his function, which is to be a subject of veneration. This makes the depiction unique, as it represents the pictorial transition to a cult of saints, in which images themselves play an increasingly important role.[22]

19 Hahn, ›Seeing and Believing‹, p. 1095.
20 Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 92; Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 15.
21 Brenk, ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, pp. 188 – 190; Brenk, *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt*, p. 99; Hahn, ›Seeing and Believing‹, p. 1095. Whether the room can be understood as a small, intimate shrine accessible only to a few people of the household, or as a space frequented by a larger number of visitors, is unclear and probably also differs depending on the century. Compare Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, p. 169 and Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*, pp. 381 – 384.
22 Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 93; Hahn, ›Seeing and Believing‹, p. 1094; Munk, ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome‹, p. 15; Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien*, p. 642.

In this way, the image develops into an icon. The term icon etymologically derived from the Greek *εἰκών* and initially meant image or likeness, in a general sense.[23] In various phases since the second century AD, some religious images were given a special meaning that went beyond their existence as mere pictures or panel paintings.[24] What defined these icons was not their appearance, which can be determined by medium, material, or style. Decisive was the perception of the image, what people thought about it, and how the faithful interacted with it. An icon was thus a devotional image that received special veneration. What is important is the conviction that an icon is a holy image that shares the holiness of the person whose image it bears. In the case of the orans, this sacredness must have been created by the proximity to the saints' tangible remains, the relics.[25]

Perceiving Sacrality Through Viewing the Icon of the Virgin Mary in the Blachernae

The concept of the icon has undergone many changes over the centuries. After the decades of the iconoclastic controversy, which were characterized by an intensive discussion of religious images on a theological level, as well as their different forms of veneration and social reception, changes took place.[26] Almost 700 years after the depiction of the orans, sacred images faced completely different challenges. These pictures were now based on an established position, an essential liturgical meaning, and a certain familiarity with their veneration. Once again, it was the curtain that was part of the response to these new requirements. Icons were no longer static, they were in the process of transformation. There was a desire for increased contact, a more immediate communication with the faithful, which would have had an impact on all their senses.

In Byzantium, images of the saints no longer solely remained objects of religious contemplation but fulfilled other functions and were given an individual, unique value. Therefore, icons seem to have developed characteristics attributed to their will. An icon was not just a work of art. It was heaven's door to earth – in a literal sense, a channel through which Christ, the Virgin, or a saint could exercise sacred power among people. Icons, thus, embody miraculous and spiritual components, because the viewer can only worship a person or a ›mystery‹ of faith. They were meant to be experienced on a multi-sensory level. An icon was simply what was recognized by the beholder as an icon. For them, the concept and the object were affectively defined: a painting became an icon at the moment of its iconic function. In this sense, the icon was created ›in the eye of the beholder‹.[27]

Unique evidence of icons and curtains in the context of religious image veneration and their staging in the Byzantine period is provided by the sources on the key icon of the Constantinopolitan Church of the Virgin Mary in Blachernae, where the relic of Mary's mantle was venerated. In addition to the *maphorion*, several other significant icons of the Virgin Mary were kept in a chapel, the Hagia Soros, and in the adjacent basilica.[28]

The most famous of these is the veiled icon attested in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Neither the icon nor the church have survived.

23 Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 60; B. Pentcheva, ›The Performative Icon‹, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 88, no. 4, 2006, p. 631; G. Vikan, *Sacred images and sacred power in Byzantium*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003, p. 1.
24 The first literary references to the existence of Christian icons can be found in the 2nd c., see T. Mathews and N. Muller, *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons*, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016, pp. 131 – 134.
25 Vikan, *Sacred images and sacred power in Byzantium*, p. 1.
26 Belting, *Bild und Kult*, pp. 38, 164.
27 Pentcheva, ›The Performative Icon‹, p. 631; Vikan, *Sacred images and sacred power in Byzantium*, p. 4.
28 A. Effenberger, ›Marienbilder im Blachernenheiligtum‹, *Millennium*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2016, pp. 275 – 326.

For this reason, written sources are the most important testimonies. The most telling of these is the *Λόγος ἐπῖ τω ἐν Βλαχέρναις γεγονότι θαύματι* or *Oratio de miraculo in Blachernais patrato* by Michael Psellos. The rhetorical description was presumably written in July 1075 at the request of Emperor Michael VII Doukas.

The text ensues from a legal dispute between the general Leon Mandalos and the Constantinopolitan Monastery tou Kalliou over the exclusive rights to a mill in Thrace. After an inconclusive legal tug-of-war, the parties decided to let the icon judge. Depending on whether the curtain would be opened after the presentation of the evidence, either the general or the monks would be granted the rights to the mill. Finally, according to the will of the icon, Leon Mandalos won. The controversy continued to rage, so a judge decided to uphold the decision made by the Virgin. To express his gratitude, the general returned to the icon of the Virgin. Suddenly, as a miraculous confirmation, the curtain of the icon lifted again and repeated the unusual occurrence of the Virgin's *σύνηθες θαῦμα*, her ›usual‹ miracle.[29]

In the preface to this narrative, Psellos provides an introductory reference to the miracle that took place weekly in the church of the Theotokos at Blachernae.[30] As the sun set each Friday evening, the church was emptied of people, the doors were closed, and the crowd waited outside.

> They enter with commingled fear and joy, while the drapery surrounding the icon lifts all of a sudden, as if some breath of air gently moved it. What happens is unbelievable to those who do not witness it, but for those who do, <it is> wondrous and an overt descent of the Holy Spirit. The form of the handmaiden of the Lord changes simultaneously with what is accomplished, I think, as it receives her animate visitation, thereby visibly signaling the invisible. In fact, the veil of the Temple was torn for her son and God when he was hanging upon the cross so that he might either manifest the truth concealed in the marks impressed <by his presence> or summon believers into the inner sanctums and destroy the barrier preventing us from a close relationship with God. In contrast, the holy drapery raises itself for the Mother of God in an ineffable fashion so that she may embrace within herself the

29 See N. Asutay-Effenberger and A. Effenberger, *Byzanz: Weltreich der Kunst*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2017, p. 257; P. Chatterjee, ›The Byzantine Icon of the Virgin in the Church of the Blachernae: Michael Psellos on the Problem of Miraculous Timing‹, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2021, p. 243; E. Fisher, ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae, the law, and neoplatonism‹, in D. Sullivan, E. A. Fisher, and E. Papaioannou (eds.), *Byzantine religious culture. Studies in honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, pp. 191 – 192; E. Fisher, ›Discourse on the Miracle that Occurred in the Blachernai Church‹, in C. Barber and E. Papaioannou (eds.), *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art. A Byzantine Perspective on Aesthetics*, Indiana, Notre Dame Press, 2017, pp. 301 – 302; Michealis Psellis, *Orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E. Fisher, Stuttgart, B. G. Teubner, 1994, pp. 199 – 200; M. Mavroudi, ›Licit and Illicit Divination. Empress Zoe and the Icon of Christ Antiphonetes‹, in V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (eds.), *Les Savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, Firenze, Sismel, 2014, p. 444; E. Papaioannou, ›The »usual miracle« and the unusual image. Psellos and the icons of Blachernai‹, in W. Hörandner (ed.), *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, vol. 51, Vienna, Austrian Academy of Scientists Press, 2001, p. 183.

30 The Blachernen complex, which included a large basilica, the holy shrine, and a bath, was originally located at the northwest corner of the city of Constantinople, outside the Theodosian walls. Because of the relics kept there, the complex and its position as a liturgical place of worship of the Virgin Mary were very present in Constantinople. Since the 6th c., services in honour of the Theotokos were held every Friday. For centuries, these were followed by processions to important places of Marian devotion in the city, see A. Carr, ›Court culture and Cult icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople‹, in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Washington DC, Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 90 – 92; A. Carr, ›Threads of authority: the Virgin Mary's veil in the Middle Ages‹, in S. Gordon (ed.), *Robes and honor. The medieval world on investiture*, New York, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 62, 64, 79; Chatterjee, ›The Byzantine Icon of the Virgin in the Church of the Blachernae‹, p. 244; M. Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium: The examples of the Icon of the »Usual Miracle« and the Hodegetria in Constantinople‹, in S. Brodbeck and A.-O. Poilpré (eds.), *Visibilité et présence de l'image dans l'espace ecclesial*, Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019, pp. 174, 181; N. Sevcenko, ›Icons in the Liturgy‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 45, 1991, pp. 50 – 54; B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, p. 145. It is difficult to determine the period during which the miracle happened. However, there are textual references that the miracle took place until the beginning of the 13th c. In 1434 at the latest, the church was destroyed by fire, see Effenberger, ›Marienbilder im Blachernenheiligtum‹, p. 281; V. Grumel, ›Le »miracle habituel« de Notre-Dame des Blechernes à Constantinople‹, *Échos d'Orient*, vol. 30, 1931, p. 141; Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 177.

> crowd that enters as if within some new inner sanctum and refuge that cannot be violated.[31]

Contradictory feelings were aroused in the people by the staging around the icon and the knowledge of its presence. When the crowd was allowed to re-enter the chapel, these feelings intensified when the elaborate curtain in front of the icon of the Virgin lifted, revealing the image. Simultaneously, as the Holy Spirit opened the curtain, the form of the Virgin changed – instantly she appeared alive and animated. Mary was given a presence through the icon that authenticated her appearance at that moment. Her invisible presence was made visible and tangible by this miracle. Through the unveiling, the icon became a place of living visitation of the Theotokos. The veil would remain in this raised position until the ninth hour of Saturday, marking the temporal and spatial limits of the presence of the Theotokos.[32]

Inspirited Icons and Heavenly Presence

Beginning in the eleventh century, changes in the appearance of icons occurred, accompanied by a transformation in veneration and staging. Psellos defines this circumstance in the term *ἔμψυχος γραφή*, a new style of painting that attempted to mediate between theological paradoxes and the renewed interests of Neoplatonism.[33] In this philosophical trend, the image was expected to manifest the presence of the divine through physical change. The style transcended the usual technical limitations of the creators of art and, consequently, the visual horizons of the viewers. This was accomplished through the intervention of higher powers. Icons were considered material manifestations of invisible divinity. They existed independently of the style of painting. Therefore, they combine and connect the divine and supernatural with the earthly and natural. As a reflection of this divine presence, there are recognisable as well as partly predictable physical changes in iconography, material, or style. Thus, *empsychos graphe* could be translated as living and ›inspired‹ painting. It is a reference to the presence and intervention of the

31 Michael Psellos, Orationes Hagiographicae 206,130 – 146, transl. E. Fisher, in Fisher, ›Discourse on the Miracle that Occurred in the Blachernai Church‹, p. 312.

32 Additional information about the miracle is provided by other sources. A detailed 12th-c. description by an unknown Latin pilgrim, known in research as ›Anonymus Tarragonensis‹, should be highlighted. See N. Ciggaar, ›Une Description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55‹, *Revue des études byzantines,* vol. 53, 1995, pp. 117 – 122, 128 – 131; Fisher, ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae‹, pp. 189 – 190; Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 175. For an translation of the text see Fisher, ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae‹, p. 189 – 190; B. Pentcheva, ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin. The Icon of the »Usual Miracle« at the Blachernai‹, *Res: Anthropology and aesthetics*, vol. 38, 2000, p. 47. Furthermore, two Latin sources dealing with the miracle have been preserved. They mention that, during the miracle, the curtain remained open from Friday evening until Saturday morning, after which it closed. See Grumel, ›Le »miracle habituel« de Notre-Dame des Blechernes à Constantinople‹, pp. 130 – 135; Fisher, ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae‹, p. 190; Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 176; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, p. 241. Two Russian pilgrimage accounts mention the miracle only in general terms, see Grumel, ›Le »miracle habituel« de Notre-Dame des Blechernes à Constantinople‹, p. 141; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, p. 241. In the 12th c. Anna Komnene also narrates the miracle. By using the phrase *σύνηθες θαῦμα* for describing it, she suggests that it is a regularly occurring event, see Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 177.

33 Barber, *Contesting the logic of painting*, p. 71; Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 292; Pentcheva, ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin‹, p. 42; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 151 – 152; Mavroudi, ›Licit and Illicit Divination‹, p. 432. Neoplatonism is based on the ancient philosophical tradition of Platonic metaphysics. This form was adapted in Late Antiquity and finally influenced by Christian views. For the Neoplatonists, a divine presence leaves a trace in the material, earthly world. Accordingly, it should be noted that not all images and icons are addressed, see Fisher, ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae‹, p. 202.

Holy Spirit in the image, as well as the manner of the viewer's interaction with the image.[34]

In this structure, an individual singular value is attributed to the image of the holy person or scene. Like the personalities depicted, the icons seem to develop individual characteristics. They were not understood as mere static objects. Rather, they were independent creations, whose appearance changed, and were thus given a certain life of their own and an individual will.[35] This style is characterised above all by the fact that the painting appears lifelike in the sense of a certain non-pictorial naturalism, to show human characteristics and to clarify the expression of deep feelings, thus combining the human and the divine in the work of art. All these characteristics are inherent in the inanimate painting. They are intended to evoke an interaction between the image and the viewer, to evoke an appropriate reaction.[36]

The Beholder's Eye

Psellos assigns an important role to visibility and invisibility, and thus to the visual perception of the faithful, in the interaction between the icon and them. Perception is mediated partly by the eye, discovering the visible aspects of the icon, and partly by the soul receiving a mysterious impression.

The text implies that, due to changes in the appearance during the performance, one can grasp the corresponding transformation and the presence of the invisible divine powers. Thus, one proceeds from physical seeing to a level of spiritual seeing. By perceiving changes of the icon through one's eye, the observer also perceives the presence of the invisible divine through the soul. The individual thereby moves to a higher level of spiritual seeing. This is taken to an extreme, for Mary is not only present, but she also receives the visitation of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the incarnation is visually and materially enacted before the faithful. The observer experiences the mystery of the presence of the Mother of God as the icon presents itself through visual withdrawal. Once the visual contact is withdrawn, those present become aware of the mystery that has just occurred.[37]

At the same time, however, Psellos points out the limits of the human capacity for perception. He breaks with representational thought patterns to replace them with a temporal, spatial, yet incomplete view. In this way, he points to the limits of the visible. Simultaneously, he controls the process of seeing by giving instructions. All these characteristics, peculiar to animated painting, are intended to create an interaction between the image and viewer to provoke an appropriate response.[38]

---

34 C. Barber, ›Living painting, or the limits of pointing? Glancing at icons with Michael Psellos‹, in C. Barber and D. Jenkins (eds.), *Reading Michael Psellos*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 121 – 124; Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 174; R. Betancourt, ›Representation as indwelling: Contextualizing Michael Psellos' empsychos graphe across artistic, liturgical, and literary theory‹, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2020, p. 65; A. Carr, ›Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 56, 2002, pp. 91 – 92; R. Cormack, ›Living Painting‹, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, Aldershot, Routledge, 2003, pp. 238 – 239; G. Peers, ›Real Living Painting: Quasi-Objects and Dividuation in the Byzantine World‹, *Religion and the Arts*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2012, pp. 438 – 439; Pentcheva, ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin‹, p. 41; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 150 – 152.

35 Barber, ›Living painting, or the limits of pointing?‹, pp. 118 – 123; Belting, *Bild und Kult*, p. 295.

36 C. Barber, ›Movement and miracle in Michael Psellos‹ account of the Blachernae icon of the Theotokos', in G. de Nie and T. Noble (eds.), *Envisioning experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Dynamic patterns in texts and images*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, p. 12; Belting, *Bild und Kult*, pp. 292 – 293; B. Pentcheva, *The sensual icon. Space, ritual, and the senses in Byzantium*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010, p. 187.

37 C. Barber, *Contesting the logic of painting. Art and understanding in eleventh-century Byzantium*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, pp. 89 – 91; J. Halfwassen, ›Schönheit und Bild im Neuplatonismus‹, in V. Lobsien and C. Olk (eds.), *Neuplatonismus und Ästhetik. Transformationen der Antike*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2007, pp. 43 – 44; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, p. 152.

38 Barber, *Contesting the logic of painting*, p. 72; Barber, ›Living painting, or the limits of pointing?‹, pp. 118 – 119; Cormack, ›Living Painting‹, p. 245; Pentcheva, ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin‹, p. 41.

In this religious context, the author points out that seeing is a communal experience that reintegrates the senses of a vast crowd of spectators. In consequence, the Virgin appears to all in the same way and offers refuge. It is not important to be educated or to have excellent knowledge of the forms of worship. Everyone perceives the miracle, and the Virgin appears to all of them.[39]

The curtain, however, triggers this intense engagement with the icon and heightens her perception. The rising and falling of the veil therefore marks both the temporal and spatial limits of the presence of the Theotokos.[40] The Virgin is revealed through the change in the icon's appearance.

Unfortunately, there are no pictorial representations of the icon or the curtains. Only a few references allow us to imagine what this curtain might have looked like: The anonymous pilgrim characterizes the material more precisely as silk, and Psellos adds that it was precious and full of images.[41]

The curtain acted as a mediator between the aesthetic perception of the decoration on the curtain and the impenetrable illusion of the icon, revealed in the miracle. The icon, whose exact nature never becomes fully tangible, is thus situated between the obviously visible and the mysteriously invisible. The latter is to be made tangible to some extent in the miracle.

Divinity of Images

Above all, the icon's curtain takes on a comparable position to that of relics. It opens miraculously, serves as an aid in judicial decisions, and is used in a prophetic manner. These are tasks that would otherwise be performed exclusively by saints or their relics.[42] In addition, Psellos refers to the curtain itself as being holy. He interprets the tearing of the veil of the Jerusalem Temple and Mary's appearance as the breaking down of the barriers between God and the faithful. As a result, the unveiling of the icon is analogous to the incarnation of Christ. This parallelization symbolizes the theological background as well as the presence of divine power. The tearing of the temple curtain at Christ's death refers to his

39 Barber, *Contesting the logic of painting*, pp. 88 – 89; Barber, ›Movement and miracle in Michael Psello's account of the Blachernae icon of the Theotokos‹, p. 17.

40 Barber, ›Living painting, or the limits of pointing?‹, pp. 126 – 128; Carr, ›Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage‹, p. 92; Chatterjee, ›The Byzantine Icon of the Virgin in the Church of the Blachernae‹, pp. 243 – 244; Fisher, ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae‹, pp. 187 – 188, 202; Papaioannou, ›The »usual miracle« and the unusual image‹, pp. 185 – 186; Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 180.

41 It is unknown how the images were applied to the drapery. Woven or embroidered images, or attached votive medallions are possible, see Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 179. In the pilgrimage account, the details about the installation of the curtain are interesting: It was held in place by two nails at the sides, and it covered only the lower part of the figure, from the belt down. Consequently, the head, arms and torso of the Virgin were always visible. See Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, p. 176. B. Pentcheva assumes that the cult image was probably completely covered with a silk cloth, the upper half of which was woven or embroidered with the image of Mary's upper body. Based on this assumption, the miracle of the curtain could also explain the change in the form and expression of the icon mentioned by Psellos. Consequently, the curtain itself would have had a representation of the torso of the Theotokos holding a medallion in her hands. After opening it, one would have seen the image of Mary standing with her hands raised in an orant gesture and a medallion depicting Christ floating in front of her chest, see Pentcheva, ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin‹, pp. 48 – 49. M. Parani, on the other hand, suggests that the curtain could have been transparent and thus the image of the Virgin would have been visible even before the opening of the textile, see Parani, ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium‹, pp. 179 – 180. The icon may have been framed by several types of curtains. The curtain covering the lower part of the icon may have been a podea. These were often used to support votive medallions, and, pictorially embroidered, they were also popular donations. On the remaining three sides, the icons may have been framed by a peplos or, more commonly, an encheirion. These hangings on the sides of the icon could have covered the panel, see Chatterjee, ›The Byzantine Icon of the Virgin in the Church of the Blachernae‹, p. 242; V. Nunn, ›The encheirion as adjunct to the icon in the middle byzantine period‹, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 10, 1986, p. 83; B. Schellewald, ›Hinter und vor dem Vorhang. Bildpraktiken der Enthüllung und des Verbergens im Mittelalter‹, in C. Blümle and B. Wismer (eds.), *Hinter dem Vorhang. Verhüllung und Enthüllung seit der Renaissance – von Tizian bis Christo*, Munich, Hirmer, 2016, p. 126.

42 Nunn, ›The encheirion as adjunct to the icon in the middle byzantine period‹, pp. 87 – 88.

earthly absence, while the lifting of the curtain and the revealing the icon of Mary marks her presence. Both textiles act without human intervention, revealing a divine influence.[43]

The Virgin interacts with the faithful and is offering them protection. The opening of the curtain helps to make the invisible perceptible to the spectators. The curtain hovers between the two stages, mediating between and interacting with them. First, with the closed curtain and the associated visual withdrawal, the viewer is introduced to the mystery of the icon and therefore even the mystery of divinity.[44] The illusion of a glimpse into the divinity is created by the process of opening the curtain, and the appearance of the Virgin through the open fabric. The curtain thus acts as a mediator between the aesthetic perception of the image of the Virgin and the impenetrable illusion of the icon. The icon and a glimpse of the divine are revealed in the miracle, but their exact nature is never fully grasped.

Veiling of Sacred Images, Icons, and the Beholders Gaze

In both cases discussed in this paper, the curtains play a prominent role. They provide a frame for the religious images, surround its content, and thus emphasize it for human perception.

The viewer's gaze is directed to the object or representation between the curtains. By giving the impression of an exclusive view, the framing textiles visually stage the content, highlighting it and giving it a special significance in the visitor's perception. The representation in the fourth century shrine under SS. Giovanni e Paolo functions similarly to a set of instructions, showing the viewer exemplary behaviour. Thus, the fresco plays with several levels. It attempts to influence the behaviour of the viewer and to convey the message of the painting. In the process, the curtain takes on a framing position and differentiates the scene being depicted. In the eleventh-century text, it is no longer necessary to show the viewer how to venerate the icon. Instead, its individual setting that distinguishes it from other icons is emphasized. The performative nature of the icon addresses the viewer.

Nevertheless, by drawing attention to essential elements and processes, through his text, Psellos attempts to guide the viewer's gaze. There is also evidence of a collective influence. The believer is always part of the crowd, but there is also encouragement for the individual's personal convictions. The reader is led to a higher level of spiritual vision and insight through the text. Psellos does not only refer to the way the spectators perceived the situation and how they acted in it; he also wants them to be an active part of the miracle. The viewers' interests are aroused by the channelled gaze, the framing function, and the performative quality of the curtains. The curtains influence the perception of those present, actively influencing them through the staging around the icon.

Furthermore, they make them feel as if they are glimpsing into other spheres, and thus into higher truths as well. Both examples are attempts to make elements of faith tangible and experienceable. Abstract, elusive elements such as concepts of holiness or the authentication of holy persons are difficult to understand and even more difficult to represent visually. The significance of the representations increased exponentially through the combination of content and iconographic conventions already familiar to the viewer. The representations consciously and deliberately draw on the viewing habits and pictorial knowledge, and use them to create new visual statements. The curtains

43 Pentcheva, ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin‹, p. 50.

44 B. Schellewald, ›Vom Unsichtbaren zum Sichtbaren: Liturgisches Zeremoniell und Bild in Byzanz im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert‹, in E. Bierende, S. Bretfeld, and K. Oschema (eds.), *Riten, Gesten, Zeremonien. Gesellschaftliche Symbolik in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 148 – 149.

have also contributed to the clarification of the authenticity of certain icons and thus of the persons depicted on them. By directing the eyes of those present, they helped to emphasize and stage the significance of religious images. As opposed to the fourth century, the textile itself is addressed as sacred and thus receives an explicit distinction. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the curtain expresses the divine will itself as an essential part of the miracle.

Nevertheless, it turns out that curtains have been interacting with the same principles of human perception for centuries. As the temple curtain mentioned by Gregory of Nazianzus demonstrates, these textiles elude the active influence of the viewers. Curtains develop an authority of their own, as is evident in certain images and textual sources. In this way, they assume an important task of conveying religious truth. They are situated between the sacred and the divine, until they themselves, as mediators of a higher truth, seem to be given a sacred status.

Acknowledgement

In preparing this chapter, I have benefited greatly from the constructive comments, stimulating discussions, and helpful support of Ronja Fink and Professor Dr Franz Alto Bauer. I would also like to thank Elise Tacconi-Garman for her linguistic advice, and the participants of the workshop for their helpful suggestions.

Research for this paper was conducted as part of my dissertation project »The Guided Gaze: Curtains as a Medium of Staging in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Middle Ages« at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, supervised by Professor Dr Franz Alto Bauer.

Figure Credits

Fig. 1 and 2: kindly provided by Patrimonio del Fondo Edifici di Culto, amministrato dalla Direzione Centrale degli Affari dei Culti e per l'Amministrazione del Fondo Edifici di Culto del Ministero dell'Interno, Italia.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Acta SS. Cypriani, Justinae e Theoctisti MM, *Acta Sanctorum Sept. VII*, 1867, col. 226.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Select Orations*, trans. M. Vison, Washington DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Michealis Psellis, *Orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E. Fisher, Stuttgart, B. G. Teubner, 1994.

Secondary Sources

Alexopoulos, S., ›Proskynesis‹, in C. Hornung et al. (eds.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 28, Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 2018, pp. 360 – 372.

Astolfi, F., ›Le case romane dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, *Forma Urbis*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2002, pp. 9 – 13.

Astolfi, F., ›La casa celimontana dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, in A. Englen et al. (eds.), *Caelius II. Le case romane sotto la basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2014, pp. 80 – 135.

Asutay-Effenberger, N. and Effenberger, A., *Byzanz: Weltreich der Kunst*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2017.

Barber, C., ›Living painting, or the limits of pointing? Glancing at icons with Michael Psellos‹, in C. Barber and D. Jenkins (eds.), *Reading Michael Psellos*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 117 – 130.

Barber, C., ›Movement and miracle in Michael Psello's account of the Blachernae icon of the Theotokos‹, in G. de Nie and T. Noble (eds.), *Envisioning experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Dynamic patterns in texts and images*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012, pp. 9 – 22.

Barber, C., *Contesting the logic of painting. Art and understanding in eleventh-century Byzantium*, Leiden, Brill, 2007.

Belting, H., *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, 7th edn., Munich, Beck, 2011.

Betancourt, R., ›Representation as indwelling: Contextualizing Michael Psellos' empsychos graphe across artistic, liturgi-

cal, and literary theory‹, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2020, pp. 62 – 85.

Bisconti, F., ›Dentro e intorno all'iconografia martiriale romana: Dal »vuoto figurative« al »immaginaria devozionale«‹, in M. Lamberigts and P. van Deun (eds.), *Martyrium. In multidisciplinary perspective*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1995, pp. 247 – 292.

Bisconti, F., ›Il gesto dell'orante tra atteggiamento e personificazione‹, in S. Ensoli (ed.), *Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città Cristiana*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000, pp. 368 – 372.

Bowes, K., *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Brandenburg, H., *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom. Vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Der Beginn der abendländischen Kirchenbaukunst*, 3rd edn., Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner, 2013.

Bravo, G., ›El ritual de la proskynesis y su significado político y religioso en la Roma Imperial. Con especial referencia a la Tetrarquía‹, *Gerión*, vol. 15, 1997, pp. 177 – 192.

Brenk, B., ›Microstoria sotto la chiesa dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo. La cristianizzazione di una casa privata‹, *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1995, pp. 169 – 205.

Brenk, B., *Die Christianisierung der spätrömischen Welt. Stadt, Land, Haus, Kirche und Kloster in frühchristlicher Zeit*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2003.

Brøns, C., *Gods and garments. Textiles in Greek Sanctuaries in the 7th–1st Centuries BC*, Philadelphia, Oxbow Books, 2017.

Carr, A., ›Court culture and Cult icons in Middle Byzantine Constantinople‹, in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Washington DC, Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 81 – 99.

Carr, A., ›Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 56, 2002, pp. 75 – 92.

Carr, A., ›Threads of authority: the Virgin Mary's veil in the Middle Ages‹, in S. Gordon (ed.), *Robes and honor. The medieval world on investiture*, New York, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 59 – 93.

Chatterjee, P., ›The Byzantine Icon of the Virgin in the Church of the Blachernae: Michael Psellos on the Problem of Miraculous Timing‹, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2021, pp. 141 – 262.

Ciggaar, N., ›Une Description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55‹, *Revue des études byzantines*, vol. 53, 1995, pp. 117 – 140.

Colini, A., *Storia e topografia del Celio nell'antichità*, Vatican, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1944.

Cormack, R., ›Living Painting‹, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, Aldershot, Routledge, 2003, pp. 235 – 253.

Crook, J., *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300 – 1200*, Oxford, Clarendon, 2000.

de Witt, J., *Spätrömische Bildnismalerei. Stilkritische Untersuchungen zur Wandmalerei der Katakomben und verwandter Monumente*, Berlin, Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1938.

Delehaye, H., ›Cyprien d'Antioche et Cyprien de Carthage‹, *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. 39, 1921, pp. 314 – 333.

Diefenbach, S., *Römische Erinnerungsräume*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2007.

Dresken-Weiland, J., *Bild, Grab und Wort. Untersuchungen zu Jenseitsvorstellungen von Christen des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts*, Regensburg, Schnell & Steiner, 2010.

Dresken-Weiland, J., ›Orans‹, in K. Wessel and M. Restle (eds.), *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst,* Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 2013, pp. 528 – 535.

Effenberger, A., ›Marienbilder im Blachernenheiligtum‹, *Millennium*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2016, pp. 275 – 326.

Engemann, J., *Deutung und Bedeutung frühchristlicher Bildwerke*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997.

Fisher, E., ›Discourse on the Miracle that Occurred in the Blachernai Church‹, in C. Barber and E. Papaioannou (eds.), *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art. A Byzantine Perspective on Aesthetics*, Indiana, Notre Dame Press, 2017, pp. 300 – 339.

Fisher, E., ›Michael Psellos on the »usual« miracle at Blachernae, the law, and neoplatonism‹, in D. Sullivan, E. Fisher, and E. Papaioannou (eds.), *Byzantine religious culture. Studies in honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, pp. 187 – 204.

Franchi de'Cavalieri, P., *Note agiografiche*, vol. 8, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1935.

Gasdia, V., *La casa pagano-cristiana del Celio. Titulus Byzantis sive Pammachii*, Rome, Federico Pustet, 1937.

Ghetti, A., ›Problemi relative alle origine dell'architettura paleocristina‹, *Atti del IX congress internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana. Roma 21 – 27 Settembre 1975*, vol. 1, 1978, pp. 491 – 511.

Goodson, C., ›Archaeology and the Cult of Saints in the Early Middle Ages: Accessing the Sacred‹, *Mélanges de l'École français de Rome. Moyen Âge*, vol. 126, no. 1, 2014, http://journals.openedition.org/mefrm/1818, (accessed 12 February 2023).

Grumel, V., ›Le »miracle habituel« de Notre-Dame des Blechernes à Constantinople‹, *Échos d'Orient*, vol. 30, 1931, pp. 129 – 146.

Hahn, C., ›Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines‹, *Speculum*, vol. 72, no. 4, 1997, pp. 1079 – 1106.

Halfwassen, J., ›Schönheit und Bild im Neuplatonismus‹, in V. Lobsien and C. Olk (eds.), *Neuplatonismus und Ästhetik. Transformationen der Antike*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2007, pp. 43 – 57.

Karivieri, A., ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo: La casa celimontana‹, in J. Hamesse (ed.), *Roma, magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis. Mélanges offerts au Père L.E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire*, vol. 3, 1998, pp. 201 – 214.

Klauser, T., ›Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst II‹, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum,* vol. 2, 1959, pp. 115 – 145.

Krautheimer, R., *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae. Le basiliche Cristiane antiche di Roma (Sec. IV–IX)*, vol. 1, Vatican, Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1937.

Leyser, C., ›»A church in the house of the saints«: property and power in the Passion of John and Paul‹, in K. Cooper and J. Hillner (eds.), *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome 300 – 900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 140 – 162.

Mathews, T. and Muller, N., *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons*, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016.

Mavroudi, M., ›Licit and Illicit Divination. Empress Zoe and the Icon of Christ Antiphonetes‹, in V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (eds.), *Les Savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, Firenze, Sismel, 2014, pp. 431 – 460.

Mielsch, H., ›Zur stadtrömischen Malerei des 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.‹, *Bullettino dell'Institut Archeologico Germanico Sezione Romana*, vol. 85, 1978, pp. 151 – 207.

Mondini, D., ›SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, in P. Claussen (ed.), *Die Kirchen der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter 1050 – 1300*, vol. 3, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010, pp. 69 – 128.

Munk, A., ›Domestic Piety in Fourth Century Rome. A Relic Shrine beneath the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, vol. 15, 2009, pp. 7 – 19.

Nicolai, V., ›A proposito di Caelisus II. Ancora sul santuario martiriale dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo al Celio‹, *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, vol. 95, 2019, pp. 281 – 326.

Nunn, V., ›The encheirion as adjunct to the icon in the middle byzantine period‹, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 10, 1986, pp. 73 – 102.

Papaioannou, E., ›The »usual miracle« and the unusual image. Psellos and the icons of Blachernai‹, in W. Hörandner (ed.), *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, vol. 51, Vienna, Austrian Academy of Scientists Press, 2001, pp. 177 – 188.

Parani, M., ›Experiencing Miraculous Icons in Byzantium: The examples of the Icon of the »Usual Miracle« and the Hodegetria in Constantinople‹, in S. Brodbeck and A.-O. Poilpré (eds.), *Visibilité et présence de l'image dans l'espace ecclesial*, Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019, pp. 171 – 194.

Peers, G., ›Real Living Painting: Quasi-Objects and Dividuation in the Byzantine World‹, *Religion and the Arts*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2012, pp. 433 – 460.

Pentcheva, B., ›Rhetorical Images of the Virgin. The Icon of the »Usual Miracle« at the Blachernai‹, *Res: Anthropology and aesthetics*, vol. 38, 2000, pp. 34 – 55.

Pentcheva, B., ›The Performative Icon‹, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 88, no. 4, 2006, pp. 631 – 655.

Pentcheva, B., *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.

Pentcheva, B., *The sensual icon. Space, ritual, and the senses in Byzantium*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Prandi, A., *Il complesso monumentale della basilica celimontana dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo*, Vatican, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1953.

Ranucci, C., ›Le pitture della Confessio‹, *Forma Urbis*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2002, pp. 28 – 29.

Ranucci, C., ›Le fasi decorative tarde della domus‹, in A. Englen et al. (eds.), *Caelius II. Le case romane sotto la basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2014, pp. 285 – 295.

Schellewald, B., ›Hinter und vor dem Vorhang. Bildpraktiken der Enthüllung und des Verbergens im Mittelalter‹, in C. Blümle and B. Wismer (eds.), *Hinter dem Vorhang. Verhüllung und Enthüllung seit der Renaissance – von Tizian bis Christo*, Munich, Hirmer, 2016, pp. 124 – 131.

Schellewald, B., ›Vom Unsichtbaren zum Sichtbaren: Liturgisches Zeremoniell und Bild in Byzanz im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert‹, in E. Bierende, S. Bretfeld, and K. Oschema (eds.), *Riten, Gesten, Zeremonien. Gesellschaftliche Symbolik in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 141 – 166.

Sevcenko, N., ›Icons in the Liturgy‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 45, 1991, pp. 45 – 57.

Sotomayor, M., ›Notas sobra la orante y sus acompañantes en la arte paleocristiano‹, *Analecta sacra tarraconensia*, vol. 34, 1961, pp. 5 – 20.

Spatharakis, I., ›The proskynesis in Byzantine art. A study in connection with nomisma of Andronicus II Palaeologue‹, *Bulletin antieke beschaving: annual papers on classical archaeology*, vol. 49, 1974, pp. 190 – 205.

Stanislao, S., ›The House of the Martyrs John and Paul Recently Discovered on the Coelian Hill at Rome‹, *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1890, pp. 261 – 285.

Stanislao, S., ›Das Haus der H. Martyrer Johannes und Paulus‹, in A. de Waal (ed.), *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 2, Rome, Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1888, pp. 137 – 147.

Stephenson, J., ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, pp. 3 – 31.

Studer-Karlen, M., *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012.

Thacker, A., ›Martyr Cult within the Walls: Saints and Relics in the Roman Tituli of the Fourth to Seventh Centuries‹, in A. Minnis (eds.), *Text, image, interpretation. Studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its insular context in honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, pp. 31 – 70.

Vikan, G., *Sacred images and sacred power in Byzantium*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003.

Wehrens, H., *Rom. Die christlichen Sakralbauten vom 4. bis zum 9. Jahrhundert: ein Vademecum*, 2nd edn., Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 2017.

Wilpert, J., ›Le pitture della »Confessio« sotto la basilica dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo‹, in R. Paribeni (ed.), *Scritti in onore di Bartolomeo Nogara: raccolti in occasione del suo LXX anno*, Vatican, 1937, pp. 517 – 523.

Wilpert, J., *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herdersche Verlangshandlung, 1916.

Fig. 1 Antonio and Gerolamo Capellano, Altar of Our Lady of the Reef (Gospa of Škrpjela), 1796, Our Lady of Škrpjela, Perast.

Curtain Frames of the Altar Retables and the Early Modern Reframing of the Dalmatian *imagines antiquae*

Matko Marušić

The motive of drapery, elaborately carved in marble or stone, has been a ubiquitous feature of altar retables, at least from the early seventeenth century onwards. Scholars have repeatedly stressed the dazzling visual qualities of the illusionistic rendering of the fabric, employed to draw attention to the principal object of devotion enshrined in the centre of the retable, aiming to increase the dramatic effect of the composition. These »curtain frames«, as I will call them in this essay, are customarily understood as derivates of the ephemeral ceremonial architecture and festival decoration set in churches on major occasions of the liturgical year. For this reason, they are frequently referenced in scholarly literature, although routinely in passing, and typically in terms of their artistry, authorship and materiality. In this essay, I will observe them from a different angle: not solely as a framing strategy or a result of Baroque theatricality, but also as the aftermath of a much older tradition of veiling religious images with textile curtains. A more systematic look at curtain frames as distinctive elements of altar retables will be cast by examining the relation to the object of devotion they frame and the movement of the fabric they neatly freeze in stone or marble.

The essay explores the Early Modern retables commissioned for the *imagines antiquae*, a subset of highly venerated religious images of (late) medieval origin, predominantly smaller-scale depictions of the Virgin and Child, whose devotional appeal flourished centuries after they were made, on account of the miraculous and thaumaturgic powers they were believed to possess.[1] Their devotional allure can therefore be fully understood only when considered in a more extensive timeframe. Indeed, the alterations they have been subjected to through time are imminent aspects of their centuries-long existence as a devotional image. These modifications include frequent overpainting (to protect them from decay and destruction due to humidity and the heat of the candles lit before them), covering in silver revetments and appending other votive offerings. More prominently, the older images were enshrined on newly-commissioned monumental marble altars as venerable religious images and relics of centuries of religious worship.

These recurrent transformations did not weaken the status of the *imagines antiquae*; on the contrary, they reinforced their alleged ancient origin, instigated continuous devotion towards

1 For an overview of religious images in Dalmatia, which is the focus of the present study see Z. Demori Staničić, *Javni kultovi ikona u Dalmaciji*, Split – Zagreb, Književni krug – Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, 2017. This essay leaves out the issue of crucifixes, either painted on panel or carved in wood; this group of devotional objects and their Early Modern »reframing« calls for a separate study. This paper is the result of the research project *From Local to Regional. The Art of Adriatic Croatia from the Middle Ages to the 19th century* conducted at the Institute of Art History and funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU.

them, and imbued them with additional qualities, such as that of the status of the venerable prototype, pointing to the long and enduring Christian identity of communities that honoured them.[2] This prestige of older images in Early Modern devotions was principally expressed through the decoration of the altar retables in which they were enshrined. For this reason, the role of curtain frames in promoting the status that medieval images acquired in the post-medieval times, lies at the heart of this study. However, throughout the Middle Ages, the sanctity of cult images was best guaranteed by keeping them out of sight, covered by textiles or shutters. Yet, the post-Tridentine altar retables in Dalmatian churches this paper analyses had the opposite function: to keep religious images permanently visible to the faithful, thus offering them to perpetual prayer and devotion.

Within this framework, the starting points of this essay are seemingly simple yet highly controversial questions: (I) When did the sacred images stop being veiled by curtains, and (II) How did Early Modern religious rituals concerning the »medieval« images replace the practices of (un-) veiling that evolved around them for centuries? Without attempting to propose any definite answers to these critical questions, but rather to map out the prospects for future studies, this essay will examine several *imagines antique,* and the altars commissioned to treasure them in the churches of the cities aligned on the Eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, in what is today Croatia and Montenegro. The working hypothesis, which will be advanced in the following pages, is that a rather singular approach was assumed in the Early Modern period. While abandoning the textile curtains as means of activation, the lavish retables in which the older religious images were enshrined usually retained the motive of animated drapery. The movement of the fabric, now petrified in coloured stone or marble, was meant to suggest – but also to conjure – the long history of the interconnection of sacred images and textiles in times when a radically different attitude toward the enshrinement of holy images was introduced.[3]

Images, Textiles and Marble Curtain Frames

During the last decades, considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the Medieval and Renaissance practices of concealing paintings with curtains and other protective coverings. Scholars have distinguished several reasons for covering images, ranging from purely practical to entirely performative ones: To protect them from dust, light and moisture, but also to ceremonially reveal them by lifting the curtain at a specific point of a liturgical feast.[4] Regrettably, written sources commenting upon the practices of activating images by raising the curtains are discouragingly slim. Still, they do attest to the usage of curtains in the public

2 See U. Bergmann, ›Reframing mittelalterlicher Skulpturen: Verschönerung, Umnutzung, Neuinterpretation?‹, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2017, pp. 273 – 291; V. Luccherini, ›Introduzione. Sulla rifunzionalizzazione post-medievale delle immagini sacre medievali‹, in V. Luccherini (ed.), *Immagini medievali di culto dopo il Medioevo*, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 7 – 18.

3 As succinctly put by Ulrich Lehner, with reference to the ›movement‹ of the curtain frames: »The sacred architecture of early modern Catholicism invited participation and contemplative awe. (…) Renaissance and Baroque churches eliminated the screen and allowed a largely unimpeded view on the altar. One could now perceive the elevation of the host and chalice during the Mass, and visually participate in it. (…) The divine mysteries no longer seemed to be kept at a distance but rather revealed to the visitor. This was underscored by the *putti* lifting heavy curtains that previously hid the glory of Heaven«, U. L. Lehner, *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform: From the Council of Trent to the Enlightenment*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, p. 128.

4 A. Nova, ›Hangings, curtains, and shutters of sixteenth-century Lombard altarpieces‹, in E. Borsook and F. Gioffredi Superbi (eds.), *Italian altarpieces 1250 – 1550. Function and design*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 177 – 189; V. M. Schmidt, ›Curtains, Revelatio, and Pictorial Reality in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy‹, in K. M. Rudy and B. Baert (eds.), *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, pp. 191 – 213. See also Corinna Mairhanser's essay in the present volume.

display of images in churches and domestic settings, respectively.[5] Indeed, the church inventories regularly include textiles varying in type and colour, some of which were arguably used for covering altar paintings, primarily the ones that witnessed fervent devotion due to their capacity to answer prayers or to channel and deliver miracles. In addition, curtains are specified in the inventories of households in Eastern Dalmatian cities as standard accessories of religious paintings for personal devotion, such as *una anchona con la cortina* and *cortina et figura beatae Virginis* (as listed in two fifteenth-centuries inventories of households in Dubrovnik).[6]

Evidence can – if rarely – be gleaned from the paintings depicting fictive curtains, such as the mid-fifteenth century Virgin with Child, Our Lady of the Reef (Gospa od Škrpjela), the central object of devotion in the Bay of Kotor (whose Early Modern »reframing« will be discussed below, see figs. 1, 5). The backdrop of the figures is a soft red fabric falling in vertical folds ending with harmaline bordering, suspended from the fictive horizontal rod with rings, implying that it could easily be pulled aside. The holy figures are, however, placed before the curtain, as was characteristic for the representations of the Virgin and Child in Venetian and Adriatic Renaissance painting (the standard term for painted textiles backing Mary and Child is »the cloth of honour«). The attention to the fabric that clothed the saintly figures can be grasped from the periodical repainting of images, considering that a new type of painted fabric was customarily changed with every new layer applied. For instance, the icon of Our Lady of Žnjan, from Split, carries no less than three different layers of paint; the textile of the Virgin's and Christ's robes was changed with every single one. The earliest dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the most recent one has been determined to be from the sixteenth century.[7] In short, the history of the relationship between textiles (primarily curtains) and the sacred representations, veiled and unveiled according to the liturgical occasion, was intertwined for centuries.

The period post circa 1600, following the Council of Trent (1545 – 63), is characterised – generally speaking – by a profound shift in the Catholic doctrine, exerting influence on the veneration of saints, relics and images. Normally, various attitudes were taken in different European regions, and the case-specific approach is necessary to grasp all the nuances of the Early Modern strategies of enshrining and reframing medieval religious images. There are instances where curtains continued to be used as principal agents of church festivities, inspiring awe in all those venerating the altars and expecting the uncovering of devotional objects enshrined. Some of the most important medieval icons from Rome, such as Madonna della Clemenza, elaborately restaged and reframed at the closing of the sixteenth century, continued to be covered by curtains.[8] Textiles regularly concealed venerable large wooden crucifixes as representations of the central event of the faith, the Passion of Christ.[9] The evidence for Eastern Adriatic churches suggests that panels depicting the Virgin and Child ceded to be veiled but were customarily protected with metal revetments, leaving but the heads and hands visible (that is, only

5 D. G. Wilkins, ›Opening the Doors to Devotion: Trecento Triptychs and Suggestions concerning Images and Domestic Practice in Florence‹, *Studies in the History of Art*, vol. 61, 2002, pp. 370 – 393.
6 M. M. Marušić, ›Hereditary Ecclesiae and Domestic Ecclesiolae in Medieval Ragusa (Dubrovnik)‹, *Religions*, vol. 11, no. 7, 2020, p. 9.
7 See Ž. Matulić Bilač, ›Splitska romanička ikona Gospe of Žnjana: analitička mapa srednjovjekovnog slikarstva u Dalmaciji‹, *Portal*, vol. 13, 2022, pp. 21 – 41. I thank the author for her help in analysing the painted textile of the Split icon.
8 K. Noreen, ›Time, Space, and Devotion: The Madonna della Clemenza and the Cappella Altemps in Rome‹, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2016, p. 897.
9 An illustrative case in post-Tridentine Sicily, see J. Gebhardt, ›The Crucifix in the Santuario Santissimo Crocifisso alla Collegiata in Monreale: The Unveiling of a Cult Image in Post-Tridentine Sicily‹, in I. Foletti, M. Gianandrea, S. Romano and E. Scirocco (eds.), *Re-thinking, Re-making, Re-living Christian Origins*, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 147 – 164.

the parts of bodies not covered in textile). Additional proof for the abandonment of the practice of (un)veiling is that none of the examples with marble curtains examined in this paper contain fixings for a metal rail from which the actual textile curtains could have been suspended on rings and controlled by a cord located to the side of the altar. Equally, no written source references the existence of actual curtains that concealed the central image of the new Baroque retables.[10]

During the seventeenth century, however, older and venerable religious paintings were encased in large-scale curtain frames in stone or marble. Despite the high level of artistry and illusionistic qualities, which successfully mimicked the actual textile by virtue of the finely polished curves and elaborate cascade-like folds, they did in no way conceal images, as was characteristic for earlier centuries. Yet – as the marble cannot *move* – they were permanently pulled aside. Nevertheless, the conspicuous use of curtains as framing devices aimed at portraying precisely the opposite: the movement of the textile, that is, the (un)veiling of the object of devotion, followed by its lifting to the heavens.

Three distinct but related forms of curtain frames can be discerned on Baroque altar retables in Dalmatian churches (but the typology can also be applied more generally). In the first case, the curtain enclosed the altar structure entirely, operating as a ceremonial backdrop for sculptures and other liturgical equipment placed on the mensa. Such an arrangement is characteristic of the early-eighteenth-century altars of the Holy Sacrament in the cathedrals of Zadar and Rijeka, among others (fig. 2).[11] In the second case, the altar's surface occupied by stone curtains is restricted to the immediate borders of the central devotional image. Such an arrangement is akin to the positioning of the curtains at the side of the image upon its revealing. In the third case, more remarkably, the stone curtains are the protagonist of the unveiling of the venerable medieval image treasured in the middle of the altar retable. Indeed, they freeze the religious rituals of veiling sacred images in time, pointing to the long history of their protection and ceremonial staging (fig. 3).

Although curtain frames are routinely perceived as conventional and uneventful features of the retables, they can also have aggregated complex religious concepts and narratives, such as miracles. A case in point is the altar dedicated to St. Dominic in the cathedral of Zadar, carved by Giuseppe Torretti at the beginning of the eighteenth century (originally from the city's Dominican church), whose »curtain« is lifted by St. Catherine and St. Mary Magdalen from the sides and the Virgin Mary from the top. The raising of the curtain is no ordinary event in the case of the Zadar retable, given that the female saints lift the veil of the prodigious image of St. Dominic in the convent of Soriano (which was miraculously disclosed to the friars in the house in Calabria, by Mary, Magdalen and Catherine).[12] Another instance of retables with marble curtains drawing upon the miraculous qualities of the object enshrined is that of the altar of the Holy Cross in the Hvar cathedral (1692). The altar was erected to house two exceptional devotional objects of the city: the small wall cross that reportedly bled in 1510 and the sizeable mid-

10 The metal rods are partially preserved on several altars, whose retable decorations do not include the motif of the curtains. Cf. for instance, the altar of the Holy Cross from the church of Our Lady of Šunj, on the island of Lopud, which presents a simple architectonic altar with pillars that treasures the large crucifix imported from Spain or Mexico, cf. P. F. Amador et al., ›The Crucified Christ of Lopud, Croatia. A Unique Early Import of Mexican Polychromed Sculpture Made of Maize Stalks‹, *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2018, cf. p. 5, fig. 2.

11 The makers of the Zadar altar (1718 – 19) are the Venetian masters Antonio Viviani and Francesco Penso vel Cabianca. The altar from Rijeka is a decade younger; it was commissioned in ca. 1726 from Pasquale Lazzarini and Paolo Zuliani.

12 I. Čapeta Rakić, ›La visione del frate Domenicano Lorenzo dalla Grotteria e gli echi dell'iconografia del miracolo di Soriano in Dalmazia‹, *IKON*, vol. 6, 2013, pp. 199 – 212. The author has traced dozen instances of depictions of the Soriano miracle, yet none of them (except for the cited altar in Zadar) displays the motive of curtains.

Fig. 2 Paolo Zuliani and Antonio Michelazzi, Altar of the Holy Sacrament, ca. 1725, Collegiate Church (Assunta), Rijeka.

fifteenth-century wooden crucifix.[13] The smaller, miraculous cross is encased in a cross-shaped chest in the altar's tabernacle, whose front is veiled in a »marble textile« that »protects« the venerated relic of the bleeding cross just as precious textiles would protect an actual relic. Moreover, the miraculous

13 R. Tomić, *Znakovi identiteta: sveci zaštitnici u umjetnosti 17. i 18. stoljeća u Dalmaciji, Boki kotorskoj i Dubrovačkoj Republici*, Split – Zagreb, Književni krug – Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2021, pp. 264–268.

Fig. 3 Francesco Cabianca and assistants, Altar of the Immaculate Virgin, 1704 – 1708, St. Claire, Kotor.

object from Hvar is imprinted on the front of the altar's tabernacle, thus drawing on complex iconographies and devotions to the Passion of Christ, such as the Veil of Veronica (fig. 4).

The Frames for *imagines antiquae*

The visual and material qualities of the retables aimed to publicise the older but newly-enshrined images as tokens of the venerable tradition of the Christian faith worthy of special reverence and, even more importantly, as symbols of communities. Therefore, the framing was central to the new role these sacred images took on in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a more significant number of them is still worshipped precisely because of their memorable and enduring Early Modern »reframing«. The elaborate frames were also necessary, considering that the older, medieval devout images were simpler and not very exciting. Their rather small size can be due to several reasons. For example, they were either fragments of larger medieval panels representing the Virgin with Child or central compartments of the sizeable polyptychs that regularly depicted the

Fig. 4 Alessandro and Paolo Tremignon, Altar of the Holy Cross, ante 1692, St. Stephen Cathedral, Hvar.

Virgin. Another and more common reason were that these small-scale images were initially intended for worship in domestic spaces, mostly in bedchambers. How and when they found their way onto the main altars of churches centuries after they were made varied from case to case.[14] The general pattern was that, at a certain point in time, they had proven to possess supernatural powers. They reportedly had wept, spoken or bled. This new status urged for a more appropriate setting, not in private houses but in the most important churches, on the public altars enshrined in elaborate framing apparatuses.

Generally speaking, *imagines antiquae* were appreciated for being stylistically rough. This was not a disparaging esthetical judgement articulated by those who opposed the veneration of centuries-old objects and considered them inappropriate for cultivating devotion. On the contrary, the formal roughness, rigid frontality and hazy linear rendering of the holy figures were seen as arguments that their portrayal was faithful to the original portraits of saints.[15] Their adherence to the »Byzantine manner« in the Early Modern times, surmised under the multi-layered term *maniera greca* (*pittura greca*, *modo greco*, etc.), made them similar in status to icons.[16] However, their Greek origin or provenance was but an Early Modern fabrication, given that they were, bar none, painted by local, Dalmatian painters of the later Trecento and Quattrocento. Nevertheless, the gold ground of the panels was sufficient to venerate them along the same line as the Byzantine prototypes, not more than a century after their creation.

Small but arrestingly enshrined medieval panels are thus a prime example of anachronism in Early Modern images, that is, their potential to purport a much older creation date and to act as objects of devotion whose history of veneration is much older than it actually was.[17] On the one hand, their style was perceived as archaic (highly positively connotated). On the other hand, the elegant curtain frames at their sides were an artistic motif that mimicked the old ritual of covering images. The significance of the motif of curtains, both actual textile curtains and »curtain frames«, in contributing to the anachronism of medieval sacred images has been little explored, but they were central to the restaging of Dalmatian *imagines antiquae*. Several case studies, which will be analysed below, suggest that curtains did not only direct the viewers' attention to these venerable yet indeed modest images, but they also engaged in a dialogue with the medieval ritual of veiling and unveiling objects of devotion.

First, however, a brief mention should be made about the long history of the textile curtains that concealed images and the motive of stone curtains in the Medieval and Renaissance art of the Eastern Adriatic. The earliest surviving example of curtains executed in stone is the lunette of the portal of the cathedral in Trogir (dated by inscription to 1240), known for its main iconographic subject, the Nativity and the Bathing of Christ. The open curtain makes the scenes visible in a theatre-like two-storey box, and the iconographic »velum« motif was read in eucharistic terms.[18] The sculptor of the lunette, magister Raduanus (Radovan), is lauded in the dedicatory inscription for the exquisite craftsmanship of the human figures. Yet, he showed the same high level of execution in the movement of the petrified fabric he so successfully

14 M. Voulgaropoulou, ›From Domestic Devotion to the Church Altar: Venerating Icons in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Adriatic‹, *Religions*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2019, pp. 1 – 41.

15 These stylistic features were central to the devotional efficacy of icons in earlier centuries as well, see G. Vikan, ›Sacred Image, Sacred Power‹, in E. R. Hoffman (ed.), *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 137.

16 A. Drandaki, ›A Maniera Greca: content, context, and transformation of a term‹, *Studies in Iconography*, vol. 35, 2014, pp. 39 – 72.

17 A. Nagel and C. S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York, Zone Books, 2010, pp. 7, 9, 13, 97.

18 For the most concise reading of the »velum« motif see E. Papastavrou, ›Il tema della Natività sul timpano di Maestro Radovan nel portale occidentale della cattedrale di Traù (Trogir)‹, *Thesaurismata*, vol. 22, 1992, pp. 22 – 24.

carved. The motif of curtains that, when open, reveal the subject of the work, was employed on the tombs of saints in the fifteenth century, and there are two such tomb altars with life-size figures of the lying saints in the cathedral in Split. Contrary to the two-hundred-year-older portal in Trogir, the Split tomb monuments are more conventional, given that the motif of curtains was abundantly deployed in the monumental tomb sculpture throughout the fourteenth century and later.[19] One of the tombs treasures the body of St. Anastasius, an early Christian martyr and one of the patron saints of Split, who was a weaver. Fittingly, his early-eighteenth-century reliquary contained several old textiles from the eighth and thirteenth centuries, as was recently discovered by a thorough technical examination of the piece.[20] The quoted example underlines that the fabrics had their afterlives, just like the paintings, and this nexus lies at the core of the future research the paper aims to fuel.

The most paradigmatic case of the »curtain frames« that exhibit deep visual impressions and the highest qualities in terms of artistry is the main altar in the Franciscan church in Kotor, dedicated to St. Clare (fig. 3). The lavish altar retable, which entirely encloses the east end of the single-nave church, was funded by prominent patrons, Kotor's patricians Ivan Bolizza and his wife Vinka, born Bucchia. It was commissioned from the Venetian sculptor Francesco Cabianca at the beginning of the eighteenth century (1704 – 08). The erection of the retable was encouraged by the deliberation of the Kotor City Council of 1673, by which the cult of the Virgin Immaculata and the specific *imago antiqua*, for decades venerated in the Franciscan church, was declared the co-patron of the city. Prominent Latin inscriptions placed at the sides of the retable, however, do not refer to the actual panel of the Virgin enshrined in the centre of the retable, which is immersed in memorable stone curtains, but to the cult of the Virgin Immaculata in a more general fashion.[21]

The heart of the triumphal-arch-like structure, executed in marble of varying colours, treasures the image of the Virgin and Child – decisively not eye-catching – encased in a silver revetment. The image, which is axially aligned with the eucharistic tabernacle that rests below, is flanked by the life-size marble figures of St. Clare and St. Francis that gesture towards the sacred image. The panel has several frames – the simple quadrangular yellowish bordering of the actual image shrouded in silver, an additional reddish marble frame (evenly rectangular), and the structure of clouds lifted to heaven by a pair of angels and even smaller cherubs. These plural frames are dull compared to the buoyant curtain in yellowish marble, held with ease by a couple of angles, calmly resting on the crowning architrave of the retable. The architrave is also topped by the imposing figure of God the Father, which is the closing component of the central axis of the retable: mensa – the tabernacle – the venerated panel of the Immaculata – God the Father.[22]

The unfolding of the marble curtains, suggested by the illusionistic movement of the fabric that resists the retable's rigid architectonic structure, unfolds the revered image and is thus a central step of the multi-layered Early Modern reframing of the small, venerated image and its reworking into the new iconography (fig. 3). There are two crucial aspects to this »iconography of reframing«: the city's Franciscan community that treasured the

19 The creators of the tomb monuments are Bonino da Milano (1427) and Giorgio Dalmata (Juraj Dalmatinac), (1448).

20 J. Belamarić, ›Svijećnjaci zadarskih majstora Mateja i Aristodija i dosad nepoznati fragmenti srednjovjekovnog tekstila iz splitske katedrale‹, in J. Belamarić, *Studije iz starije umjetnosti na Jadranu*, III, Split, Književni krug, 2020, pp. 60 – 64, for colour plates see p. 219 ff.

21 SPECVLO SINE MACVLA / LILIO INTER SPINAS SPINIS INNOXIO / DEIPARAE VIRGINI / ABSQV ORIGINALI NOTA CONCEPTE / SACRUM, see Tomić, *Znakovi identiteta*, p. 332.

22 The architrave is also topped at the sides by the figures of St. John the Evangelist and St. Vincent Ferrer, as the name-saints of the patrons, Ivan (John) and his wife Vinka (Vincenza).

image of the Immaculate Virgin (principal saints of the Order are given a prominent position in the composition) and the ancient ritual of unveiling the image (the protagonist of the retable's programme). The marble curtains, although always »open«, underline that the image is offered to the faithful for veneration only upon the textile by which the image is protected as the most precious relic is lifted. The unveiling of the image was, however, the initial step of the ceremonial staging; upon removing the curtain, the image is adored by the saintly figures while being carried upwards by angels.

A comparable interplay of frames, fictive curtains and the ritualisation of the veneration encoded in the altar design is that of Our Lady of the Reef, just off the coast of Perast (the religious image was briefly already mentioned in the context of painted textiles behind the saintly figures). According to the recent reading of the religious and political circumstances of the image's veneration, the roots of the upheaval of its cult was the »political aspiration of the citizens of Perast to consolidate their dominion over the broader territory«.[23] The panel is said to have miraculously arrived by sea from Negropontes and stranded on the rock on which the church honouring the Virgin was later built. However, the image's stylistic traits argue that it was created by a mid-fifteenth-century painter active in Kotor and Dubrovnik, but the question of authorship remains open.[24] All the same, the miraculous image generated a significant cult among the local population, which is why the object witnessed several Early Modern »reframings«.[25] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the new altar for the image was commissioned in Venice but was replaced less than eighty years later by a different one. The first altar retable featured yellowish marble curtains raised by a group of angels, whereas the image was encased in a slender dark-green frame. The following retable, commissioned in 1796 (fig. 4), the one in which the image remains to be venerated to this day, gives less attention to the curtains and the unveiling of the image; it is topped by the textile canopy, one of the most common elements of ephemeral apparatuses of Baroque altars. The second retable emphasises lifting the image to the heavens and carries additional motifs of Marian iconography, such as gilded flowers at the margins.

By the time the second altar was commissioned, the image of Our Lady of the Reef had been covered by a silver revetment, leaving, according to the custom, only the faces of the Virgin and Child Christ visible, as shown on the *folio volante* by Innocente Alessandri, distributed to spread the word of the venerated image from the Bay of Kotor and to instigate much broader devotion to it (fig. 5).[26] In such a way, the original painted fabric, both behind the holy figures (red with the ermine border) and their draperies, was obscured. This, along with the exclusion of the elegant marble curtains from the first altar and the introduction of a simple textile baldachin on the top of the altar composition, could attest to the fact that the importance of textiles in the design of altars for the Dalmatian *imagines antiquae* gradually diminished by the end of the eighteenth century, yet further instances must be considered to corroborate this hypothesis.

In view of suggestions regarding the multiple significances of the curtain frames, it is necessary to stress that not all medieval images venerated in Early Modern Dalmatia were framed in this way. For instance, the main altar of the Šibenik cathedral, installed ca. 1645, was erected to treasure the

23 S. Brajović and M. Ulčar, ›Legends, Images and Miracles of the Virgin Mary in the Bay of Kotor in Early Modern Period‹, *IKON*, vol. 10, 2017, pp. 149 – 158.
24 I. Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom. O majstoru Lovru iz Kotora i slikarstvu na prostoru od Dubrovnika do Kotora tijekom druge polovice XV. stoljeća*, Dubrovnik, Matica hrvatska – Ogranak Dubrovnik, 2013, p. 112.
25 S. Brajović and M. Ulčar, ›Silver Covers, Iron Grids and Sensory Experience. Simultaneousness of Iconoclastic and Iconophilic Nature of Veneration in the Early Modern Bay of Kotor‹, *IKON*, vol. 11, 2018, pp. 83 – 92; Tomić, *Znakovi identiteta*, pp. 354 – 355.
26 Tomić, *Znakovi identiteta*, pp. 354 – 355.

Fig. 5 Innocente Alessandri, Our Lady of the Reef (Gospa of Škrpjela), folio volante, 1708, private collection, Split.

older image of the Virgin and Child, lifted by angels and worshipped by St. James and St. Roch at the lower sides. The image, unambitious in style and execution, is arguably a late fifteenth-century work by a local painter. The panel was originally placed above the eastern city gates (and, therefore, was not veiled as would have been the case if the object had been placed in one of the city's churches or in a domestic space). The image proved miraculous when it shed tears in April of 1635, some hundred and fifty years after its creation. For this reason, the image was taken off the gate and closely examined by church authorities, who, upon au-

thenticating the miracle, decided to enshrine the prodigious image on the cathedral's main altar.[27]

Given that the image continued to weep, a new altar was commissioned, which provided a more fitting setting for the meagre painting in the middle of the raised presbytery of the Renaissance cathedral of Šibenik. The altar retable commissioned in the following years (among the biggest ones in the region and ordered for the most extraordinary church, a cathedral) does not feature marble curtains. For what reason – keeping in mind other instances of new retables erected to treasure older images – were curtains omitted in this case? Is it perhaps because the Šibenik's weeping Virgin – initially exhibited above the gate to the city, and thus permanently visible to all entering the town and seeking Mary's protection – was never closed off by curtains and unveiled at precise moments (for there was no mass celebrated before it)? Although this working hypothesis is seductive and perhaps stimulative, it is impossible to prove given the present state of the research. The reasoning, indeed, could also have been more prosaic. The altar's design was occasionally left entirely to the master of the workshop from which it was commissioned. In addition, curtain frames on Dalmatian retables were more frequent from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, so their omission in the Šibenik cathedral could also be due to the early date of the commission.[28]

***

The skilfully chiselled curtain frames can be percieved as metaphorical analogies of textile curtains, used as historical accessories of medieval images – either small-scale panels in domestic settings or larger polyptychs on church altars. By examining their apparent connotations for the reframing, staging and reception of older medieval panels of the Virgin and Child, one cannot overestimate the significance of the network of temporal references within the retables. The stylistic rendition of the panels harked back to Byzantine prototypes, which became highly revered in the post-Tridentine period. The curtains were a visual trope deployed on numerous retables (as is routinely described in scholarly literature, and rightly so). Nevertheless, this paper has argued that – when observed in the light of the religious ritual of (un)veiling religious images – the curtains, now with a different materiality, conceivably held a richer meaning in relation to *imagines antique* cherished on altar retables. They, too, pointed to bygone times, conjuring the medieval ritual of concealing religious images with curtains and unfolding them at the most critical moments of the liturgical calendar.[29] Therefore, any scrutiny of the altar retables for *imagines antiquae* and their marble curtain frames must consider both the miraculous accounts of the medieval panels of the Virgin, the implications of the motif of curtain frames and the artistic context of the newly-commissioned altar retables. Only thusly can one grasp that not only images had afterlives, but also the curtains which underwent a material change – from textile to stone – retaining, however, the ritual they embodied for centuries of Christian worship of religious images.

Figure Credits
Fig. 1, 3, 4 and 5: photo Paolo Mofardin, Institute of Art History, Zagreb; Fig. 2: photo Mario Pintarić.

27 K. Stošić, *Gospa od Plača u Šibenskoj katedrali, 1635. – 1935.*, Šibenik, Biskupska kurija Šibenik, 1935, pp. 2 – 5.
28 This seems to be corroborated by another retable for an *imago antiqua* in the Franciscan church in Šibenik, carved in wood by Issepo Ridolfi by the 1638, when it was gilded by a local painter, see D. Premerl, ›Ranobarokni drveni oltari u Crkvi sv. Frane u Šibeniku – podrijetlo arhitekturnog tipa i pitanje Mondellina autorstva‹, *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, vol. 29, 2005, pp. 146, 151.
29 See the discussion on the »visual expression of the nonlinear nature of sacred time«, Noreen, ›Time, Space, and Devotion‹, pp. 907, 910.

Bibliography

Amador, P. F. et al., ›The Crucified Christ of Lopud, Croatia. A Unique Early Import of Mexican Polychromed Sculpture Made of Maize Stalks‹, *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2018, pp. 5 – 22.

Belamarić, J., ›Svijećnjaci zadarskih majstora Mateja i Aristodija i dosad nepoznati fragmenti srednjovjekovnog tekstila iz splitske katedrale‹, in J. Belamarić, *Studije iz starije umjetnosti na Jadranu*, III, Split, Književni krug, 2020, pp. 49 – 85.

Bergmann, U., ›Reframing mittelalterlicher Skulpturen: Verschönerung, Umnutzung, Neuinterpretation?‹, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2017, pp. 273 – 291.

Brajović, S. and Ulčar, M., ›Legends, Images and Miracles of the Virgin Mary in the Bay of Kotor in Early Modern Period‹, *IKON*, vol. 10, 2017, pp. 149 – 158.

Brajović, S. and Ulčar, M., ›Silver Covers, Iron Grids and Sensory Experience. Simultaneousness of Iconoclastic and Iconophilic Nature of Veneration in the Early Modern Bay of Kotor‹, *IKON*, vol. 11, 2018, pp. 83 – 92.

Čapeta Rakić, I., ›La visione del frate Domenicano Lorenzo dalla Grotteria e gli echi dell'iconografia del miracolo di Soriano in Dalmazia‹, *IKON*, vol. 6, 2013, pp. 199 – 212.

Demori Staničić, Z., *Javni kultovi ikona u Dalmaciji*, Split – Zagreb, Književni krug – Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, 2017.

Drandaki, A., ›A Maniera Greca: content, context, and transformation of a term‹, *Studies in Iconography*, vol. 35, 2014, pp. 39 – 72.

Gebhardt, J., ›The Crucifix in the Santuario Santissimo Crocifisso alla Collegiata in Monreale: The Unveiling of a Cult Image in Post-Tridentine Sicily‹, in I. Foletti, M. Gianandrea, S. Romano and E. Scirocco (eds.), *Re-thinking, Re-making, Re-living Christian Origins*, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 147 – 164.

Lehner, U. L., *The Inner Life of Catholic Reform: From the Council of Trent to the Enlightenment*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022.

Luccherini, V., ›Introduzione. Sulla rifunzionalizzazione postmedievale delle immagini sacre medievali‹, in V. Luccherini (ed.), *Immagini medievali di culto dopo il Medioevo*, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 7 – 18.

Marušić, M. M., ›Hereditary Ecclesiae and Domestic Ecclesiolae in Medieval Ragusa (Dubrovnik)‹, *Religions*, vol. 11, no. 7, 2020, pp. 1 – 14.

Matulić Bilač, Ž., ›Splitska romanička ikona Gospe of Žnjana: analitička mapa srednjovjekovnog slikarstva u Dalmaciji‹, *Portal*, vol. 13, 2022, pp. 21 – 41.

Nagel, A. and Wood, C. S., *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York, Zone Books, 2010.

Noreen, K., ›Time, Space, and Devotion: The Madonna della Clemenza and the Cappella Altemps in Rome‹, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2016, pp. 883 – 914.

Nova, A., ›Hangings, curtains, and shutters of sixteenth-century Lombard altarpieces‹, in E. Borsook, F. Gioffredi Superbi (eds.), *Italian altarpieces 1250 – 1550. Function and design*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 177 – 189.

Papastavrou, E., ›Il tema della Natività sul timpano di Maestro Radovan nel portale occidentale della cattedrale di Traù (Trogir)‹, *Thesaurismata*, vol. 22, 1992, pp. 9 – 28.

Premerl, D., ›Ranobarokni drveni oltari u Crkvi sv. Frane u Šibeniku – podrijetlo arhitekturnog tipa i pitanje Mondellina autorstva‹, *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, vol. 29, 2005, pp. 137 – 56.

Prijatelj Pavičić, I., *U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom. O majstoru Lovru iz Kotora i slikarstvu na prostoru od Dubrovnika do Kotora tijekom druge polovice XV. stoljeća*, Dubrovnik, Matica hrvatska – Ogranak Dubrovnik, 2013.

Schmidt, V. M., ›Curtains, Revelatio, and Pictorial Reality in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy‹, in K. M. Rudy and B. Baert (eds.), *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, pp. 191 – 213.

Stošić, K., *Gospa od Plača u Šibenskoj katedrali, 1635. – 1935.*, Šibenik, Biskupska kurija Šibenik, 1935.

Tomić, R., *Barokni oltari i skulptura u Dalmaciji*, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 1995.

Tomić, R., *Znakovi identiteta: sveci zaštitnici u umjetnosti 17. i 18. stoljeća u Dalmaciji, Boki kotorskoj i Dubrovačkoj Republici*, Split – Zagreb, Književni krug – Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2021.

Vikan, G., ›Sacred Image, Sacred Power‹, in E. R. Hoffman (ed.), *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp. 135 – 146.

Voulgaropoulou, M., ›From Domestic Devotion to the Church Altar: Venerating Icons in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Adriatic‹, *Religions*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2019, pp. 1 – 41.

Wilkins, D. G., ›Opening the Doors to Devotion: Trecento Triptychs and Suggestions Concerning Images and Domestic Practice in Florence‹, *Studies in the History of Art*, vol. 61, 2002, pp. 370 – 393.

Fig. 1 Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna.

Acoustic Staging at the Chrysotriklinos

Friederike Kranig

> Activities which are different happen in a time which is a space: [They] are each central, original. The emotions – love, mirth, the heroic, wonder, tranquillity, fear, anger, sorrow, disgust – are in the audience.
> *John Cage, Silence*[1]

With reference to acoustics, John Cage uses these words to describe a conception of music whose basic features are recognisable in Late Antiquity. Through music, already existing emotions can be conducted or even indoctrinated. Music as a temporal process cannot be grasped as a haptic item. Instead, it fills a space or an environment, and invades the body using sound waves. Thus, it is not perceived through ears only, but rather through the entire human organism and its emotions. As Late Antique church fathers had already recognised, music can influence its listener in this way both positively and negatively.[2] This un- and subconscious process is intensified by concealing the cause, in this case the source of the sound. In so doing, the music completely loses its objectivity, making a reflective and critical investigation almost impossible. Such a concealment of music can also be observed for the Byzantine period during imperial staging. Curtains are used in this context as a separating element since they are the only things capable of creating a visual but not an acoustic barrier. Moreover, the curtain creates a sense of mystery of what lies behind. In this way, it becomes the perfect instrument of imperial propaganda.

The Material: Introducing the Storylines

Prologue: Music Behind the Curtain

Curtains, in a wide variety of shapes and colours, are a frequently encountered element of ephemeral and mobile room interiors in Late Antiquity. They are primarily able to control our visual perception of the room, whether by intentionally separating parts of the room from view or by moderating the lighting. However, their influence on sensual perception is not limited to visual effects. They also influence the acoustic quality of a room; for example, by absorbing sound waves, they reduce the reverberation time. This effect is created by almost all objects in a room, but especially by (thicker) materials such as textiles, (wall) carpets or curtains. How much a sound is affected depends on a variety of factors. Among others, the type and

1 J. Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1961, p. 97.
2 Cf. Ref. 20.

placement play a decisive role. Unlike a tapestry, a curtain implies that something lies beyond. In so doing, the translucency of such a curtain barrier is strongly dependent on the type of material chosen. It should be mentioned that impact and applications of curtains go far beyond their use as a visual barrier. However, the curtain as a decorative element separating the room will be the main focus of this work.

A closed curtain creates a visual barrier. However, the separation of space is not necessarily a permanent condition. It can be dissolved at any moment by opening the curtain. This *visual experience* mystifies what lies behind it. It tells the viewer that something is invisible yet close, hidden from sight but still in the same space and almost tangible. The main questions of this article arise from the examination of the curtain on a visual level:

1. What effect does a curtain have on the acoustics of a room?
2. Is the curtain used to stage the acoustics of a room or rather, how is the relationship between curtains and acoustics?

To answer these questions, it seemed necessary to separate the two factors »acoustics« and »curtains«, including their installation. The first part is devoted to the human perception in general, as well as to the appreciation and perception of music in Late Antiquity. In the second part, a setting in the Great Palace is explained. It is based on a case study, an example from the book of ceremonies. The combination of curtains and acoustics utilised is discussed in third part.

As an introduction, a more contemporary example will serve to connect music and curtains and thus provide valuable impulses for the following analyses.

Curtain up!

Impact and Applications of a Curtain by the Example of Cavalleria Rusticana

The issue of acoustic staging by means of curtains in the Chrysotriklinos of the Great Palace in Constantinople is problematic in many respects. Due to the lack of archaeological evidence, statements concerning the appearance of the Chrysotriklinos can only be made with reservations. Likewise, little is known about the use of curtains in Late Antiquity. For an initial classification of acoustic effects that can be caused by curtains, a more contemporary example is suitable to avoid the difficult situation of sources and to concentrate on the two main factors, namely acoustics and curtains. The chosen example comes from the field of musical theatre since the emotional bond between actor or action and the audience brings the psychological effects of perception more into focus.

The opera Cavalleria Rusticana by Pietro Mascagni first opened in 1890. The story is based on the novella by the same name, respectively the play by Giovanni Verga. The novella was published in 1880 and the play was first presented in this form in 1884.[3]

While in the novella and the play, the idea of revenge is still central and strongly influences the characters, in the opera it is almost completely replaced by love, jealousy and the suffering that ensues. The down on his luck main character is in love with the wealthy Lola. Before Turiddu's military service, they had a romantic relationship. When he returns to his village after a two-year

3 S. Boselli, ›The Intertextual Short Play: An Example Using Verga's Cavalleria rusticana and Capuana's Il piccolo archivio‹, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 126, 2011, p. 58. The opera is of the verismo style. This is a style of Italian opera that enjoyed great popularity around 1900. A characteristic feature is the realistic and tragic plot, which is embedded in the life of a low-class social environment. See A. Rüth, ›Von sizilianischer Archaik zu modernistischer Ästhetik. Aktualisierungen der Cavalleria Rusticana bei Verga, Mascagni und Coppola‹, *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2016, p. 126.

absence, his former love is engaged to the rich peasant Alfio. The jealous Turiddu therefore seduces Santuzza, who comes from a poor background, to in turn make Lola jealous. The plan is successful and the love between Lola and Turiddu flares up once more; much to the misfortune of Santuzza, who now appears in the opera as the personified victim.[4]

In a weak moment, the aggrieved Santuzza reveals her knowledge of Turiddu and Lola's relationship to the latter's fiancé Alfio, thus sealing the outcome of the story and its tragic end.

While the events depicted in the novella extend over a period of several weeks, the time frame depicted in the opera is considerably shorter. The love story between Lola and Turiddu, the source of all evil, is presented to the audience in a kind of prologue with the curtain closed and thus preceded to the main storyline.[5] At this point, the curtain functions as both a visual and an acoustic barrier. But it is not only the stage space that is separated from the audience, but also the current action from the main plot. The action that takes place when the curtain is closed is not perceived as a part of the opera, but as a prologue. The curtain therefore is not only a visible but also an acoustic barrier between the singer and the audience, making the voice quieter and thus seemingly more distant. This apparent spatial distance also generates a temporal distance. Different dimensions are created, different levels that are initially separated by a curtain and then brought together with its opening.

Visual and acoustic effects are linked throughout the play by the use of the curtain. In the opera, two groups of effects can be distinguished: One group consists of purely physical effects, the other of effects that are based primarily on the psychology of perception. Both groups cannot be strictly separated from each other but rather merge smoothly.

Sound absorption by textiles and the associated volume modulation is primarily a physical effect, but when used appropriately, as in the opera, it also has an impact on the psychology of perception.

The group of perceptual-psychological effects includes audio-visual staging, which deals with the question of the intention of installation of a curtain in connection with sounds. What was the interest in concealing the sound sources? By playing with visibility and invisibility, the curtain gains a mysterious or surprising character. By hearing the invisible, the listener is misled because he cannot grasp the location of the sound source.

In so doing, different dimensions can arise in space. It must be decided individually whether this is a purely spatial dimension or one that is inherent in a social or temporal moment. In Cavalleria Rusticana, the curtain separates one part of the action from the other. It creates a prologue and thus a temporal distance. In concealing the stage, it causes a visual separation and thus reinforces the distance to what is behind it. This spatial distance is further reinforced by its acoustic effect of sound absorption. Conversely, a certain closeness is generated by the music. Although the sounds are heard from a distance, they nevertheless reach the ear of the listener, which means they are remarkably close to him. Through the music and the sung word, the listener is emotionally involved in what is happening behind the curtain, despite a particular distance.[6]

4 She is not only the cheated woman but also in no way well situated, a difference to her prototype, Santa from the novella by the same title. More detailed, including further references i. a. Rüth, ›Von sizilianischer Archaik zu modernistischer Ästhetik‹, p. 131.
5 Even the love affair between Santuzza and Turiddu, which leads to the tragic ending of the story, is not staged in concrete terms, but is recounted in retrospect by the aggrieved Santuzza herself. Cf. Rüth, ›Von sizilianischer Archaik zu modernistischer Ästhetik‹, p. 133.
6 According to Ester Saletta »… a successful production always aims to achieve a concrete, participatory and empathetic effect on the audience. There is no real theatre if there is no empathetic participation of the audience« (E. Saletta, ›Unter dem Zeichen der Theaterdigitalisierung. Bergamo und sein Donizetti-theater: Das Beispiel der neuen Kulturvision einer norditalienischen

Even though optical and acoustic perception are connected, they function on different levels. To understand the effect of the curtain on acoustics or on the perception of acoustics, it is necessary to have a look at the characteristics of human perception.[7]

Perception and Experience Through the Curtain: Visual, Acoustic and Musical Experience

Art and related experiences are closely linked to human perception. They depend on the senses they use. A picture wants to be seen, music on the other hand wants to be heard.

Visual perception and thus *visual experience* are primarily related to an object. However, the object does not function completely autonomously, but is at least partially dependent on its environment and/or time. A chair one saw yesterday is of course the same today as it will be tomorrow. The same also applies to a curtain in the room that has not been moved. But if the environment of the object changes, for example, if it becomes brighter or darker, the same object evokes different visual stimuli in its observer. A changing experience of the same observer may also be relevant in this context. However, a visual stimulus is always associated with an object triggering it. The triggered visual stimuli are in turn attributed to this object as properties. For example, door curtains would be described as hanging, made of wool, heavy and blue.[8]

The *acoustic experience* works differently. Acoustic stimuli triggered by an object are only attributed to it to a limited extent. A sound made by a curtain when opened may be heard as a rustling or rushing sound; but not as an inherent property of the curtain. Beating a stick on a metal object will be interpreted as a loud banging or clattering sound. However, the noise does not become a property of the causer (in this case the stick or the metal).[9]

The *acoustic experience* is furthermore a twofold event: One is the perception of sound through the listener's body, while the other involves the listener's localisation of the sound source in the room. Both happen in relation to each other and simultaneously. The characteristics of sound and thus of the *acoustic experience* can be described by the concept of »distant proximity«.[10] The event or the object triggering the sound is in the distance or not in the immediate vicinity of the listener. The sound, however, overcomes this distance between the subject, i. e. the listener, and the object, i. e. the sound source. The impression of proximity is established.[11]

Although *musical experience* seems to function primarily through the aural perception, there are differences between listening to a simple noise, i. e. the *acoustic experience*, and listening to music, i. e. the *musical experience* being described here. In the course of scientific examination of music, it is understood as a structure, or an object that needs to be investigated. As a researcher, the observer has a differentiated relationship with music as an object. He grasps, understands, and evaluates.[12] In the reality of a *musical experience*, however, the individual is not opposite any musical object, but is rather a part of it. The perception of music only primarily happens through the aural sense. The question arises as to which other senses or sensa-

Provinzstadt in Zeiten der Corona-Pandemie‹, in D. Pietzcker and C. Vaih-Baur (eds.), *Neue Wege für die Kultur? Kommunikationsstrategien und -formate im internationalen Kultursektor*, Wiesbaden, Springer Gabler, 2023, p. 5. Transl. by F. Kranig).

7 C. Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug. Zur Theorie der musikalischen Erfahrung‹, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2001, pp. 317 – 336.

8 Pursuant to the English philosopher Roger Scroton. C. Koopman gives the example of a heavy iron ball, the visual stimuli it triggers and the associated properties of the ball, see Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, p. 328.

9 Using the example of an iron ball again, Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, p. 328.

10 Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, pp. 326 – 328.

11 The aspect of distant proximity and the properties of sound and its perception are summarised in Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, pp. 317, 318, 323 – 327.

12 Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, pp. 200, 317, 318.

tions are triggered in the audience by music? This physical participation, which is manifested in a feeling[13] that cannot be defined further, is based on the »visualization of the tendency of the tones«.[14]

The music or the piece of music as a sequence of time can never be captured in its entity. Only a small part of it is present at the time of hearing: That which was heard shortly before, that heard now, and an anticipation based on experience of what will be heard in the immediate future. The mentioned experience is based on familiar, so to say, aural patterns, which have been shaped by the prevailing musical tradition of a particular place at a particular time.[15] Music as an ongoing continuity thus becomes a holistic experience, in whose subjective experience not only the sense of hearing but the entire organism is involved. It causes a wide variety of stimuli that extend the acoustic one and is thus perceived as something very close »to us« or »in us«.[16]

The aspect of ›distant proximity‹, as described earlier regarding *acoustic experience*, is dissolved during a *musical experience.* The aspect of distance recedes into the background or is almost neutralized by the aspect of proximity.

Musical Propaganda in Late Antiquity

What influence does music have on the human mind and the subsequent mindset or behaviour? The field of music psychology has been dealing with this question since the early 1970 s. Researchers therefore have a rather broad spectrum of diverse studies and experimental data, which can be elaborated on, at their disposal. There is a broad consensus regarding the fact THAT music influences human action, but there is still uncertainty about how and to what extent.[17]

Of course, today's discussion concerning the influence by music cannot be transferred directly to Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, there are certain parallels in terms of the musical perception. While theoretical tracts on notation, form and structure constituted the focus of the scientific examination of music in the Middle Ages, the Late Antique approach was different. It is less a matter of creating a set of rules for performing music, but rather an attempt at understanding the essence of music.[18]

In the *de institutione musica*[19], Boethius classifies three different types of music: The *musica mundana* is like *music of spheres* or the *harmony of the heavenly bodies*, which had been described centuries prior by Pythagoras. But unlike according to Pythagoras, this celestial music is not created by some superordinate power but con-

13 The ›feelings‹ triggered by music are very diverse. They are not measurable or to be evaluated objectively. They are always of a completely subjective nature.

14 Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, p. 328.

15 Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, pp. 317 – 336.

16 Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, p. 328.

17 For further publications, cf. e. g., K. E. Behne, Zu einer Theorie der Wirkungslosigkeit von (Hintergrund-)Musik, in K. E. Behne, G. Kleinen, and H. de la Motte-Haber (eds.), *Wahrnehmung und Rezeption,* Musikpsychologie. Jahrbuch der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Musikpsychologie 14, Göttingen, Hogrefe, 1999, pp. 7 – 23.

18 J. Mc Kinnon, ›Christian Antiquity‹, in J. Mc Kinnon (eds.), *Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Man & Music*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990, p. 85.

19 *Boeth., Inst. mus.*, pp. 175 – 371; Cf. also A. Heilmann, *Boethius' Musiktheorie und das Quadrivium. Eine Einführung in den neuplatonischen Hintergrund von »De institutione musica«*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007, 2007, pp. 203 – 222.

trolled by someone and, thus, a defined divine power.[20]

The concept of heavenly and earthly music is also noticeable in the writings of Late Antique church fathers like Eusebius of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, or Augustine of Hippo. Man is understood as the instrument of God[21] since the ability to sing is God-given.[22] Music also has another benefit. When used in the right way, it can contribute to strengthening or consolidating mind and will. Of course, any *right* always implies a *wrong*. In general, vocal music was considered to be good. As an instrument of God, man can thus become part of the heavenly choirs.[23] Instrumental music is classified as being highly questionable. It is associated with reprehensible activities of theatre people, moral decay, and even the devil.[24] However, music is not only used for strengthening or weakening one's spirit but serves as a thought support and learning aid. Using music, it is possible to anchor ideas in people's minds without them noticing. One may also think back to the *musical experience*, which describes music as something »very close«, something »within us«.[25]

Already in Late Antiquity, Christians recognized the utility and quality of music as a medium. Although the use of music first had to be translated from pagan customs to Christian usage, it could then be used unconditionally as a language of its own, or »as a medium of transnational identity.«[26] Music also created cohesion among Christians around the world and distinguished them from people of other faiths. It creates not only a stronger congregational bond but also a powerful external projection and attractiveness to those who are not baptized.[27]

The Scene: Stage and Stage Setting

Introducing the Program

Like staging a play, the staging of imperial power follows certain rules. Staging is the public, often artistically designed display of a thing or theme. The item of the staging is the ruler himself. The ceremonial script of the Byzantine Empire is given by the ceremonial book of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. The stage or backdrop is provided

20 *Boeth., Inst. mus.*, pp. 189 – 198; Cf. Heilmann, *Boethius' Musiktheorie und das Quadrivium. Eine Einführung in den neuplatonischen Hintergrund von »De institutione musica«*, 2007, pp. 245 – 247; Also M. Markovitz, *Die Orgel im Altertum*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 329. In addition to further information on the source situation and edition, he provides exemplary text passages, their evaluation and analysis, including further publications; On the philosophical thought of music found in Boethius, cf. D. S. Chamberlain, ›Philosophy of Music in the Consolatio of Boethius‹, *Speculum*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1970, pp. 80 – 97.

21 In *Eus., Verbo Dei*, 14.4 Eusebius of Caesarea (for example) had already established the concept of man as an instrument of God. For this in detail, see J. Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter. Untersuchungen zu Laktanz, Euseb, Chrysostomos und Augustinus*, Wiesbaden, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 117 – 137; Chrysostom discusses the influence of music on the human psyche and distinguishes between good (divine) and bad (earthly) music. Cf. exemplary on music as a medium of infatuation and enchantment for its listeners Joh. Chr., De stat. 4.4: »Aber fürchte Nichts! Denn je weiter der Feind seine Hinterlist treibt, desto mehr deckt er die Herzhaftigkeit der Jünglinge auf; denn deßhalb erschallt so laute Musik, deßwegen steht der Ofen in Brand, damit sowohl Freude als Furcht der Anwesenden Seelen belagere. Ist Jemand unter den Anwesenden gallsüchtig und hartnäckig? Es sänftigte ihn, spricht er (der König), die bezaubernde Macht der volltönenden Musik! Ist Jemand über diese Nachstellung erhaben? Es schrecke und schlage ihn der Anblick der Flamme darnieder! Und es war Furcht wie Freude: diese drang durch die Ohren, jene durch die Augen in die Seele.« For further information on the power of music in the work of Chrysostom, cf. Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter*, 2019, pp. 159 – 214.

22 Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter*, pp. 317 – 321.

23 Cf. also Ref. 20; See also Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter*, p. 136.

24 Cf. also Ref. 20; See also Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter*, pp. 212 – 214, 314 – 320.

25 Koopman, ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug‹, p. 328.

26 Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter*, p. 317.

27 Singing hymns was reserved for baptized Christians, who, in this way, could catch a glimpse of heaven or of the heavenly choirs, see Günther, *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter*, pp. 314 – 315.

by the Great Palace in Constantinople, for which we have insufficient archaeological evidence.[28] But other important clues are provided by written and pictorial sources, which can be used to identify the various buildings and at least partially reconstruct their position in relation to one another.[29] However, not only the architectural design of the stage, but also the stage setting, i. e. the furnishings and organization of the interior, remain unexplained. Only conjectures can be made and compared.[30] Thanks to the ceremonial book, we are informed about movable inventory such as furniture – including thrones, instruments, and sound machines – and even curtains. However, their exact placement, orientation, or attachment is still disputed.

While today the Ceremonial Book serves as one of the most important sources regarding the architecture and design of the Great Palace, it was certainly not written to give outsiders an idea of the place. Rather, it was created for a community well familiar with the palace and its associated spaces.[31] For this reason, detailed descriptions of the architecture, interior design and decoration are missing. More important, however, was keeping a record of the events and actions, i. e. the ceremonial setting, which had to take place in a particular way on a specific occasion. The ceremonial book thus primarily provides the plot or the action, as

28 Since large parts of the former palace district are now overbuilt, only very few remains have been recovered as of yet. These include the palace mosaic, which was excavated by a cooperation project lead by the University of Ankara and St. Andrews University, Scotland, in two campaigns between 1935 and 1954. It is located on the backside of the Blue Mosque. Based on small finds, it has been dated to the first half of the 6th c. AD. In detail Ö. Terziglu, *Great Palace Mosaic Muzeum*, Istanbul, BKG, 2014, pp. 4 – 6, 84 – 85. Summarised among other things in S. Yerasimos, *Konstantinopel. Istanbuls historisches Erbe*, Paris, Tandem Verlag GmbH, 2000, pp. 63 – 65; F. A. Bauer, ›Einführung‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 1 – 4. In detail on the archaeological findings and records that could be attributed to the Great Palace, incl. plans and a summary of the respective excavation results, see N. Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople. An Architectural Interpretation*, Amsterdam, Brepols, 2016, esp. pp. 181 – 267.

29 A reconstruction of individual buildings is still difficult since the available findings and sources allow for very different ground and elevation possibilities. Early pictorial sources have recently been compiled in the context of the anthology »Die byzantinischen Häfen in Konstantinopel« by A. Effenberger, see A. Effenberger, ›Konstantinopel/Istanbul – Die frühen bildlichen Zeugnisse‹, in F. Daim (eds.), *Die byzantinischen Häfen Konstantinopels*, Mainz on the Rhine, Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2016, pp. 19 – 34. N. Westbrook deals in great detail with the Ceremonial Book and evaluates it regarding its significance for the architecture of the palace: Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 51 – 180. See also J. Bardill, ›Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople. Archaeology, Text, and Topography‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 5 – 46; J. M. Featherstone, › The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 47 – 62; and P. Schreiner, ›Zu Gast in den Kaiserpalästen Konstantinopels. Architektur und Topographie in der Sicht fremdländischer Betrachter‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 101 – 134.

30 Effenberger, ›Konstantinopel/Istanbul – Die frühen bildlichen Zeugnisse‹, pp. 19 – 34; Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 51 – 180; Bardill, ›Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople. Archaeology, Text, and Topography‹, pp. 5 – 46; J. M. Featherstone, › The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 47 – 62; Schreiner, ›Zu Gast in den Kaiserpalästen Konstantinopels. Architektur und Topographie in der Sicht fremdländischer Betrachter‹, pp. 101 – 134; also Bauer, ›Einführung‹, pp. 1 – 4. Exemplary for this problem is the discussion between Albrecht Berger (A. Berger, ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells. Gesang, Orgelspiel und Automaten‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 72 – 73) and Franz Alto Bauer (F. A. Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz. Geschenke im Rahmen des byzantinischen Kaiserzeremoniells‹, F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 151 – 164) regarding the design and establishment of the Magna Aura.

31 Cf. Effenberger, ›Konstantinopel/Istanbul – Die frühen bildlichen Zeugnisse‹, pp. 19 – 34; Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 51 – 180; Bardill, ›Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople. Archaeology, Text, and Topography‹, pp. 5 – 46; Featherstone, › The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 47 – 62; Schreiner, ›Zu Gast in den Kaiserpalästen Konstantinopels. Architektur und Topographie in der Sicht fremdländischer Betrachter‹, pp. 101 – 134; Berger, ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells. Gesang, Orgelspiel und Automaten‹, pp. 72 – 73; Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, pp. 151 – 164; especially Bauer, ›Einführung‹, pp. 1 – 4.

well as the type of staging. The ceremony to be performed was strictly controlled by the Byzantine Imperial court.

The Plot: A Delegation in the Imperial Palace

Both curtains and music or acoustic signals play a central role in Byzantine court ceremonies.[32] While they often occur in combination with each other, they are at no time causally related. A curtain is placed *and* Music is played. But a curtain is never placed *because* music is playing. Although never explicitly written, it can be assumed, based on the enormous number of texts regarding both curtains and music, that curtains were also used to set the stage for music, or rather to colour the overall soundscape of a room in a particular way.

Often, these are merely enumerations of the actors or objects appearing in a room on a particular event and, as such, serve primarily to demonstrate power and wealth. But some passages also reveal a much deeper intention regarding the use of music and curtains. The deliberate application of fabrics and textiles to control the acoustic atmosphere of a room is illustrated by an example: the reception of a delegation of the Emir of Tarsos under Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos.[33]

The depiction of the actual reception is preceded by an extremely detailed description of prearrangements. They include, first and foremost, the decoration of the palace with the most magnificent materials and objects, taken from other premises, such as the Chrysotriklinos, the Nea Ekklesia or the Church of Saint Mary of Blachernae. The passage is also accompanied by precise details about the line-up and dress of the imperial entourage, as well as a list of the actors in attendance.[34] Among these are the choirs of Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Apostles, as well as the golden and silver organs provided in the Magna Aura and the Chrysotriklinos.

The Magna Aura is the starting point of the event and serves as the stage of an ostentatious state reception. Already at this point, different chants performed by the two choirs are mentioned. Curtains are not documented in this context. The choirs are therefore visible and can be heard at full volume. An acoustically pompous experience, fitting for the official reception.[35]

The banquet at the Chrysotriklinos completes the carefully arranged presentation, which sends the Saracens from the Magna Aura through a magnificently decorated palace. An arc of suspense is built up, which reaches its highpoint in the Justinianos through appropriate waiting times and the fitting out with new robes. The subsequent banquet in the presence of the emperor follows a thoroughly planned out sequence of events.

The Stage: The Chrysotriklinos

The stage is the room itself, whose architecture and interior decoration can be deduced, at least in part, from the information contained in the ceremonial book. According to this, it was a domed central building. Similar to the church of Sergios and Bacchos (fig. 2), the dome spans an octagonal structure.[36]

---

32 Berger, ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells‹, pp. 64 – 69.

33 The necessity exists due to ongoing wars between Byzantines and Arabs in Cilicia, among other places. Summarised by Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 155. Furthermore see F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, ›Kilikien und Isaurien‹, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, vol. 5, 1990, pp. 430 – 431.

34 Cf. Cer. II 15, pp. 570 – 822.

35 Cer. II 15, pp. 576 – 578.

36 The 16 windows of the dome also indicate that its construction is similar to that of the church of Sergios and Bacchos. The latter consists of 16 segments whose shape alternates: »Acht von ihnen, die jeweils über den Scheitelpunkten der acht großen Bögen liegen und dort von einer großen Fensteröffnung durchbrochen werden, sind nur in einer Richtung gekrümmt; sie können mit anderen Worten als Ausschnitte der Oberfläche eines ellipsoiden Halbzylinders beschrieben werden. Zwischen ihnen und damit über den acht Pfeilern bzw. über den Ecken des Oktogons liegen acht andere Elemente, die zusätzlich auch in sich selbst, also quer

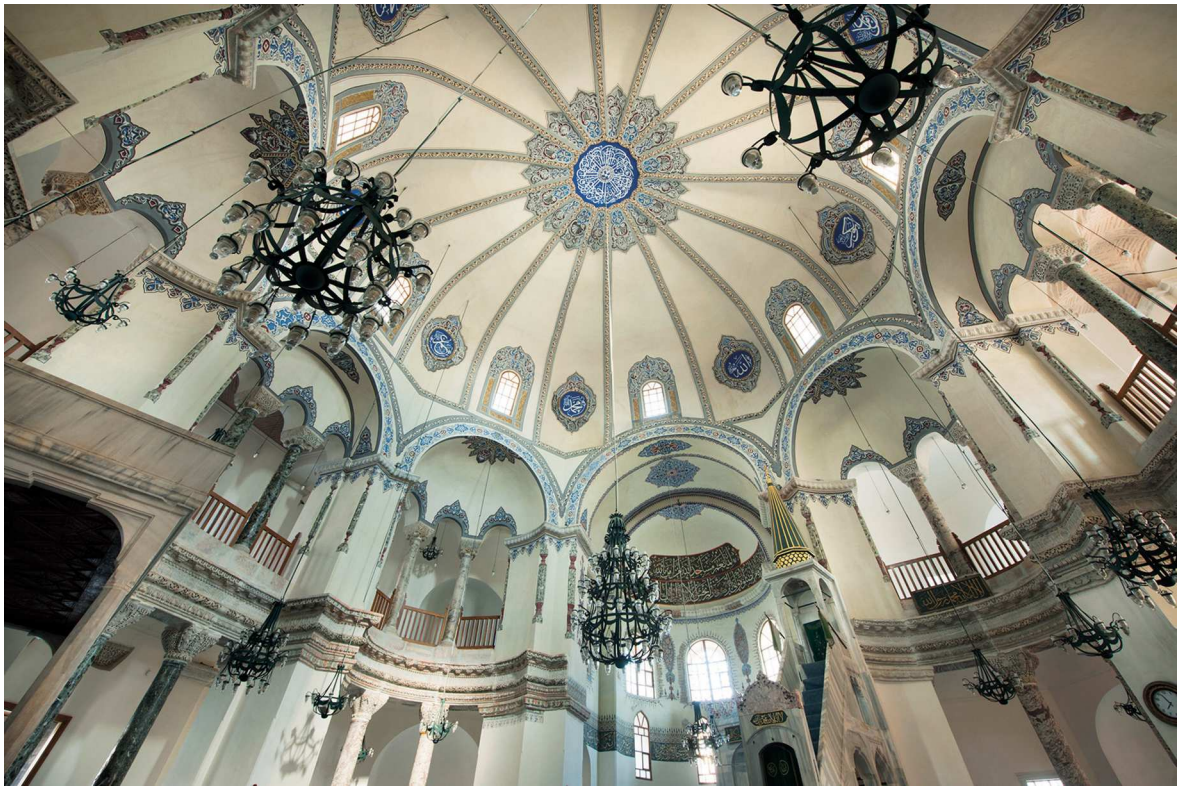


Fig. 2 Interior view of the octagon, 2012, church of Saints Sergios and Bacchos, Istanbul.

The structure's outer façade is less clear. Although the ceremonial book gives various clues, these allow leeway for different reconstruction possibilities. Above all, there is disagreement about the number of apses and the arrangement of the eight vaults and their connection to the central space (fig. 2). Since it is not a free-standing building, but one directly surrounded by other palace rooms, some of the older suggestions can be excluded.[37] In his most recent book, dedicated exclusively to the Great Palace in Constantinople, Nigel Westbrook combines both ideas. Considering the annex buildings, he takes up the proposal of Irving Lavin's niche central building and adapts it to fit with new research. The resulting building is a multiplex structure (see fig. 3, green line). The exterior in the eastern part is mainly rectangular with a projecting apse only in the very east. The western part of the exterior building, rather, describes a round building with projecting apses on each vault. The interior consists of the undisputed central octagon, which is incorporated into a

zur Kuppelkurve aufgewölbt sind und damit eine konkave oder gebuste Form aufweisen (H. Svenshon and R. Stichel, ›Neue Beobachtungen an der ehemaligen Kirche der Heiligen Sergios und Bakchos (Kücük Ayasofya Camisi) in Istanbul‹, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, vol. 50, 2000, p. 398). The octagonal shape of the interior is widely agreed upon (see fig. 3, blue line). Compare M. Featherstone, ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, in L. Hoffmann (eds.), *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur Byzantinischen Kulturgeschichte*, Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 7, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005, pp. 832 – 840; Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 121 – 125.

37 Compare Featherstone, ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 846 – 847. For the first time, he refers to the annexes that make illumination of the lateral vaults difficult or even impossible. At the same time, he refutes the arguments of Jean Ebersolt, Irving Lavin, and Richard Krautheimer. Compare J. Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies*, Paris, Leroux, 1910, pp. 79 – 80; I. Lavin, ›The House of the Lord. Aspects of the Role of Palace Triclinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages‹, *Art Bulletin*, vol. 44, 1962, pp. 22 – 23; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, London, Penguin Books, 1986, pp. 77 – 78, 231. Summarised in Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 157.

circular niche central building.[38] In contrast to this new idea stands the reconstruction proposed by Jeffrey Featherstone, who assumes an apsidal end only for the eastern vault. The same vault is also larger than the others, which gives it additional importance. Instead of independent and separately functioning vaults, Featherstone reconstructs a simple ambulatory (see fig. 3, red line). It gives the building a certain resemblance to Late Antique churches such as San Vitale in Ravenna (fig. 1), Sergios and Bacchos in Constantinople (fig. 2), or the Palace Chapel in Aachen, all constructed as central buildings.[39]

While Westbrook seeks and finds his comparative examples in the dining and reception halls of Roman palaces, Featherstone uses the model of central churches from Late Antiquity, a significant difference that entails diverse levels of interpretation regarding imperial self-image. Westbrook's proposal relies on using old patterns, whereas Featherstone's reconstruction aims to break through in favour of new ideas (fig. 3). The latter therefore seems more plausible regarding the imperial self-image in Christianity, and will be referred to in the following discussions. Through its similarity to the aforementioned Late Antique church buildings, a particular closeness to God was established, which is completed with the apse image of Chrysotriklinos, and the emperor enthroned below.[40]

Finally, the dome was equipped with 16 windows, two to each vault. This at least supplied enough daylight emblazing the octagonal central room. To what extent the lateral vaults were equipped with separate windows or whether they were illuminated only artificially, or likewise via the central room, is still unknown.[41]

The Setup: Choirs, Curtains, and Organs

The information taken from the ceremonial book regarding the inner architecture of the Chrysotriklinos allows for an approximate idea of the design and use of the space on different occasions. Furthermore, the mosaic decoration was subject to numerous changes. In particular, the image of Christ enthroned in the eastern apse was affected by the ongoing disputes of iconoclasm, but was finally able to prevail.[42] The remaining mosaic decoration of the Chrysotriklinos is not figural. Like the Hagia Sophia, the dome is exclusively covered with a gold mosaic. The wall mosaics, which were renovated under Constantine VII

38 Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 121 – 128, and figs. 37, 40.

39 In the attached plan, its floor plan most closely follows San Vitale in Ravenna (fig. 1). It is reinforced by the additional dome raised by a tambour, which provides more space for the windows. Featherstone, ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 833 – 840. Compare Featherstone, › The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 52 – 54, as well as Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 157.

40 In this context, cf. a representation from the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram (Munich, Bavarian State Library, Clm 14000) from the 9th c., which shows the Emperor Charles the Bald enthroned under a canopy. Above his head, the hand of God can be seen, reaching out of heaven, and protecting him from above. This kind of legitimation of rule by God could have been inspired by a Byzantine tradition. The inspiration in this case would be the emperor enthroned under the image of Christ in the apse of Chrysotriklinos. Compare R. Pizzinato, ›Vision and Christomimesis in the Ruler Portrait of the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram‹, *Gesta*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2018, p. 147. On the self-image of the Byzantine claim to power, cf. also Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, esp. p. 161.

41 Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, p. 123 emphasises the similarity of the dome to that of the Church of Sergios and Bacchos, and argues for a similarly shallow dome but elevated by a tambour, which would provide space for the windows. An additional lighting of the lateral vaults would at least be partly conceivable in his proposal. See Featherstone, ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 834 – 849; Featherstone, › The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 52 – 54.

On the other hand, he dispenses a tambour and sketches a relatively flat dome, which likewise refers to Sergios and Bacchos. An additional lighting of the vaults is not provided. However, it opens the possibility that the light from the central octagon could enter the lateral vaults through openings above the curtains by means of arcades.

42 For changing mosaic decoration during the Iconoclasm see especially J. D. Breckenridge, ›Christ on the Lyre-Backed Throne‹. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 34/35, 1980/1981, p. 257; on the image of Christ in the eastern apse see, among others, Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 130 – 134; A. M. Cameron, ›The Artistic Patronage of Justin II‹, in A. M. Cameron (eds.), *Continuity and Change in Sixth-century Byzantium*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1981, p. 76.

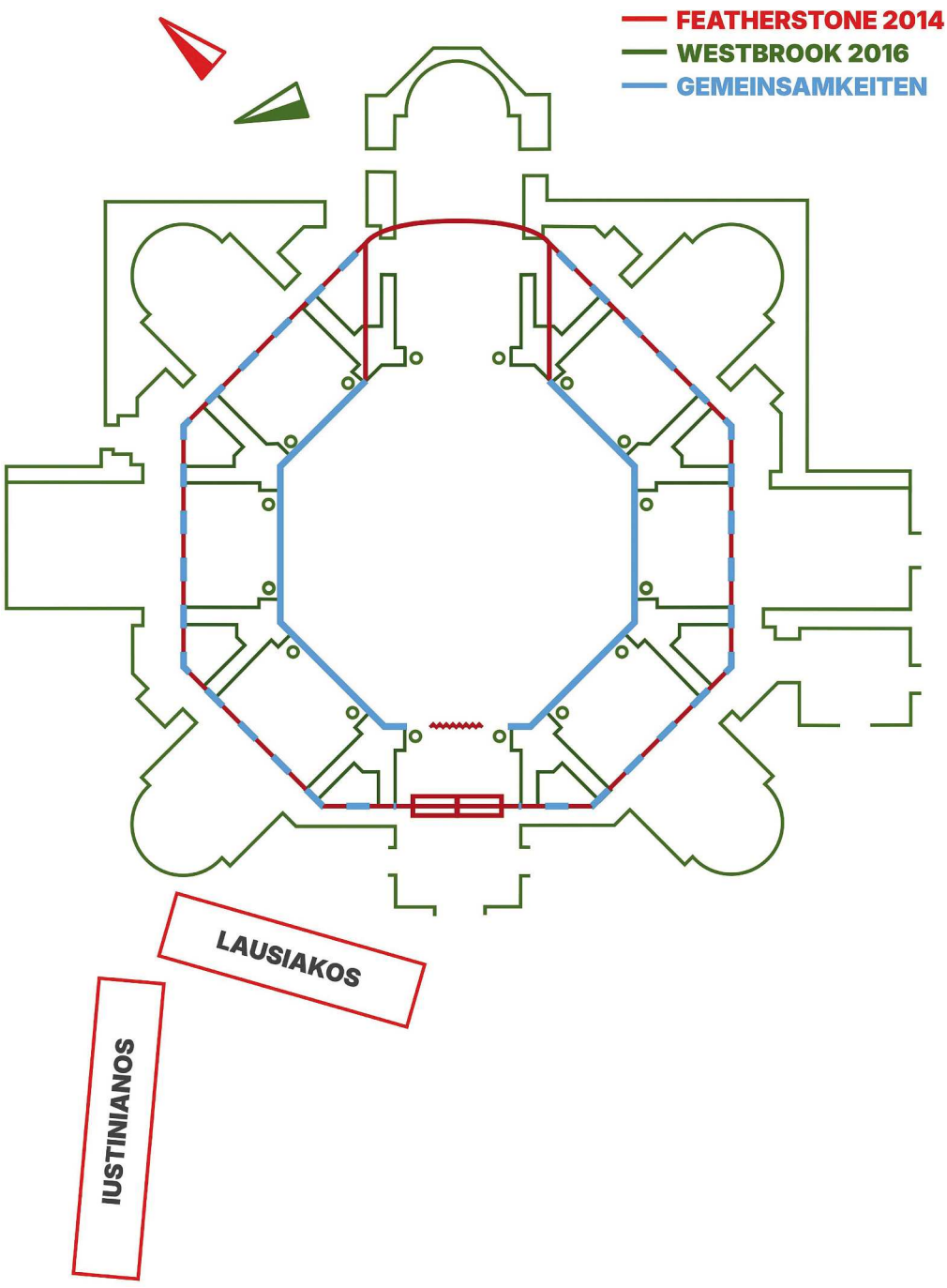


Fig. 3 Combined groundplans of the Chrysotriklinos after Featherstone 2014 and Westbrook 2016 with focusing their similarities by Alexander Dreyer and Friederike T. Kranig, 2024.

Porphyrogennetos, show floral or paradisial decorations.[43] Integral elements of the movable room decor are curtains separating the inner octagon from the ambulatory area, and respectively the surrounding vaults. We do not know what the curtains were made of, how they were patterned or how translucent they were.[44]

During the visit of the Tarsian delegates, the Chrysotriklinos was additionally equipped with treasured objects. Each two silver and golden organs were placed in the entrance area. The main room was equipped with golden tables and corresponding benches.[45] In addition, numerous polycandelabra, emailles, silver shields, and other treasures were borrowed from surrounding rooms and churches for this purpose.[46]

Finally, the choirs of the Hagia Sophia and Church of the Apostles were positioned in the lateral vaults, behind curtains to provide the musical background during the festival.[47]

Staging and Final Consideration

Acoustic Propaganda in the Imperial Palace

After a long procession through the palace, filled with sensory impressions not only on a visual level, but also with olfactory and acoustic aspects, they finally reach the Justinianos. The suspense of the forthcoming is heightened again by the long wait. In the Justinianos, the delegates receive new clothes, i. e. splendid robes, to be worn for the coming banquet. While they had previously been spectators of a theatre play staged especially for them, they now become protagonists of the performance themselves, at least through the delivery of new clothes. This is where the staging of the actual banquet in the Chrysotriklinos begins. Even before the Tarsian delegation, the emperor enters the still empty Chrysotriklinos and takes his throne in the eastern apse. As previously in the Magna Aura, this entry of the emperor into the Chrysotriklinos could also have been accompanied by the acoustic signals of the organs, despite the

43 On this briefly Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, p. 131.

44 There must have been several ›sets‹ of curtains, as, on certain events, some of them were installed in other areas, for example, during the visit of the Tarsian delegation. Some of the textiles, which were only temporarily attached, among others in the Onopodion and the Portico of the Golden Hand, were borrowed from the Chrysotriklinos. The latter was decorated with even more luxurious cloths in honour of the reception. Cf. Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 157; Cer. II 15, p. 573; Cer. II 15, pp. 580 – 582. Moreover, the lighting of the lateral vaults remains questionable, since windows are only documented for the dome. While Westbrook's reconstruction permits additional windows in the side vaults, Featherstone's proposal does not. According to this, light would have entered the lateral ambulatory through open arcade arches above the curtains or, alternatively, was illuminated exclusively by artificial light sources. Both remains speculative. For Westbrook's reconstruction cf. Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 121 – 125, and esp. figs. 37 – 39; Featherstone's proposal in detail in Featherstone, ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, pp. 933 – 840, esp. p. 835.

45 The suggestion that both the emperor and the envoys from Tarsos might have dined together in the eastern apse does not seem very likely to me. The whole reception, the procession through the palace, and finally the arrival at the Chrysotriklinos aim at demonstrating power and wealth. The illustration of imperial superiority over the ›enemies‹ is the main purpose of the play. Considering this, it seems improbable to miss an opportunity to portray the emperor as appointed by God himself; positioned in the eastern apse like a cult image with Christ enthroned above. For further considerations on the organisation of various banquets and on the accommodation of their visitors see Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, pp. 125 – 128.

Based on the number of participants, who must be distributed either on clines or seated at tables, he concludes the dimensions of the Chrysotriklinos. Firstly, he refers to the report of Luitprand of Cremonas, who tells about celebrating Christmas in the Hall of the 19 Akkubita. The food was not eaten sitting down, but lying on semi-circular benches (Luitprand, Anapod. 6, pp. 199 – 200). In contrast, however, the Book of Ceremonies describes the guests invited to the meal in the Chrysotriklinos as sitting down at golden tables (Cer. II 52, p. 767). In Westbrook's opinion, sitting while eating was a tradition that emerged no earlier than the 10th c. (Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople*, p. 126).

46 For a detailed description and list see Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 158.

47 Positioning the choirs on opposite sides is suggested by J. Bardill (Bardill, ›Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople‹) based on the Ceremonial Book (Cer. II 15 pp. 580 – 582.). This seems to make sense also regarding music-practical considerations. Communication between the two choirs and making music together on the basis of listening to each other would be at least somewhat easier to achieve in this way.

lack of an audience. The organs were set up in the Tripeton, a kind of antechamber of the Chrysotriklinos, which must have been located between the latter and the Justinianos. Their loud and presumably shrill sound would probably have been heard in the nearby Justinianos as well.[48] As an acoustic preannouncement from a distance, it would have heightened the excitement of those waiting even more. The entrance of the Saracens finally happens through the main portal and the Tripeton, and hence by passing by the golden and silver organs. It is not known whether these organs were intended to accompany their entry by sound or to be a further illustration of the imperial wealth and its (scientific) superiority.[49] After crossing the vestibule, the main door of the Chrysotriklinos opens. The curtain behind it, however, represents a further visual barrier that may have prevented those from proceeding.[50]

The view into the darkness and a light shining behind those door curtains is finally revealed when the curtain opens. The delegates now enter the western vault of the Chrysotriklinos. Curtains separate it from the central octagon, whose windowed dome is the building's only natural light source. Therefore, the lateral vaults were only dimly lit. If the western curtains were indeed made of a lighter and more translucent cloth,[51] it would have added to the mystical and mysterious atmosphere. The light from the main room would have shone through and people would have been visible without really being recognisable.

This last barrier does not simply open vertically or horizontally by pulling it up or apart. Rather, the curtains are lifted from their outer central edges to the right or top left by means of long sticks; from the inside and invisibly to outsiders.[52] The first thing visible to the delegation is the emperor on his throne under the image of Christ, surrounded by gold. With each step further into the room, the Saracens become aware, piece by piece, of the full extent of the emperor's wealth.[53]

This entire passage is not described in the Book of Ceremonies. After the delegates have received their new robes in the Chrysotriklinos, there is a small break in time, after which they immediately find themselves in the Chrysotriklinos.[54] Accordingly, it can be assumed that this part followed the usual procedure, i. e. the envoys were ›simply‹ escorted one room further, onto stage and thereby perfectly integrated into stage set. Moreover, there is no additional acting that would distract from the most important thing, namely imperial power and superiority; there was no additional music and no signals. The scene focuses entirely on visual splendour, the value of which is emphasised, highlighted, and amplified by the surrounding silence. Precisely this silence creates an acoustic dimension, that offers no possibility of escape or distraction. The envoys are totally submerged in the situation: Hearing their own footsteps, their own breathing in the middle of the golden hall, with everyone's eyes on them, their own excitement heightened to the maximum. They themselves become the show for the proper showmen. Caught up in this situation and overwhelmed by impressions, the majesty of the emperor is staged. Called by God himself, alongside Christ, he sits in the

48 Compare Berger, ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells‹, pp. 65 – 67.
49 It should be noted that, depending on the reconstruction approach of the Chrysotriklinos as well as the surrounding buildings, the envoys could have entered through a different door. On the placement of the organs Cer. II 15, p. 580; Bauer, Potentieller Besitz, p. 159; Berger, ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells‹, pp. 65 – 69.
50 In my mind, the organs first begin to play at this point. While the passage through the vestibule took place in complete silence, the instruments now give the signal for the western door curtain to open, as postulated by Maria G. Parani (M. G. Parani, ›Mediating presence: curtains in Middle and Late Byzantine imperial ceremonial and portraiture‹, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 42, no.1, 2018, p. 9, also fig. 1). This happens as if by magic towards the right or left side.
51 As is most recently stated in Parani, ›Mediating presence‹, pp. 9 – 11.
52 Featherstone, ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, p. 837.
53 Cer. II 15, pp. 584 – 585.
54 Cer. II 15, pp. 584 – 585.

apse and thus is given divine traits himself.[55] The Chrysotriklinos is transformed into the emperor's church.[56]

The golden tables are assumed to be placed in the middle of the central octagon. Here the envoys are seated, and the banquet is held. A direct participation of the emperor is doubtful, as human proximity would undermine his godlike aloofness and grandeur.[57] It is more likely that the emperor remains a silent participant and observer on his throne in the apse, clearly and permanently visible to everyone.

Whereas the room was previously silent, an acoustic component is now introduced to the staging:

> »While the Saracen guests dined with the rulers, the church-singers from the Church of the Holy Apostles stood inside the curtain in the vault, which is towards the imperial bedchamber, while those from Hagia Sophia stood inside the curtain in the vault, which is towards the Pantheon. They sang imperial eulogies throughout the banquet, except that at each entry of the dishes they were quiet for the organs to sound. «[58]

First, the organs sound. They are signaling that something is going to happen soon. The instruments are well known, as they were already admired upon entering the Chrysotriklinos. The envoys are already familiar with the sounds of the organ and their significance, as they are usually heard when the emperor enters the Magna Aura.[59] It is thus linked to an *acoustic experience.* The sound itself is not simply perceived as a property of the instrument. Rather, it is caused by the instrument. The instrument is the sound source that can be located in space by hearing it. The sound itself, however, doesn't symbolise the organ but rather imperial power and exclusivity. The dishes served to the tune of the organ are thus also unmistakably given by the emperor.

It is followed by the consumption of served food. For the first time since the beginning, the eating and drinking guests are distracted from the actual staging. The organs are now silent. Instead, the choirs of the Hagia Sophia and the Apostle Church are singing. They are also performing for the second time on this day, as a first performance took place earlier in the Magna Aura. On stairs on either side of the hall, they had sung imperial consecrations and blessings. Their outstanding positioning, combined with jubilant chanting, must have made a lasting impression. Thus, the foundation for a *musical experience* was already laid in the Magna Aura. This *musical experience* is not linked to an object or even to the choir. It manifests itself entirely in the music. The heard is connoted positively and preserved in the sensitive memory through the medium of music.

In the Chrysotriklinos, the choirs remain in the background. They are invisible to visitors in the main room and positioned behind curtains in the northern and southern vaults. Their song sounds slightly subdued due to the heavy cloth surrounding them. They echo from afar, giving the music a mystical dimension. While the delegates are in the process of eating and reflecting on what they have just experienced, they already become further

55 Breckenridge, ›Christ on the Lyre-Backed Throne‹, p. 259.

56 As one would expect, this scenario is supported by olfactory sensory impressions. Although there is no explicit mention of such a sensation in this passage, we learn about it in connection with the same legation elsewhere. During the reception at the Magna Aura, rose water was sprinkled in the room. Cf. Cer. II 15, p. 574; Cf. also Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, pp. 160 – 161. Somewhat later, or more precisely a few days later, the Saracens enter the Chrysotriklinos for a second time. While the decoration remained untouched, this time the floor was strewn with myrtle, rosemary, and roses. Cf. Cer. II 15, p. 587.

57 This assumption is supported by Franz Alto Bauer's conclusion, in which he refers to the passivity of the emperor: »Im Gegensatz zum sechsten Jahrhundert – [scheint] der Kaiser kein Wort zu sprechen. Die spärliche verbale Kommunikation erfolgte ausschließlich über den Logotheten. Der Gesandte nahm den Kaiser nur als Zentrum eines räumlich durchorganisierten Thronbilds wahr, das um die Dimension der Musik und der mechanischen Laute bereichert wurde. Er konnte (wie die Mehrzahl der anwesenden Mitglieder des Hofstaats) den Kaiser nicht beim Durchschreiten des Palastes sehen, bei Handlungen und Bewegungen also, die ihn der menschlichen Natur angenähert hätten.« (Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 161).

58 Cer. II 15, p. 585.

59 Berger, ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells‹, p. 67; also Bauer, ›Potentieller Besitz‹, p. 159. Cer. II 15, p. 568.

influenced by the subconscious and their *musical experience*. Intuitively, the conveyed contents of this music are taken in unreflectively, in order to bring about further behaviour in any future in sense of Byzantium.

While the initial silence for the entry of the envoys into the Chrysotriklinos, as well as the *acoustic experience* evoked by the organs are merely two further elements in staging imperial superiority, another sensory level, the *musical experience* extends even further. Of course, it too provides imperial presentation and exaltation, but it is capable of more. Only by means of the medium music is it possible to transmit contents and to embed them deeply into someone's subconscious. It is precisely this subconscious aspect that is additionally reinforced by hiding the sound source, i. e. the cause of the music, behind a curtain. Such an influence can only be achieved by a curtain. Only a curtain offers the possibility to create something that is hidden from the eyes but open to the ears, and thus to let sound and music work without visual intervention.

Summary

Using the example of Cavalleria Rusticana, the different levels a curtain influences were explained. Above all, they separate a front from a back. In a certain way, this creates different temporal dimensions that exist parallel to each other: namely, the one behind the curtain, in this case embedded in the past, and the one in front of the curtain, the present time witnessed by the audience. Only sounds can cross this barrier. The music furthermore succeeds in entirely cancelling out the aspect of distance, whereby the events behind the curtain are carried into the present time through the music. Hidden from view, the events are mystified in this way.

The described phenomenon is based on three essential experiences, whose effects on people are related to each other. The *visual experience* is linked to an object and is closely connected to it. It is a subject-object relationship of an individual and its counterpart. An *acoustic experience*, on the other hand, does not rely on an object. The sound produced is not attributed as a property to the object causing it. The object simply represents the sound source. The proximity of sound penetrating the body through waves and the distant localisation of the sound source are opposed to one another. A particular distance is created between the object and the sound. This distance is completely cancelled out by the *musical experience*. Music is something very close, which is not exclusively absorbed by means of the ears, but through the entire sentient organism. It is ›in us‹ and can thus influence the human being not only on an emotional level; it influences all our actions.

This value, as well as the danger of music, was already recognised by the ancient church fathers, such as John Chrysostom or Augustine of Hippo, who tried to use this for their own purposes. While on the one hand they point out the dangers of profane (especially instrumental) music, on the other hand they use music as a memory and learning aid, and to firmly establish their own content in the minds of the community.

A similar phenomenon can be seen in the Great Palace in Constantinople. Music is used here in combination with curtains, which increases the intensity of this effect. The phenomenon is illustrated by the example of the reception of a delegation from Tarsos under Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos and is explained in detail. In this context, it was first necessary to specify the surrounding ambience, in this case the Chrysotriklinos. This has been the subject of innumerable reconstruction attempts in the past, all of which have their pros and cons; the one accepted here and generally considered to be the most credible is that of Jeffrey Featherstone. It is used throughout this paper to explain the acoustic dimension.

The ambience of the Chrysotriklinos described in the Book of Ceremonies, which is decorated and furnished in the most splendid manner, exclusively serves the visual staging of imperial power. The Byzantine emperor is presented as the first among God, to emphasise his sovereign claim. The entire setting of the reception is designed for exactly this

one purpose. It almost resembles a theatrical performance that relies on the participation and influencing of the audience, in this case the emissaries, and their senses. The visual staging is supported by an acoustic dimension. This includes absolute silence at the right moment to show off the splendid surroundings at their best and to push their impact to the extreme. In addition to absolute silence, certain signals are part oft the *acoustic experience*, too. Thus, with the help of sound signals, a connection is created between what is presented and the imperial power.

The ultimate enhancement is the *musical experience*. It is used to convey content, or in this case rather an attitude, and to embed it in the listeners' minds. Due to the invisibility of the choirs, the music is only heard in the background. It is less consciously perceived and thus hardly reflected – a perfect way to impose one's point of view or opinion on the subconscious. Only curtains are capable of this, for they are the only barrier to sight but not to sound.

Figure Credits
Fig. 1: Wikipedia Commons (Username.Ruge), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ravenna_Basilica_of_San_Vitale_wideangle.jpg; Fig. 2: akg-images / Rainer Hackenberg AKG1719793; Fig. 3: by Alexander Dreyer and Friederike T. Kranig, after Featherstone 2014 and Westbrook 2016 (2024).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris de ceremoniis aulae byzantinae, trans. A. Moffatt and M. Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies*, Byzantina Australiensia 18, Leiden, Brill, 2012.

Eusebius von Caesarea, ›De Laude Constantini. De Verbo Die‹, ed. by H. P. Schneider, *Eusebius von Caesarea. Lobrede auf Konstantin. Über den Logos Gottes*, Fontes Christiani 89, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 2020.

Anicius M. S. Boethius, *De Institutione Musica.* Libri Quinque, ed. G. Friedlein, *Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius.* De institutione arithmetica (libri 2). De institutione musica (libri 5), Leipzig, B. G. Teubner, 1867, pp. 175 – 371.

John Chrysostom, ›Homilien über die Bildsäulen‹ (Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae I–XXI [De statuis]), trans. J. Mitterrutzner, *Des heiligen Kirchenlehrers Johannes Chrysostomus Einundzwanzig Homilien über die Bildsäulen.* Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, ser. 1, vol. 22, Kempten, 1874.

Liutprand of Cremona, *Anapodosis and Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana ad Nicephorum Phocam.* The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona, trans. P. Squatriti, Washington, CUA Press, 2007.

Secondary Sources

Bardill, J., ›Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople. Archaeology, Text, and Topography‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 5 – 46.

Bauer, A. and Rau, R. (eds.), *Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit.* Widukinds Sachsengeschichte, Adalberts Fortsetzung der Chronik Reginos, Liudprands Werke, Ausgewählte Quellen zur Deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters, vol. 8, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977.

Bauer, F. A., ›Einführung‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 1 – 4.

Bauer, F. A., ›Potentieller Besitz. Geschenke im Rahmen des byzantinischen Kaiserzeremoniells‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 135 – 170.

Behne, K. E., Zu einer Theorie der Wirkungslosigkeit von (Hintergrund-)Musik, in K. E. Behne, G. Kleinen, and H. de la Motte-Haber (eds.), *Wahrnehmung und Rezeption,* Musikpsychologie. Jahrbuch der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Musikpsychologie 14, Göttingen, Hogrefe, 1999, pp. 7 – 23.

Berger, A., ›Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells. Gesang, Orgelspiel und Automaten‹, F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 63 – 78.

Breckenridge, J. D., ›Christ on the Lyre-Backed Throne‹, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 34/35, 1980/1981, pp. 247 – 260.

Boselli, S., ›The Intertextual Short Play: An Example Using Verga's Cavalleria rusticana and Capuana's Il piccolo archivio‹, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 126, 2011, pp. 4 – 73.

Cage, J., *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1961.

Cameron, A. M., ›The Artistic Patronage of Justin II‹, in A. M. Cameron (eds.), *Continuity and Change in Sixth-century Byzantium*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1981, pp. 62 – 84.

Chamberlain, D. S., ›Philosophy of Music in the Consolatio of Boethius‹, *Speculum*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1970, pp. 80 – 97.

Ebersolt, J., *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies*, Paris, Leroux, 1910.

Effenberger, A., ›Konstantinopel/Istanbul – Die frühen bildlichen Zeugnisse‹, in F. Daim (eds.), *Die byzantinischen Häfen Konstantinopels*, Mainz on the Rhine, Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2016, pp. 19 – 34.

Featherstone, J. M., ›The Chrysotriklinos as Seen through *De Ceremoniis*‹, in L. Hoffmann (eds.), *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie. Beiträge zur Byzantinischen Kulturgeschichte*, Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 7, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005, pp. 832 – 840.

Featherstone, J . M . , › The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*‹, in F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 47 – 62.

Günther, J., *Musik als Argument spätantiker Kirchenväter: Untersuchungen zu Laktanz, Euseb, Chrysostomos und Augustinus*, Wiesbaden, De Gruyter, 2019.

Heilmann, A., *Boethius' Musiktheorie und das Quadrivium: Eine Einführung in den neuplatonischen Hintergrund von »De institutione musica«*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.

Koopman, C., ›Identifikation, Einfühlung, Mitvollzug. Zur Theorie der musikalischen Erfahrung‹, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2001, pp. 317 – 336.

Krautheimer, R., *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, London, Penguin Books, 1986.

Lavin, I., ›The House of the Lord. Aspects of the Role of Palace Triclinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages‹, *Art Bulletin*, vol. 44, 1962, pp. 1 – 27.

Markovitz, M., *Die Orgel im Altertum*, Leiden, Brill, 2003.

Mc Kinnon, J., ›Christian Antiquity‹, in J. Mc Kinnon (eds.), *Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Man & Music*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990, pp. 68 – 87.

Parani, M. G., ›Mediating presence: curtains in Middle and Late Byzantine imperial ceremonial and portraiture‹, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 42, no.1, 2018, pp. 1 – 25.

Pizzinato, R., ›Vision and Christomimesis in the Ruler Portrait of the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram‹, *Gesta*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2018, pp. 145 – 170.

Rüth, A., ›Von sizilianischer Archaik zu modernistischer Ästhetik. Aktualisierungen der Cavalleria Rusticana bei Verga, Mascagni und Coppola‹, *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2016, pp. 126 – 147.

Saletta, E., ›Unter dem Zeichen der Theaterdigitalisierung. Bergamo und sein Donizetti-theater: Das Beispiel der neuen Kulturvision einer norditalienischen Provinzstadt in Zeiten der Corona-Pandemie‹, in D. Pietzcker and C. Vaih-Baur (eds.), *Neue Wege für die Kultur? Kommunikationsstrategien und -formate im internationalen Kultursektor*, Wiesbaden, Springer Gabler, 2023, pp. 1 – 15.

Schreiner, P., ›Zu Gast in den Kaiserpalästen Konstantinopels. Architektur und Topographie in der Sicht fremdländischer Betrachter‹, F. A. Bauer (eds.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Byzas 5, Istanbul, Yayınları, 2006, pp. 101 – 134.

Svenshon, H. and Stichel, R., »Neue Beobachtungen an der ehemaligen Kirche der Heiligen Sergios und Bakchos (Kücük Ayasofya Camisi) in Istanbul‹, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, vol. 50, 2000, pp. 389 – 401.

Terziglu, Ö., *Great Palace Mosaic Muzeum*, Istanbul, BKG, 2014.

Hild, F. and Hellenkemper, H., ›Kilikien und Isaurien‹, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, vol. 5, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990.

Westbrook, N., *The Great Palace in Constantinople. An Architectural Interpretation,* Amsterdam, Brepols, 2016.

Yerasimos, S., *Konstantinopel. Istanbuls historisches Erbe*, Paris, Tandem Verlag GmbH, 2000.

Fig. 1 The Grand Vizier's tent, second half of the seventeenth century, Bavarian Army Museum, Ingolstadt.

Shapeshifting Curtains: Curtains, Tents, and the Sultan's Image

Priscilla Pfannmüller

An icon of Bavarian history, the Grand Vizier's tent (fig. 1) at the Bavarian Army Museum, has sparked the interest of researchers for generations. Since 2019, these findings have been questioned. In-depth research has led to new investigations, revealing surprising facets.[1] This paper discusses how the Grand Vizier's tent can be perceived as a curtain and how its ability to change its layout does not only correspond with the changing style of Ottoman dynastic representation but relates, too, to the overwhelming significance of gardens for the Ottoman culture.

Thereby, I will follow the wide field of research studying Ottoman culture, especially royal festivities and ceremonies regarding their function in shaping the image of Ottoman rulers and their courts. However, I will not focus on immaterial culture, but on an incremental part of Ottoman court culture: imperial tents in general and, as a case study, the mid-seventeenth century AD Grand Vizier's tent at the Bavarian Army Museum. Tents played a vital role in Ottoman culture and were widely used in every-day court. By analysing this special artefact, I can offer new insights into the changing understanding of power and how the symbolism of tents reflects this change.

In a first step, I will introduce the Grand Vizier's tent, its provenance, as well as recent research. Then, I will analyse why and how a tent can be defined as a curtain and discuss the main functions of curtains. Afterwards, I will examine the tent's function as well as symbolic meaning: First, with closed curtains and second, with open curtains. As the tents curtains are rolled up, the function shifts from a sleeping tent to a garden pavilion. However, the ability to roll up curtains is an astonishingly new feature in the design of Ottoman tents that emerges at a time when Ottoman conceptions of power changed fundamentally. The Grand Vizier's tent might mark the starting point of this evolution.

This line of argument follows various branches of research and combines them. In the last 20 years, a lot of research has been done on tents in general, and especially on Ottoman tents. Most important is the ground-breaking anthology of Nurhan Atasoy about the Ottoman imperial tent complex, the so-called *Otağ-ı Hümayun*.[2] In this book, she examines nearly all existing Ottoman tents throughout Turkey and Europe and carves out their main structural elements. By doing this, Atasoy describes a typology of tents and their usage. Backed by these works, Ashley Dimmig

1 As an introduction see: P. Pfannmüller, ›Tale of a Tent. The Grand Vizier's tent, *HALI*, vol. 210, 2021, pp. 83 – 87. In-depth: S. M. Lorenz et al., *Das Zelt des Großwesirs. Ein osmanisches Schlafzelt aus der »Türkenbeute« des Kurfürsten Max II. Emanuel im Bayerischen Armeemuseum. Studien zur Geschichte eines musealen Objekts von 1687 bis 2023*, Lindenberg im Allgäu, Fink, 2023.
2 N. Atasoy, *Otağ-ı Hümayun. The Ottoman imperial tent complex*, Istanbul, Aygaz, 2000.

focuses on imperial tents in the Late Ottoman Period. She highlights the shifting in form, decoration style, and usage caused by the Ottoman Empire's ongoing Europeanization in the eighteenth century after a wave of defeats starting with the Great Turkish War (1683 – 1699).[3] Atasoy's and Dimmig's research is flanked by studies by historians of Byzantine art. Margaret Mullet and Dominik Heher analysed Byzantine tents as spaces of power and representation. Interestingly, they both connect their findings with Atasoy's and compare them.[4]

Besides Atasoy and Dimmig, the name Gülru Necipoğlu is deeply intertwined with research on Ottoman imperial court culture. In her works she may seem to primarily focus on Ottoman architectural history. However, these studies shed light on representational and ceremonial aspects of architecture and their interdependence with textile architecture, namely: tents.[5] This leads to a vivid branch of research dealing with ceremonies, festivals, and rituals in the Ottoman world.[6] As numerous illustrations, e. g. in the Surname-i Vehbi[7] indicate, tents played a crucial role in imperial everyday life. For Atasoy as well as many other researchers, such illustrations have been regarded as fruitful sources in understanding various functions of tents, as well as the more general appearance of the imperial tent complex. Unfortunately, the performative role of tents has not yet been adequately studied.

The Grand Vizier's Tent

The so-called Grand Vizier's tent is one of the most prominent spoils of war that were taken by the Bavarian prince-elector Maximilian II. Emanuel (1662 – 1726) in the aftermath of the Second Battle of Mohács in 1687, constituting together with other items the so-called »Türkenbeute«, a well-known topic in Bavarian history.

Due to its importance for Bavarian identity and self-image, the tent and the other trophies have been analysed and referred to quite often in various studies.[8] However, they have not been studied in-depth but have been perceived as genuine trophies – a trend which can be seen regarding the »Karlsruher Türkenbeute«, too.[9] It is only in recent years that so-called turcica have been increasingly examined regarding their use, symbolism, and provenance, and thus a far more

3 A. Dimmig, ›Fabricating a New Image: Imperial Tents in the Late Ottoman Period‹, *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 341 – 372 and A. Dimmig, *Making Modernity in Fabric Architecture: Imperial Tents in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2019.

4 M. Mullett, ›Tented ceremony: Ephemeral Performances under the Komnenoi‹, in A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou, and M. G. Parani (eds.), *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean. Comparative Perspectives*, Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 487 – 291 and D. Heher, *Mobiles Kaisertum. Das Zelt als Ort der Herrschaft und Repräsentation in Byzanz (10.–12. Jahrhundert)*, Berlin, LIT Verlag, 2020.

5 G. Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Cambridge/Mass., The MIT Press, 1992; G. Necipoğlu, ›An outline of shifting paradigms in the palatial architecture of the pre-modern Islamic world‹, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 3 – 24 and G. Necipoğlu, ›Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces‹, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 303 – 342.

6 E. g., a good summary on recent trends: O. Felek, and S. Erdoğan İşkorkutan, ›Introduction: Ceremonies, Festivals, and Rituals in the Ottoman World‹, *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019, pp. 9 – 19 and K. Şahın, ›Staging an Empire: An Ottoman Circumcision Ceremony as Cultural Performance‹, *American Historical Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 463 – 492.

7 The Surname-i Vehbi comprises 137 depictions of episodes of the circumcision of sultan Ahmed III.‹s sons in 1720. It was painted by Abdülcelil Çelebi, called E. Levnî. Nowadays, it is part of the Topkap Saray museum, inv.-nr. 3594/f.57b-58, see: E. Atil, ›The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Festival', *Muqarnas*, vol. 10, 1993, pp. 181 – 200.

8 E. g. M. Junkelmann, ›Das Türkenzelt Max Emanuels‹, in K. Weigand and J. Zedler (eds.), Ein Museum der Bayerischen Geschichte, Munich, Utz, 2015, pp. 289 – 318 and H. Glaser, *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700*, 2 vol., exhibition catalogue, Munich, Altes und Neues Schloss Schleißheim, Hirmer, 1976, vol. 2 pp. 50 – 92.

9 See: E. Petrasch et al., *Die Karlsruher Türkenbeute: die »Türkische Kammer« des Markgrafen Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden-Baden*, Munich, Hirmer, 1991.

complex picture of these »Türkenbeuten« has emerged.[10] Also, this bundle of objects – armour, weapons, textiles, flags, and musical instruments – has been constantly on display: in the Munich Zeughaus, the Bavarian National Museum, the Bavarian Army Museum and the Völkerkundemuseum (today: Museum Fünf Kontinente). Nowadays, the Grand Vizier's tent is on display in Ingolstadt, in the Bavarian Army Museum.

Participating in the Great Turkish War from 1683 to 1689, Max Emanuel was one of the most influential and successful commanders, next to Karl of Lorraine, the Polish King Jan Sobieski, Margrave Louis of Baden, and Prince Eugene of Savoy. Tents in general were perceived as the utmost prestigious trophies a leading officer could win. Contemporary sources, e.g. letters or battle reports, underline that tents were especially noteworthy and they were specifically mentioned separately. As the epitome of the whole tent complex, the Grand Vizier's tent is named in various battle reports, as well as in contemporary copper engravings.[11]

The tent belonged to the Ottoman Grand Vizier Sarı Süleyman Paşa (+1687) and was part of his tent complex comprising many tents varying in form and function. As Ferdinando Marsigli (1656 – 1730) and many other travellers to the Levant have reported, there were audience tents, sleeping tents, dining tents, and tents where beverages such as coffee and sherbet were served.[12] By reading Marsiglis explanations, and analysing the tent's fabric, it is evident that the Grand Vizier's tent was used as a waterproof sleeping tent. After having come to Bavaria, it was also used extensively by the Bavarian prince-electors throughout the centuries, e.g. for hunting parties or military purposes. Tents were not only used in wartimes. Instead, tents played a crucial role in the courtly everyday life – in the Ottoman empire but also in Bavaria.

Besides its provenance, it is important to sum up the tent's decoration. The dodecagonal tent consists of 12 panels, so-called hazine, that are sewn together, and a large roof. On the outside, one broad border with yellow-blue fork leaves decorates the uniform, bright reddish appearance. Four panels are highlighted by the same, albeit, circumferential border with yellow-blue fork leaves.

The inside stands in harsh contrast to the tent's outer layer and is richly decorated with various flowers, e.g. roses, tulips and carnations. The hazine are separated from each other by delicate arcades with florally decorated columns and arches. Eight panels are decorated with various floral ornaments. These ornaments are embroidered on silk sheets sewn onto linen. The largest of these ornaments, the ogival şemse, resembles a sun-medallion. Most ornaments are similarly structured. Two şemse are different and show bunches of flowers while the others have more abstract ornaments and are structured by a stylized cross. The two hazine with the stylized bunches of flowers mark the entrance and the area of the tent directly opposite it. Four panels are highlighted by

10 One of these initiatives is the Forum Turcica. It was founded in 2021 by Prof. Dr. Hendrik Ziegler (Marburg) and colleagues from various museums and universities across middle and middle eastern Europe, aiming to examine Ottoman, pseudo-Ottoman as well as Persian artifacts. See: Forum Turcica, *Sammlungs- und Funktionsgeschichten von Objekten osmanischer Provenienz aus Museen im deutschsprachigen Raum*, https://themator.museum-digital.de/ausgabe/showthema.php?m_tid=1917&tid=1917&ver=standalone, (accessed 17 March 2023).

11 E.g., Relation der von der Christlichen Armee wider dero Erbfeind bey dem Berg Harsan, unweit Siclos erhaltenen herrlichen Victori. Auß dem Chur-Bayrischen Feldlager bey Barniewar, den 14. Augusti, Anno 1687 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Res/4 Turc. 92,13); Relation, der Bey dem Berg Harsan vorbeygegangenen Feld-Schlacht / Den 12. Aug. Anno 1687 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Res/4 Turc. 92,14).

12 See L.F. Marsigli, *Stato militare dell'imperio Ottomano, incremento e decremento del medesimo* […], 2 vol., The Hague, P. Gosse and J. Neaulme P. de Hondt A. Moetjens, 1732, vol. 2, p. 59 and plate XIX. Furthermore: John Covel described tents where one was drinking coffee, sherbet, as well as cold water. See: J. T. Bent (eds.), *Early voyages and travels in the Levant.* London, Hakluyt Society, 1893, p. 167.

windows, so-called pencere, which can be closed with rolled cloth shutters. The ceiling of the tent is completely decorated with borders and lockets consisting of flowers.

For further research, one must keep in mind that the tent's current presentation does not correspond exactly to its original appearance. Due to its ongoing usage, the tent underwent many restorations. The most recent took place in the mid-twentieth century and led to notable changes: Most textiles, e. g. the hazine's red base-fabric as well as the silk base-fabric for the appliqué had been replaced as they seemed too destroyed and did not fit the time's idea of how a marvellous trophy was meant to look. As a result, and because of a lack of knowledge, some decorations have been changed or even removed.[13]

From Tent to Curtain

To explore the Grand Vizier's tent and postulate that it must be perceived as a curtain is not as strange as one might think. But, it is important to briefly highlighting the etymology of the modern word »tent« and its connection with curtains.

The English word »tent« is derived from the Latin »tentorium« of the same meaning: It describes a tent, mainly used in military campaigns by common soldiers. So far, it does not seem probable to analyse tents as curtains. However, Raffael's *Madonna della tenda* (fig. 2) suggests that »tenda« or the English »tent« means more: The Madonna is not depicted in a tent but standing in front of a curtain. This hints that there is an etymological link between tent and curtain. A second indication can be found in Byzantine times: The Greek word »auleios« (αύλειος) describes an imperial tent complex, but it also means court, atrium as well as curtain. Another, even more common word for tent was »skene« (σκηνή). It was also used to refer to the stage of a theatre. Thus, it connects tents with theatres and indicates the usage of tents for staging someone's power.[14]

The strongest indication, however, is given by the Grand Vizier's tent itself. A large fragment of a hazine, which was removed in the 1970s during a vast restoration of the tent, shows an Ottoman inscription offering new insights into the crafting process, and the understanding of tents as curtains. The inscription can be read as »Ömer Perdeci«.[15] The word »perdeci« resembles the name of one department of the imperial tent maker corps: the perdeciyan. Their task was to tailor curtains, and they worked alongside tent makers (otağgeran-ı hassa), tent tailors (haymeduzân) and needleworkers (nakşduzân).[16] Indeed, the Ottoman word »perdeci« means a type of doorman who opens and closes the door curtains. Also, »perdesarai« literally means ›palace of curtains‹ – or more abstract: tent.[17] The unknown Ömer Perdeci might have been one of those craftsmen tailoring curtains. For Ottomans, tents were textiles whose main goal was to cover and to uncover people. Tents were perceived as curtains and not as static objects.

This brief digression shows that the so-called Grand Vizier's tent must be understood as some kind of curtain. Throughout the centuries, tents and curtains have ever been connected, regardless of language and culture. The different usages and meanings of these words suggest a correlation between tents, curtains, court, palace, and staging. In the concrete example of the Grand Vizier's tent, it seems reasonable to postulate that it was made of curtains.

In addition to the etymological connection of the two terms, there is another dependence be-

13 See: Lorenz et al., *Das Zelt des Großwesirs*. p. 53 – 58.
14 Heher, *Mobiles Kaisertum*, pp. 6 and 61.
15 The author kindly thanks Prof. Dr. Hans Georg Meyer, Munich, who offered his generous help in reading and translating the inscription.
16 Atasoy, *Otağ-ı Hümayun*, p. 23.
17 J. Zenker, Türkisch-arabisch-persisches Handwörterbuch, vol. 1, Leipzig, Wilhelm Engelmann, 1862, p. 189.

Fig. 2 Raffael, Madonna della tenda, 1513/14, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

tween them: They share basic functions and usages. In general, three main functions of curtains have been differentiated: firstly, to hide and reveal somebody or something. Secondly, curtains function as props for (self-)staging. No matter if textile or painted, curtains have always been used to stage

Fig. 3 Konrad Witz, Antipater before Julius Caesar, ca. 1435, Kunstmuseum Basel.

and frame people. We can see this in portrait paintings as Frans Hals' Willem van Heythuysen (c. 1625) or throne rooms, e.g. at the Palace of Fontainebleau (1808). Thirdly, curtains shape space by dividing between interior and exterior. This can be illustrated by Konrad Witz' painting

Antipater before Julius Caesar (1435, fig. 3).[18] By inserting a curtain into the pictorial space, Witz creates the illusion of a room in which Antipater and Caesar are standing. The viewer no longer perceives the gold ground as an abstract but as something spatial.

Tents share these functions. First of all, they also serve the purpose of concealment, or shielding. When tents are closed, you cannot see through them, so it is unclear what is happening inside. This is intentional, because tents are supposed to protect the user from bad weather, for example. At the same time, if the fabric panels at the entrance are opened, tents can reveal something or someone. This leads to the second function, representation. By taking the fabric aside, a person is not only revealed, but also framed and thus emphasized. The tent forms the frame, or the backdrop, for ceremonial acts such as the acceptance of (military) parades or the reception of diplomats. The third function, to shape space, can also be observed. Dimmig has highlighted: »Tents are temporary structures that are erected outdoors, but as soon as they are assembled, they create an interior space – one that changes with every reinstallation.«[19] This finding gets support from a report by John Covel (1638 – 1722), an English clergy and, later, ambassador in the Levant between 1675 and 1676. He observed the impermanence and ever-changing form of Ottoman tents and describes this phenomenon by comparing the imperial tent complex he saw in Adrianopel with that on the Maidan, a not specified marketplace presumably in Istanbul: »[…] by putting of it and extending it they may easily gain or lose [sic] a pace or two.«[20]

Having examined etymologic and functional correlations between tents and curtains, I will analyze how the changing power conception in the late seventeenth century led to a change in tent design. However, the Grand Vizier's tent is only the starting point in a series of evolving tent designs.

The Secluded Sultan Behind Closed Curtains

When all curtains are closed, the tent presents itself in a secluded manner. There is nearly no decoration at all, except for four small windows, which can be closed by roller-shutters (fig. 4). As I will show, this design mirrors Ottoman power conceptions as they are manifested in the built architecture of the Topkapı Serail.

The sultans were very private persons. They were omnipotent but invisible to their subordinates, and surrounded by a divine atmosphere – just like their Byzantine predecessors.[21] In the last years, various researchers have highlighted that the Ottoman sultans retreated from public as they settled in modern Turkey. While conquering the Byzantine Empire, the sultans were still to be seen marching and fighting alongside their soldiers. However, after they settled, they began to seclude themselves even more and adapted Byzantine perceptions of dynastic representation. Indeed, the Ottoman conception of power was highly artificial and philosophical.[22]

18 For a detailed analysis see: C. Blümle, ›Glitzernde Falten. Goldgrund und Vorhang in der frühneuzeitlichen Malerei‹, in G. Brandstetter and S. Peters (eds.), *Szenen des Vorhangs – Schnittflächen der Künste*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Rombach, 2008, pp. 50 – 51.

19 Dimmig, ›Fabricating a New Image‹, p. 347.

20 Bent (eds.), *Early voyages and travels in the Levant*, p. 164.

21 Necipoğlu, ›Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces‹, p. 306 and Dimmig, ›Fabricating a New Image‹, p. 345.

22 Karateke and Reinkowski highlighted: »The Ottoman production of legitimacy bore a distinctly elitist character. At least in its written texts it did not address the general public and was meant to serve philosophical and, one might even say, aesthetic demands.« H. T. Karateke and M. Reinkowski, ›Introduction‹, in H. T. Karateke and M. Reinkowski (eds.), *Legitimizing the Order*, Boston, Brill, 2005, p. 5.

Fig. 4 Outer façade of the Grand Vizier's tent.

With its four courts, the architecture of the Topkapı Serail reflects this seclusion. As part of a strictly defined ceremonial procedure, their accessibility was highly codified and restricted. Everybody knew that the sultan must have been somewhere in the inner parts of the Serail, but nobody knew exactly where he was. As such, the sultan did not participate visibly at meetings or sessions of his officials, e. g. in the council hall. However, he did participate invisibly: He sat behind a golden, grilled window, surveying his officials.[23] This grilled window slightly resembles the barred windows of the Grand Vizier's tent. Only through them, it was possible to »interact« with the outside. The Grand Vizier (or the sultan) could see from the inside, but the people outside were unaware that they were being watched.

This analogy of tent and palace might sound strange. However, it is widely accepted and has often been underlined by various researchers, labelling tents as »mobile palaces«[24] or even »portable replica of the Ottoman palace«[25]. Their structure and function are the same, even if the material is different. There are more hints of this: First, the Grand Vizier's tent is the nucleus, the most private and most secluded part of the so-called Zeltburg, meaning the complex of all tents belonging to the Grand Vizier or the sultan. Through its bright red colour, it was visible for everybody, and everybody knew that this was the sultan's (or Grand Vizier's) tent. Its outer colour distinguished the tent from most other tents, which were green.[26] Because of its bright colour and its dodecagonal form, there was no need for any further decoration – it was evident to the Ottomans that this tent was special: It was the heart of the whole encampment.[27]

The second hint for this analogy between tent and palace is even more convincing. The heart of the Topkapı Serail were the sultan's gardens right next to the Golden Horn. The Grand Vizier's tent is a fictional, mobile garden as well: In contrast to the uniform outer-layer of the tent, the inside paints a completely different picture. The decoration with its delicate columns and arches filled with flowers makes it seem as if one is standing in built architecture, more precisely: in a garden pavilion whose roof is overgrown with flowers (fig. 5). Seeing only the exterior, nobody would expect that the interior of the tent is that splendid. Not only to viewers today, but also for people in the seventeenth century, this discrepancy between exterior and interior was surprising. The Polish king John III Sobieski stated in a letter to his wife Marie Casimiere: »What nice things he had beside his tents, it cannot be described. He had baths, he had a little garden and fountains, rabbits, cats; there was even a parrot, but it was flying around

23 Necipoğlu, ›Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces‹, p. 304.
24 Dimmig, *Making Modernity in Fabric Architecture*, pp. 78 – 80.
25 Atasoy, *Otağ-ı Hümayun*, p. 56.
26 Contemporary sources such as the Surname-i Vehbi indicate that there was only one reddish tent in a Zeltburg. And even Atasoy names only one reddish tent that still existed: the Grand Vizier's tent.
27 Dimmig argues that the lack of decoration was because tents were exposed to the elements and therefore it would not have been prudent to decorate the exterior. Dimmig, ›Fabricating a New Image‹, p. 347.

and we could not catch it.«[28] John III Sobieski describes an entirely different sphere. The interior of the tent is reminiscent of a heavenly garden and stands in harsh contrast to the uniform exterior.

Indeed, flowers have always been an incremental part of Ottoman art. The Ottomans incorporated Roman as well as Byzantine garden traditions into theirs and created something new. The use of vegetal decorations stems from the extraordinary importance of gardens for Ottoman and, more generally, Islamic culture. The iconography of flowers and other vegetal ornaments can be found everywhere: The famous tiles of Iznik as well as carpets were embellished with flowers. Owning a garden next to their palace was one of the most important things for Ottoman dignitaries. Its size mirrored the dignity and status of its owner.[29] The nucleus and most private part of a palace was its garden. It is not surprising that the layout of the Topkapı palace with its modular buildings grouped around courts resembles the formation of a tent city.[30] Bernard O'Kane even goes a step further in stating that tents »emphasize the garden at the expense of built architecture«.[31]

By displaying flowers on the inside of the tent, the Ottoman needleworkers incorporated stylistic elements from Safavid and Mamluk Empires, as well as the Balkans and even central Europe,[32] creating the illusion of standing in a garden pavilion with delicate columns and arches framing the fictional (heavenly) nature one was looking at. There are even tents whose interior architectural fictions go one step further than the Grand Vizier's tent: They suggest standing inside a pavilion where the *curtains* are pulled aside[33] – a motif that is well known and can be found in the Palatium mosaic in Sant'Apollinare nuovo in Ravenna, for example.

Regarding the importance of gardens for Ottoman culture,[34] these tents function as a kind of mobile garden. The remarkable dodecagonal form of the Grand Vizier's tent might as well indicate a connection to the heavenly sphere: The Persian historian Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (Khvandamir, 1475/6 – 1535/6) describes in his Qanun-i Humayuni the regulations of Humayun, a dodecagonal, imperial tent complex belonging to the Mughal emperor Humayun (1508 – 1565). Khvandamir describes »a large tent, which consisted of twelve compartments corresponding to the Signs of the Zodiac« and mentions a second large tent, which was »like the empyrean heaven, which covers the lower heavens«.[35]

The closed Grand Vizier's tent mirrors the seclusion of the Ottoman sultans. It is itself the epitome of the omnipotent ruler or its representative, the Grand Vizier, showing his presence while hiding the person. Furthermore, the aspect of seclusion is accentuated by the vegetal decoration on the inside, creating the illusion of a garden

28 K. Michałowicz, ›Letter of Jan III Sobieski to Maria Kazimiera, 13 IX 1683‹, based on J. Sobieski, Listy do Marysieńki, ed. L. Kukulski, Czytelnik 1962, pp. 520 – 524, *Passage to knowledge – Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów*, 2018, https://www.wilanow-palac.pl/letter_of_jan_iii_sobieski_to_maria_kazimiera_13_ix_1683.html (accessed 14 March 2023).

29 G. Necipoğlu, ›The suburban landscape of sixteenth-century Istanbul as a mirror of classical Ottoman garden culture‹, in A. Petrucciolo (eds.), *Gardens in the time of the great Muslim empires: theory and design*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, p. 32.

30 Necipoğlu, ›An outline of shifting paradigms in the palatial architecture of the pre-modern Islamic world‹, p. 17.

31 B. O'Kane, ›From tents to pavilions: Royal mobility and persian palace design‹, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23, 1993, p. 253.

32 The distinct Ottoman stylization of floral elements evolved over time and incorporated stylistic features from near and far. Gülrü Necipoğlu labelled this as a »transcultural aesthetic«. See: G. Necipoğlu, ›Early modern floral: The Agency of ornament in Ottoman and Safavid visual cultures‹, in G. Necipoğlu and A. Payne (eds), *Histories of ornament. From global to local*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 142.

33 E.g., a tent in the Topkapı Palace museum, TSM Inv. No. 2917 (late 18th c.), and a second in the Military Museum, Istanbul, AMI Inv. No. 238I I (late 17th c.), Atasoy, *Otağ-ı Hümayun*, p. 166.

34 Only to name two important contributions to this area of research, see: A. Petruccioli (eds.), *Gardens in the Time of The Great Muslim Empires. Theory and Design*, Leiden, Brill, 1997 and N. Atasoy (eds.), *A garden for the sultan. Gardens and flowers in the Ottoman culture*, Istanbul, Aygaz, 2002.

35 Khwāndamīr, Qānūn-ı-humāyūnī, trans. Baini Prashad, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1940, p. 48 and Necipoğlu, ›An outline of shifting paradigms in the palatial architecture of the pre-modern Islamic world‹, p. 17.

Fig. 5 Ceiling of the Grand Vizier's tent.

sanctuary, just as the sultan had in his imperial palace.

Open Curtains: Staging the Sultan

However, the appearance and function of the Grand Vizier's tent changes completely by opening the hazine: Except for the three hazine opposite the entrance, all of them can be rolled up. The tent morphs from a fictional into an actual garden pavilion or kiosk:[36] The stitched columns and arches transform into real columns and arches, which frame the beholder's gaze of the surrounding nature. The ability to open to nature is something new and points out, once again, that the boundaries between textile and built architecture were blurred in the Ottoman Empire, and that tents and architecture must be thought of together. The Grand Vizier's tent changes from tent to garden kiosk, from standing in the midst of a battlefield to being located in the most scenic spots of Istanbul, surrounded by magnificent gardens.[37]As Dimmig has shown, this change in constructing tents coincides with the trend of sultans as well as Ottoman nobility beginning to occupy new areas of Istanbul, e. g. the shores and gardens next to the Bosporus.[38] They left their palaces and became more present and visible. However, this trend evolves in the early eighteenth century – the Grand Vizier's tent can be dated to the mid seventeenth century. There must be a second (or third) reason, besides a newfound love of nature, that lead to this change.

36 Atasoy, *Otağ-ı Hümayun*, p. 92.
37 N. Atasoy, ›Ottoman Garden Pavilions and Tents‹, *Muqarnas*, vol. 21, 2004, p. 15.
38 Dimmig, ›Fabricating a New Image‹, p. 343.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman empire struggled as the failed quest for Saint Gotthard (1664) and the following Peace of Vasvár marked the end of a long period of expansion. The tables turned: The Ottoman Empire increasingly found itself on the defensive, as the Holy Roman Empire managed to forge an alliance against the High Porte and to oppose it as a united front – the failed Battle of Vienna in 1683 bears witness to this. At the same time, the Ottoman philosophy of rule came under pressure. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, French philosophers linked the sultan's hiddenness with despotism. This new frame of mind found its way into and proved to be most successful, as contemporary Ottoman sources reflect this discourse. It triggered Ottoman elites to change their royal image to be more accessible. They emerged from their secluded palaces to be seen.[39]

The Grand Vizier's tent reflects this cultural evolution. By rolling up the tent's curtains, the boundaries between ruler and ruled dissolve. Nevertheless, the tent still frames the ruled-ones' gaze of the sultan and connects the Ottoman's affection for nature with the tent's function as garden kiosk.

Conclusion

Defining tents as textiles that function as curtains offers new insights on understanding these magnificent products of Ottoman craftsmanship. The so-called Grand Vizier's tent served as a case-study.

The starting point was an in-depth analysis of the terms of »tent« and »curtain«. It was shown that, throughout the centuries, those two words were heavily intertwined, no matter the language. A newly discovered inscription on the Grand Vizier's tent confirms this correlation: Tent tailors were referred to as curtain tailors indicating that the separate parts of the tent, the hazine, were perceived as curtains. Furthermore, the tight link between tents and curtains was underlined by comparing basic functions. Both of them hide and reveal somebody or something. By doing so, they work as representational props, and have been used extensively. A third function tents and curtains share is their ability to shape a room by dividing space into an interior and exterior.

The Grand Vizier's tent marks the transformation of the Ottoman concept of power: from the secluded, absent sultan to a more public personality. The tent reflects this process in its shapeshifting form from a closed *oba* to an open kiosk staging the monarch. One could sum this up by once again quoting Dimmig: »The sultans came out from behind the veil.«[40]

Figure Credits
Fig. 1, 5: Bayerisches Armeemuseum (photo: Erich Reisinger); Fig. 2: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (photo: Sibylle Forster); Fig. 3: Kunstmuseum Basel; Fig. 4: Bayerisches Armeemuseum (photo: C. Paggiarino).

Bibliography

Primary sources

Bent, J. T. (eds.), *Early voyages and travels in the Levant*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1893.

Khwāndamīr, *Qānūn-ı-humāyūnī*, trans. Baini Prashad, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1940.

Marsigli, L. F., *Stato militare dell'imperio Ottomano, incremento e decremento del medesimo* […], 2 vol., The Hague, P. Gosse and J. Neaulme P. de Hondt A. Moetjens, 1732.

Michałowicz, K., ›Letter of Jan III Sobieski to Maria Kazimiera, 13 IX 1683‹, based on: J. Sobieski, Listy do Marysieńki, ed. L. Kukulski, Czytelnik 1962, pp. 520–524, *Passage to knowledge – Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów*, 2018, https://www.wilanow-palac.pl/letter_of_jan_iii_sobieski_to_maria_kazimiera_13_ix_1683.html, (accessed 14 March 2023).

Relation der von der Christlichen Armee wider dero Erbfeind bey dem Berg Harsan, unweit Siclos erhaltenen herrlichen Victori. Auß dem Chur-Bayrischen Feldlager bey Barnie-

39 Necipoğlu, ›Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces‹, p. 306.
40 Dimmig, ›Fabricating a New Image‹, p. 345.

war, den 14. Augusti, Anno 1687 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Res/4 Turc. 92,13).

Relation, der Bey dem Berg Harsan vorbeygegangenen Feld-Schlacht / Den 12. Aug. Anno 1687 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Res/4 Turc. 92,14).

Secondary sources

Atasoy, N., *Otağ-ı Hümayun. The Ottoman imperial tent complex*, Istanbul, Aygaz, 2000.

Atasoy, N. (eds.), *A garden for the sultan. Gardens and flowers in the Ottoman culture*, Istanbul, Aygaz, 2002.

Atasoy, N., ›Ottoman Garden Pavilions and Tents‹, *Muqarnas*, vol. 21, 2004, pp. 15 – 19.

Atil, E., ›The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Festival‹, *Muqarnas*, vol. 10, 1993, pp. 181 – 200.

Blümle, C., ›Glitzernde Falten. Goldgrund und Vorhang in der frühneuzeitlichen Malerei‹, in G. Brandstetter and S. Peters (eds.), *Szenen des Vorhangs – Schnittflächen der Künste*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Rombach, 2008,

Dimmig, A., ›Fabricating a New Image: Imperial Tents in the Late Ottoman Period‹, *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 341 – 372.

Dimmig, A., *Making Modernity in Fabric Architecture: Imperial Tents in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2019.

Felek, O. and Erdoğan İşkorkutan, S., ›Introduction: Ceremonies, Festivals, and Rituals in the Ottoman World‹, *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019, pp. 9 – 19.

Forum Turcica, ›Sammlungs- und Funktionsgeschichten von Objekten osmanischer Provenienz aus Museen im deutschsprachigen Raum‹, https://themator.museum-digital.de/ausgabe/showthema.php?m_tid=1917&tid=1917&ver=standalone, (accessed 17 March 2023).

Glaser, H., *Kurfürst Max Emanuel. Bayern und Europa um 1700*, 2 vol., exhibition catalogue, Munich, Altes und Neues Schloss Schleißheim, Hirmer, 1976.

Heher, D., *Mobiles Kaisertum. Das Zelt als Ort der Herrschaft und Repräsentation in Byzanz (10.–12. Jahrhundert)*, Berlin, LIT Verlag, 2020.

Junkelmann, M., ›Das Türkenzelt Max Emanuels‹, in K. Weigand and J. Zedler (eds.), *Ein Museum der Bayerischen Geschichte*, Munich, Utz, 2015, pp. 289 – 318.

Karateke, H. T. and Reinkowski, M., ›Introduction‹, in H. T. Karateke and M. Reinkowski (eds.), *Legitimizing the Order*, Boston, Brill, 2005, pp. 1 – 11.

Lorenz, S. M. et al., *Das Zelt des Großwesirs. Ein osmanisches Schlafzelt aus der »Türkenbeute« des Kurfürsten Max II. Emanuel im Bayerischen Armeemuseum. Studien zur Geschichte eines musealen Objekts von 1687 bis 2023*, Lindenberg im Allgäu, Fink, 2023.

Mullett, M., ›Tented ceremony: Ephemeral Performances under the Komnenoi‹, in A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou, and M. G. Parani (eds.), *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean. Comparative Perspectives,* Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 487 – 291.

Necipoğlu, G., *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Cambridge/Mass., The MIT Press, 1992.

Necipoğlu, G., ›An outline of shifting paradigms in the palatial architecture of the pre-modern Islamic world‹, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 3 – 24.

Necipoğlu, G., ›Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces‹, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 303 – 342.

Necipoğlu, G., ›The suburban landscape of sixteenth-century Istanbul as a mirror of classical Ottoman garden culture‹, in A. Petrucciolo (eds.), *Gardens in the time of the great Muslim empires: theory and design*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, pp. 31 – 71.

Necipoğlu, G., ›Early modern floral: The Agency of ornament in Ottoman and Safavid visual cultures‹, in G. Necipoğlu, and A. Payne (eds), *Histories of ornament. From global to local*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 132 – 155.

O'Kane, B., ›From tents to pavilions: Royal mobility and persian palace design‹, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 249 – 268.

Petrasch, E. et al., *Die Karlsruher Türkenbeute: die »Türkische Kammer« des Markgrafen Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden-Baden*, Munich, Hirmer, 1991.

Petruccioli, A. (eds.), *Gardens in the Time of The Great Muslim Empires. Theory and Design*, Leiden, Brill, 1997.

Pfannmüller, P., ›Tale of a Tent. The Grand Vizier's tent‹, *HALI*, vol. 210, 2021, pp. 83 – 87.

Şahın, K., ›Staging an Empire: An Ottoman Circumcision Ceremony as Cultural Performance‹, *American Historical Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 463 – 492.

Zenker, J., *Türkisch-arabisch-persisches Handwörterbuch*, vol. 1, Leipzig, Wilhelm Engelmann, 1862.

Fig. 1 Outdoor banquet scene under an awning, wall painting from Pompeii, MANN, Naples, inv. 9015.

Vela and Parapetasmata: Forms of Use and Meaning from the Late Hellenistic through the Roman Imperial Period

Eva Christof

When we speak of »curtains«, we generally mean one, two, or more panels of fabric mounted on a rod and hung in front of a window, balcony or patio door. However, this preconceived idea cannot be transferred directly to the ancient world, as the realities of daily life are far too different. The corresponding Latin term, *velum* (pl. *vela*) or Greek *parapetasma* (pl. *parapetasmata*)[1] basically denotes a large rectangular piece of cloth, a textile, or a large sheet of fabric, and has several different uses. Only one of these, which is not at all the most common, is similar to our modern use of a »curtain«, where one or two pieces of cloth are guided by rings on a wire or are looped over a rod. The fact is that, in Antiquity, large, rectangular pieces of fabric were used, mounted and hung in a variety of ways. Corresponding representations can be found in Greek and Roman surface art, i. e. reliefs, wall paintings and mosaics. In the pictorial representations, the pieces of fabric are attached to architectural features or trees by tying their ends; more often, the exact method of mounting them remains unclear.

Entering New Spheres: Door Curtains in the Houses of Pompeii and on Tomb Reliefs

We naturally associate curtains with windows. But if we look at the street-facing windows of any townhouse in Pompeii or, for example, at the façade of the House of the Stags[2], we see that the windows of Roman houses were always high-set, small wall openings that neither provided light nor offered the view as today's windows. And thus, these small windows, sometimes secured with an iron grille, as in the House of the Alcove[3], didn't need curtains for darkening or privacy. According to Lucia Michelien's recent consistent study of the use of the terms windows and doors in Latin texts, vela were never installed above the windows in

1 Veil, in Greek *parapetasma, prokalymma, aulaia*, in Latin *velum, aulaea, plagula, cortina, linteum* (cf. R. Hurschmann, ›Vorhang‹, in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. 12, no. 2, Stuttgart, Metzler, 2002, pp. 334 – 335; D. Mazzoleni, ›Parapetasma‹, in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 3, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2014, pp. 68 – 69).

2 M. Osanna, *Pompeji. Das neue Bild der untergegangenen Stadt*, Darmstadt, von Zabern, 2021, p. 85 fig. 45.

3 P. Roberts, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, London, The British Museum, 2013, p. 50 fig. 34.

Roman houses but always above doors[4]. Since in Roman houses doorways were positioned with axial symmetry, it made sense to use vela for visual control[5] in addition to the actual doors. These »door curtains« are almost exclusively mentioned in literature and are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to trace in archaeological evidence, simply because there are no corresponding traces of attachments on the wooden door frames, most of which have not been preserved[6]. Some evidence comes from the Vesuvian area. Bronze rings of about 5 cm in diameter and an iron wire found in Pompeii, in the House of Menander, have been interpreted as components of a door curtain[7]. Also in Pompeii, in the Villa of the Mysteries, a curtain rod with rings was discovered in front of the entrance to the tablinum[8].

The epigraphically documented occupational term »velarius«[9] refers to the way the vela were managed at the doors, designating the person who pushed back the vela at the doors in noble households, i. e. provided portier services. An architectural fragment of a Roman Imperial tomb from Salzburg[10], in the province of Noricum, shows a curtain hanging from rings, tied to the side and, next to it, a servant with a jug, serving at a banquet The (door) curtain emphasises that the scene is set in a room. In a similar way, a block from a tomb from Regensburg in the Roman province of Raetium depicts a curtain hanging on rings and drawn back at the sides, forming the right border of an inn scene[11]. Strikingly, the (door) curtain is being drawn back at mid-height by a finger-shaped curtain holder[12]. The woman depicted in the immediate vicinity of the curtain and the man grasping her buttocks – both, moreover, connected by their gazes – seem to be leaving the banquet area via the drawn-back curtain, to the lovers' tryst that will probably follow. On other relief slabs that once decorated funerary monuments in different places in the North-Western provinces of the Roman Empire, vela are depicted on the right-hand edge of the scenes, hanging from rings and pulled aside at the middle. These vela always

4 For the occurrences in Latin texts: L. Michielin, *Fores et Fenestrae. A Computational Study of Doors and Windows in Roman Domestic Space*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2021, pp. 36 – 37, 134, 269, 271, 280, 282 – 283. On the sparse remains of wire ropes and rings or traces of the suspension of such door curtains in Pompeii: Michielin, *Fores et Fenestrae*, pp. 53 – 54. For the reconstruction of the main entrance of the Domus of Fortuna Annonaria with double-leaf door and curtain: Michielin, *Fores et Fenestrae*, p. 218, 248.

5 Michielin, *Fores et Fenestrae*, p. 119, 122.

6 cf. M. T. Lauritsen, ›The Form and Function of Boundaries in the Campanian House‹, in A. Anguissola (ed.), *Privata Luxuria*, Munich, Utz, 2012, pp. 101 – 105. On the attempt to determine possible attachment places and the possibly prefabricated room transitions equipped with curtains: A. Anguissola, *Intimità a Pompei: Riservatezza, condivisione e prestigio negli ambienti ad alcova di Pompei*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 102 – 105.

7 P. M. Allison, *The Insula of the Menander at Pompeii, Vol. III: The Finds, A Contextual Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2006, pp.132 – 133, cat. nos. 776 – 779, pl. 57.3 – 6; presumably hung on iron wire (ibidem p. 178, cat. no. 1231) as a curtain.

8 J. W. Stephenson, ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, p. 20 fig. 18. Cited in Anguissola, *Intimità a Pompei*, p. 102 fn. 12 and in Michielin, *Fores et Fenestrae*, p. 53 fn. 42; For two round bronze elements of 15 cm in diameter and a hook in the shape of a ram spur, the holding elements of a (door) curtain rod: Naples, MANN, inv. 124347, inv. 124348: R. Aßkamp (ed.), *Luxus und Dekadenz: römisches Leben am Golf von Neapel*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007, p. 252, cat. 6.21.

9 Cf. EDR111982; EDR135131.

10 Salzburg, Museum, inv. 2800; G. Kremer, *Antike Grabbauten in Noricum: Katalog und Auswertung von Werkstücken als Beitrag zur Rekonstruktion und Typologie*, Vienna, Austrian Archaeological Institute, 2001, cat. I 137.

11 From Castra Regina/Regensburg, at Regensburg, Museum of History, inv. 47: F. Wagner, G. Gamer, and A. Rüsch (eds.), *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani. Corpus der Skulpturen der römischen Welt. Deutschland 1, 1. Raetia (Bayern südlich des Limes) und Noricum (Chiemseegebiet)*, Bonn, Habelt, 1973, no. 383.

12 Previous attention has been drawn to finger-shaped curtain augers and curtain supports in Late Antiquity (cf. H. Maguire, ›The Disembodied Hand the Prokypsis, and the Templon Screen‹, in J. D. Alchermes (ed.), *Anathemata Eortika: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 2009, pp. 230 – 235), but here we have interesting evidence of an even earlier use.

indicate the indoor nature of a scene[13]. The (door) curtains can also appear as two sheets, open on both sides, for example, as seen in a payment scene from Metz[14], where the curtains are symmetrically placed on both sides, far above the people in order to indicate the presence of a door behind them. The mention of curtains in the Vindolanda tablets[15] also documents the presence of curtains in pairs. In all the representations of curtains on the funerary monuments from the North-Western Roman provinces, one velum or two vela in particular emphasise the indoor setting, whether it is of an inn, a banquet, a workshop, or a shop. The curtains or curtain offer(s) a way to refer to the outside without needing to represent it concretely. By suggesting the existence of an outside area, however, a particularly strong emphasis is placed on the scene depicted in the foreground. On a funerary monument in Arlon from the early third century AD[16], a curtain frames the scene on both the right and the left, indicating the interior of a house, in the middle of which a noble lady sits. One appears again in the scene on the right, where something is being delivered to a woman by a servant. On the funerary monument of the Secundinii, the so-called Igler Column, dated to the early or mid-third century AD, curtains are depicted in two relief scenes: once in the scene depicting people counting money and examining cloth[17] and a second time in the scene in which several clients pay their respects to their patron and, in turn, bring him gifts in the form of a hare, two fish, a lamb, a chicken, and a basket of fruit[18]. From the contrast between the city gate depicted on the left edge and the curtain on the right, it can be deduced that the clients pass through the gate and into the house of their patron, who is already awaiting them at a door with the curtain pulled back, which functions as a pars pro toto of his house, his hand raised in greeting.

As an interim conclusion, it should be noted that the type of curtains depicted on the Roman funerary monuments from the North-Western Roman provinces, which are tied back at the middle and hung from rings on a pole, denotes one possible form of an ancient velum. Earlier evidence for the same type of velum was found in Pompeii on doors, both on front doors and doors leading to other rooms inside houses. From the evidence presented, it may be deduced that this form of velum is used in two-dimensional art to represent 1) an entrance 2) the interior of a house/workshop, shop or sanctuary.

13 Limestone funerary relief in Arlon, with a craftsman seated at his work: Musée Luxembourgeois: S. Bosche, *Die Selbstrepräsentation von Handwerkern und Händlern im Grabkontext in der Provinz Gallia Belgica. Aspekte der Vermittlung sozialer Identität in einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft*, Heidelberg, Propylaeum, 2015, p. 109 cat. no. T41 (figs. 54–56). A multi-figure banquet scene in Mainz on the Rhine, State Museum: U. Rothe, *Dress and Cultural Identity in the Rhine-Moselle Region of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2009, p. 159 M37 pl. 25 (late 2nd – early 3rd c. AD); a money counting scene found in Neumagen (Belgica), now in the Trier Regional Museum: M. Stark, ›Blick- und Betrachterführung auf den Grabdenkmälern der Gallia Belgica‹, in A. Binsfeld et al. (eds.), *Stadt – Land – Fluss. Grabdenkmäler der Treverer in lokaler und überregionaler Perspektive: Akten der Internationalen Konferenz vom 25. – 27. Oktober 2018 in Neumagen und Trier*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2020, p. 68 figs. 6–7; and in St. Wendel, the salesroom of a cloth merchant: Trier, Regional Museum, inv. St.W. 120: Rothe, *Dress and Cultural Identity*, p. 150 cat. T 172 pl. 23 (early 3rd c. AD).

14 Metz, Musée de La Cour d'Or, inv. 75.38.70: H. Rose, ›Wer will fleißige Handwerker sehen… Ein Überblick über die reliefverzierten Grabmäler von Metz unter ikonographischen Gesichtspunkten‹, in A. Binsfeld et al. (eds.), *Stadt – Land – Fluss. Grabdenkmäler der Treverer in lokaler und überregionaler Perspektive: Akten der Internationalen Konferenz vom 25. – 27. Oktober 2018 in Neumagen und Trier*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2020, p. 122 fig. 7; 123 with fn. 36.

15 L. Allason-Jones, ›Pillow Talk‹, in T. Ivleva, J. De Bruin, and M. Driessen, (eds.), *Embracing the Provinces: Society and Material Culture of the Roman Frontier Regions, Festschrift Carol van Driel-Murray*, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2018, pp. 181–188, esp. pp. 185–186.

16 U. Rothe, *Dress and Cultural Identity*, p. 141 T117, 4 pl. 17.

17 J. K. Eberlein, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis: Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 1982, p. 14. 35. 56. 154 cat. 10; p. 219 fig. 1.

18 U. Rothe, *Dress and Cultural Identity*, pp. 131–132 T62-west frieze pl. 12.

Creating Space: Early Evidence for the Use of Large Fabric Panels in Temporary Constructions

Textiles in the form of large fabric panels have long been used for the luxurious decoration of a site, forming an essential part of ephemeral architecture, temporary canopies, pavilions, or tents. One of the oldest examples of this is the »Tomb of the Hunter « in Tarquinia from the late sixth century BC[19]. The inside of this tomb was painted to look like a hunting tent. A number of Macedonian tombs were also decorated with paintings imitating textile canopies, and this evidence has already been compiled by Monica Baggio[20].

The marvellous, ephemeral banqueting tent of Ptolemy II Philadelphos[21], who ruled from 285/84 to 246 BC, is only known from Athenaeus' description. The main components of this banqueting structure, designed for 130 klinai and 200 small, three-legged tables, were wooden columns combined with fabrics to form a tent-like roof. Inside the marquee, fine Phoenician fabrics served as room dividers, and a myriad of paintings were hung in front of this, as if they were walls of a building. As can be seen in the well-known wall painting from Pompeii depicting the confrontation between the Nucerians and Pompeians in AD 59 in the city's amphitheatre[22], temporary stalls could be erected by using simple wooden beams and a textile tarpaulin. This mural also shows a sunshade being used in the amphitheatre[23], a kind of velum typically installed in amphitheatres and theatres[24] in the first century BC and later.

The long tradition of creating space by means of textiles in Antiquity gave rise to the wall curtain, called linteum[25]. We would be overjoyed if such textiles had been preserved. At the Forum of Augustus in Rome, inaugurated in 2 BC, in the so-called Aula of the Colossus, a wall was covered with slabs of white Carrara marble upon which at least one wall curtain with a palmette pattern and wavy band décor was painted[26].

19 M. Baggio and M. Salvadori, ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica: alcune riflessioni‹, in M. Cupitò, M. Vidale, and A. Angelini (eds.), *Beyond Limits. Studi in onore di Giovanni Leonardi*, Padova, LIT, 2017, p. 297 fig. 1. According to old documentation drawings, also in Tarquinia, the »Tomb of the Tapestry«, dated to around 300 BC, was decorated with a painting of a wall hanging: M. Salvadori, ›La decorazione parietale nella tarda Repubblica: il »secondo stile««‹, in I. Baldassarre et al., *Pittura Romana dall'ellenismo al tardo antico,* Milano, Motta, 2006, p. 84 with fig.; J. J. Pollitt (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Painting in the Classical World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, CD/W 6.17.

20 Baggio and Salvadori, ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica‹, pp. 297 – 298.

21 Athenaeus, Deipnosophistai 5, 196a–197a; cf. Baggio and Salvadori, ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica‹, p. 297; More detailed: E. Calandra, ›L'occasione e l'eterno. La tenda di Tolomeo Filadelfo nei palazzi di Alessandria. Parte prima. Materiali per la ricostruzione‹, *Lanx,* vol. 1, 2008, pp. 26 – 74; E. Calandra, ›A proposito di arredi. Prima e dopo la tenda di Tolomeo Filadelfo‹, *Lanx*, vol. 5, 2010, pp. 1 – 38; B. Emme, ›Zur Rekonstruktion des Bankettbaus von Ptolemaios II‹, *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, vol. 1, 2013, pp. 31 – 55.

22 Naples, MANN, inv. 112222, Pompeii, House I,2,23 (AD 59 – 79): E. La Rocca, *La pittura di un'impero*, Milano, Skira, 2009, p. 199; V. Sampaolo (ed.), *Gladiatori*, exhibition catalogue, Naples, Archaeological Museum, Milano, Electa, 2020, fig. p. 148; p. 196 cat. no. 104 with fig.

23 R. Graefe, *Vela erunt: die Zeltdächer der römischen Theater und ähnlicher Anlagen*, 2 vols., Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1979, pp. 104 – 108 pl. 112 – 113.

24 F. Sear, *Roman Theatres. An Architectural Study*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, esp. p. 10 fn. 200 for the donours of *vela* in theatres.

25 E. Miramontes Seijas, *Latin Lexicon of Textiles: Clothes, Adornments, Materials and Techniques of Ancient Rome*, Oxford, BAR Publishing, 2021, p. 99 s. v. linteum-i/3.

26 L. Ungaro, ›L'Aula del Colosso nel Foro di Augusto: architettura e decorazione scultorea‹, *Escultura romana en Hispania*, vol. 5, 2008, pp. 29 – 64 with illustrations.

Protecting from Sun: Horizontal Sails

Another important use of large cloths in Antiquity was that of horizontally drawn awnings, which were also temporary constructions. Depictions from the Hellenistic period up until Late Antiquity prove that vela were indeed used as awnings. They were stretched horizontally over people's heads as sun protection and were fixed either to parts of buildings or often to tree branches. When not in use, the velum would hang down loosely[27]. This form of sun protection is particularly popular in mythological scenes[28] and in mythological banquets set outdoors, as in the banquet scene in the house of the Triclinium[29], twice in the House of the Chaste Lovers[30], as well as a copy from the same model in another instance in Pompeii (Fig. 1)[31]. The use of the velum as an awning for an ephemeral outdoor banquet continued into Late Antiquity[32].

27 Bacchus being raised by the Nymphs of Nysa, Villa Farnesina, cubiculum B, 3rd quarter of the 1st c. BC, Rome, National Museum, Palazzo Massimo: D. Mazzoleni and U. Pappalardo, *Fresques des villas romaines*, Paris, Citadelles et Mazenod, 2004, fig. p. 229. A cloth in the background of a mythological scene as being attached to a column, hanging down rather than being stretched: Naples, MANN, inv. 114322. From Pompeii, House of Jason (IX,5,18 – 21), 3rd style: Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, pp. 134 – 135, cat. no. 76. Sacred idyllic landscape with a velum tied to a tree, hanging loosely: S. De Caro (ed.), *Alla ricerca di Iside: analisi, studi, restauri dell'Iseo pompeiano nel Museo di Napoli,* Soprintendenza Archeologica per le Province di Napoli e Caserta, Rome, Arti, 1992, cat. no.1,6 pl. 11.

28 Nile mosaic in Praeneste, 80 BC: Graefe, *Vela erunt*, pl. 124,1; J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 107 fig. 221, pl. 108 fig. 222; K. M. D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 50 fig. 47. A 2nd style wall painting from Herculaneum with a satyr and a nymph in a sacred idyllic landscape: Naples, MANN, inv. 9244; House of the Pygmies (IX, 5,9), Cubiculum I: M. P. Guidobaldi and D. Esposito (eds.), *Ercolano, colori da una città sepolta,* San Giovanni Lupatoto, Arsenale, 2012, pp. 130 – 131 (fig.). A wall painting with pygmies in the so-called House of the Pygmies: Graefe, *Vela erunt*, pl. 123,1. And Naples, MANN, inv. 113196, Pompeii, House VIII,5,24: K. M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet Images of Conviviality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 61 fig. 30. On one of two cameo glass panels intended for wall insertion with depictions of bucolic scenes, Eros ties a sun sail to a tree, from Pompeii, House of M. Fabius Rufus (VII,16,22); Naples, MANN, inv. 153651 (Julio-Claudian period): Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, p. 102; pp. 226 – 227 cat. no. 51; Roberts, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, fig. p. 245. In wall paintings of the 4th style, Ariadne is sleeping under a sun sail and does not notice Theseus leaving her: Naples, MANN, inv. 115396: from Pompeii, 4th style, House of L. Caecilius Iucundus, Triclinium (o), V,1,26: F. Ghedini (ed.), *Ovidio – amori, miti e altre storie*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2018, p. 216 cat. no. 144. And Bacchus finds Ariadne – previously left behind by Theseus on Naxos – asleep under a sun sail: Naples, MANN, inv. 9271, from Pompeii, 4th style: Ghedini, *Ovidio – amori*, p. 271 cat. no. 146 (G. Salvo); Several Erotes meet to play music outdoors under an awning at the feet of a statue of Dionysus: Wall painting in Naples, MANN, inv. 9207, from Pompeii, from the House of Marcus Lucretius (IX,3,5), probably from a banqueting room, namely triclinium (16), AD 50 – 79, 4th style: Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, pp. 160 – 161 cat. no. 267; Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, colour pl. 4; Aßkamp, *Luxus und Dekadenz*, p. 245 cat. no. 6.5 (S. Vendito), p. 246. In the workshop of Hephaestus, where metalworking already generates a great deal of heat, at least the additional warmth caused by the sun is reduced by the shading velum: Naples, MANN, inv. 9531: from the House of the Quadriga (VII, 2,25, Triclinium »n«): Nava, *Rosso pompeiano*, p. 105.

29 House of the Triclinium (Pompeii V,2,4), Naples, MANN, inv. 120031: Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, p. 60 fig. 29; Aßkamp, *Luxus und Dekadenz*, p. 153 fig. 3; pp. 244 – 245 cat. no. 6.3 (S. Vendito); Roberts, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, p. 230 fig. 267; B. Longfellow and M. Swetnam-Burland (eds.), *Women's Lives, Women's Voices. Roman Material Culture and Female Agency in the Bay of Naples*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2021, colour pl. 12.

30 Central panel of the north wall of triclinium »m« in the House of the Chaste Lovers (IX.12.6), Pompeii, in situ: Longfellow and Swetnam-Burland, *Women's Lives*, colour pl. 10; Central panel of the east wall of triclinium »m« in the House of the Chaste Lovers (IX.12.6), Pompeii, in situ: Longfellow and Swetnam-Burland, *Women's Lives*, colour pl. 11.

31 Naples, MANN, inv. 9015, AD 50 – 79: Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, colour pl. 2; Aßkamp, *Luxus und Dekadenz*, p. 67 fig. 4, p. 244 cat. no. 6.2 (S. Vendito).

32 Floor mosaic of a festive meal that takes place outdoors under a dark red and white velum stretched from tree to tree, in Piazza Armerina, Hall of the Little Hunt: Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, p. 135 fig. 137; Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, p. 147 fig. 86. Floor mosaic in Alexandria depicting a banquet on the Nile: A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets et al., *Mosaics of Alexandria: Pavements of Greek and Roman Egypt*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press and Alexandria, 2021, p. 111 cat. no. 44 fig. 111, detail: ibidem, p. 112 cat. no. 44 fig. 112. Floor mosaic of an outdoor banquet supposedly from Ostia, now in the Detroit Institute of Arts: C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Exhibition Antioch: The Lost Ancient City, 2000 – 2001*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 184 – 185 cat. no. 68.

Lateral Stretched Vela: Emphasising Action in the Foreground and Adding a Further Narrative Level

In Antiquity, particularly popular ephemeral vela were those laterally stretched. These had the function of providing shade but also protected from wind. They did not so provide a visual boundary but instead were used as a kind of separation from the surroundings, creating a smaller, more intimate, festive setting outdoors either in nature or in the city[33]. Like the horizontally stretched velum, these vela generated a more intimate setting for a banquet[34] or were a quick means of creating a provisional indoor space[35]. On a Hellenistic votive relief in Munich, supposedly from Corinth (fig. 2)[36], a scene is depicted in which the small-sized human participants come to perform a sacrifice in the sanctuary of the gods Hygieia and the enthroned Asclepius, who are larger in scale. The cloth attached to the gnarled tree branches behind them is an intermediate between a sunshade attached to trees and a laterally stretched cloth. In one significant scene from the small frieze from the High Hellenistic Pergamum altar, a laterally stretched cloth can be seen in the back of the bedchamber, where Telephos is warned by the serpent sent by the goddess Athena in the last moments before he marries Auge, his own mother[37]. The relief shows the kline, the remains of the figure of Telephos and the remains of the warning serpent. The »curtain« serves both to emphasise the drama and to mark the intimate setting of the interior. Also, in Pompeian wall painting, intimate scenes are also sometimes depicted in front of a laterally stretched velum[38].

When the background is completely covered by cloth, without enabling the slightest view of what lies behind, the velum is intended to emphasise the scene in front. This is the case with the well-known relief depicting the apotheosis of Homer found at a villa in Bovillae, south of Rome[39] dating to the fourth quarter of the second century BC, and with several 3rd and 4th style mythological wall paintings of the Vesuvian area[40].

---

33 Miramontes Seijas, *Latin Lexicon of Textiles*, p. 176 s. v. Velum-i/2.

34 Naples, MANN, inv. 9016, from Pompeii (1,3,18), 3rd style, ca. 30 BC – AD 54: La Rocca, *La pittura di un'impero*, p. 230 (with fig.), p. 295 cat. IV,2.

35 cf. a terracotta relief in Rome depicting Odysseus being recognized by the sheperd Eumaios and the dog Argos upon his homecoming: Rome, National Museum, inv. 62750: Eberlein, *Apparitio regis*, pp. 45, 145 cat. no. 1. 235 fig. 35. And cf. the frieze in Rome at the Forum Transitorium, which shows how the goddess Minerva taught women to spin and weave and the punishment of Arachne, who had challenged her in this art, as a cautionary parable for anyone who should dare to question the political power of Rome. In the background of the figurative scenes, beside the looms, some decoratively knotted vela are shown. Most likely, these should be understood as indicating a protected indoor setting where the textile contest is held: D. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, Yale, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 193 fig. 161.

36 Munich, Glyptothek, inv. 206: Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, p. 196 fig. 210 (ca. 200 BC, said to originate from ancient Corinth).

37 Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen, inv. 20 – 21: F. Queyrel, *L'Autel de Pergame: Images et pouvoir en Grèce d'Asie*, Paris, Picard, 2005, pp. 80 – 81 Scenes 15 – 16, p. 97 interpretation of scenes 15 – 16.

38 Rome, National Museum, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 1188: Villa Farnesina, detail of the decoration of cubiculum D, right wall of the antechamber: Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, *Fresques des villas romaines*, fig. p. 232; M. Baggio, ›Amorosi gesti‹, in M. L. Catoni and G. Zuchtriegel (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022, p. 97 fig. 2; M. Salvadori, ›Concubitos varios Venerisque figuras: fortuna di un repertorio erotico nell'arte romana‹, in M. L. Catoni and G. Zuchtriegel (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022, p. 130 fig. 9. Further: Naples, MANN, inv. 27696; from Pompeii, 4th style: Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, pp. 172 – 173 cat. no. 348; Anguissola, *Intimità a Pompei*, p. 55 fig. 12.

39 London, British Museum, inv. 1819,0811 (221 – 205 BC): Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, p. 15 fig. 4.

40 Daedalus presents the wooden bull backed by a green cloth and thus particularly emphasised to Pasiphae, in Pompeii, in the house of the Vettians, in the Ixion room: Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, *Fresques des villas romaines*, fig. p. 47; fig. p. 342; Eros is playing the cithara on a griffin char in Herculaneum: Naples, MANN, inv. 9178, from Herculaneum, House of the Stags, cryptoporticus, 4th style: Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, pp. 154 – 155 cat. no. 228a; Nava, *Rosso pompeiano*, fig. pp. 164 – 165; Guidobaldi and Esposito, *Ercolano*, fig. p. 281. In the Fullonica of Sestius Venustus (I, 3,18) in Pompeii, the velum protects and emphasises a banquet attended by several women: Naples, MANN, inv. 9016.

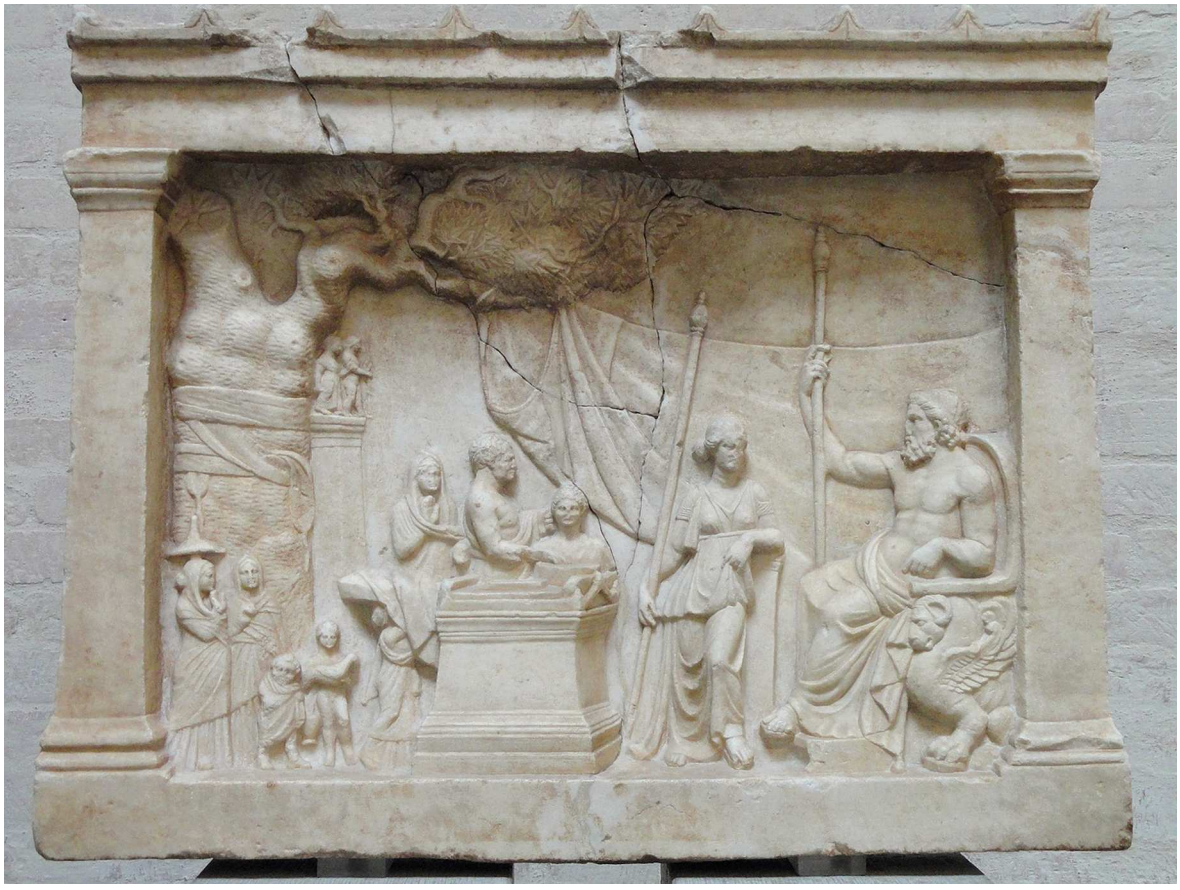


Fig. 2 Greek votive relief, Glyptothek, Munich, inv. 206.

In some cases, the laterally stretched velum allows a view of the architecture or trees behind it.

The Ikarios relief type[41] derives from an original created at the end of the second century BC, and depicts a poet being visited by Dionysus and his entourage. Here, the fabric is attached to the architecture in such a way that it provides a view of the sanctuaries in the background. A Neronian marble relief fragment in Rome[42] shows a lateral velum in front of a temenos wall and a temple. A lateral velum can also serve to further delineate a location in the sanctuary, as can be seen on the late Augustan marble base from Sorrento[43] and on a mosaic from Ampurias depicting the sacrifice of Iphigenia[44]. On a first century AD funerary altar in Este that shows a banquet scene[45], the tree behind the velum signals an outdoor setting. The architectural or natural depictions in the background of

41 Paris, Louvre, inv. MA 1606: G. Sauron, *Römische Kunst. Von der mittleren Republik bis Augustus*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 2013, p. 78 fig. 60; London, British Museum, inv. 1805,0703.123: Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, p. 197 fig. 211; Naples, MANN, inv. 6713: S. Settis and M. L. Catoni, *La forza del bello: l'arte greca conquista l'Italia*, exhibition catalogue, Mantova, Palazzo Tè, 29 marzo – 6 luglio 2008, Milan, Skira, 2008, p. 267 (fig.) p. 351 cat. no. 95 (L. Franchi Viceré).

42 Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. 1426: J. C. Balty (ed.), *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum,* Los Angeles, Getty, 2005, p. 374, IV, 1b Representations of Cult Places, cat. 14b pl. 42.

43 C. Cecamore, ›La base di Sorrento: le figure e lo spazio fra mito e storia‹, *Römische Mitteilungen*, vol. 111, 2004, p. 110 fig. 4, p. 111 fig. 5.

44 Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, p. 146 fig. 150.

45 Este, Museo Nazionale Atestino, said to have been found in Aquileia: Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, p. 75 fig. 37.

the laterally stretched velum simultaneously expand the depth effect of the respective scene.

Jumping to Hellenistic tomb reliefs from Asia Minor[46], the background is usually completely undecorated. If there is a decorated relief background, lateral vela/parapetasmata, which are depicted in this context from the second century BC onwards, are as important as the architecture[47]. The lateral velum is (almost) always linked to so-called Totenmahl scenes, the representation of a banquet. The velum/parapetasma might be attached to a column, as on a tomb relief in Iznik /Nikaia from the first century BC[48]. The banquet is held in front of it, as on a tomb relief created before the middle of the second century BC, now housed in the Istanbul Museum[49]. In most cases, there is not even a minimal view of what lies beyond. In all these representations, the aim is by no means to cover something up, hide it, or make it invisible, but, on the contrary, to provide a frame for the main depiction in the foreground, to centre, emphasise it, and highlight the festivity and joie de vivre. The popularity of delimiting the sides with a velum at banquets continues unabated into Late Antiquity[50].

However, since the second century BC, a parallel possibility existed: parts of the armament or the upper body, face, and helmet of one or more armed warriors could stand out against the background of the parapetasma (Fig. 3)[51]. In these cases, the parapetasma functions as a means of introducing an additional time or narrative level. Through the use of background symbols such as a shield, a horse protome, or men in arms[52], an additional reference to the ideal of the deceased as a daring fighter, and his heroic act is put into the picture. The use of the lateral velum/parapetasma in these cases serves as an artifice to add an additional layer of narrative and meaning to the image.

Let us stay briefly with Hellenistic funerary monuments. On the grave stelae in Syrian Antioch, a local, particularly characteristic background design can be observed starting in the second century BC and leading in to the first century AD: While mostly mostly single-figure or two-figure scenes appear the foreground, two burning torches and a cloth stretched between them can be seen in

46 For these and more: J. Fabricius, *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs: Grabrepräsentation und Wertvorstellungen in ostgriechischen Städten*, Munich, Pfeil, 1999, p. 84 fn. 2: H 139 pl. 2b, p. 84 fn. 2: H 163 pl. 2a; E. Pfuhl and H. Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, vols. 1 – 2, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1977 – 1979, 1429 pl. 208 (whole stele) pl. 240 (detail) from Daskyleion in Bursa = Fabricius, *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs*, p. 84 fn. 2, pl. 34a; Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1511 pl. 218, 1544, 1647, 1656 pl. 242, 1846 pl. 265 = Fabricius, *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs*, fig. 30 pl. 18a; Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1869 pl. 268, 1898 pl. 272, 1899 pl. 273, 1908 = Fabricius, *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs*, p. 84 fn. 2: fig. 15; Samos, Vathy Museum, no. 216: Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1863.

47 Fabricius, *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs*, pp. 84 – 85.

48 Iznik (Nikaia), Archaeological Museum, dated to the 1st c. BC (with secondary, now visible inscription): Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1656 pl. 242.

49 Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, inv. 2200: Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 843 pl. 123 (middle of the 2nd c. BC).

50 Mosaic from Antioch, 4th c. AD, now in Worcester, Museum of Art, inv. 1936.26: Kondoleon, *Exhibition Antioch*, p. 121 cat. no. 9; Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, 14. Ivory pyxis in Baltimore, 6th c. AD, Walters Art Museum, inv. 71.64: Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, p. 198 fig. 116. Manuscript of Vergilius Romanus, feast of Dido: Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, colour pl. 16.

51 Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1908 pl. 274 (from the isle of Teos, beginning of the 2nd c. BC); Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1899 pl. 273 (from the isle of Teos, 3rd quarter of the 2nd c. BC).

52 Bursa, Archaeological Museum, from Daskyleion (2nd c. BC): Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1429 pl. 208, p. 403 no. 1429b pl. 240; Lucca, National Museum, inv. No A-1, mid 2nd c. BC: Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1869 pl. 268; see also Macedonian marble funerary stelae from the 1st c. BC: stele of Dionysophon, Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum, inv. 1935B: T. Stefanidou-Tiveriou, ›The Late Hellenistic Private Portraits in Macedonia: From the Heroic Realm to Realism‹, in S. Dillon, M. Prusac-Lindhagen, and A. K. Landgren (eds.), *The Portrait Face. Understanding Realism and Verism in Greek and Roman Portraits*, Athens, Norwegian Institute at Athens, 2021, p. 55 fig. 2a. Stele of Caius, Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum, inv. 10138: Stefanidou-Tiveriou, ›The Late Hellenistic Private Portraits in Macedonia‹, p. 65 fig. 8a.

Fig. 3 Hellenistic funerary stele from the island of Teos.

Fig. 4 Funerary stele dated to the first century BC, from ancient Antioch-on-the-Orontes.

the background (fig. 4)[53]. Torches are inherently polysemantic. They can be of relevance in the context of the worship of the gods, and weddings, but of course they can refer to the laying out and escorting of the dead into the afterlife[54]. In the case of the Antiochian grave stelae, the combination of torches and the cloth stretched between them suggests that the special borderline between life and death is implied.

And this could also be the case for another type of tomb. Numerous loculus closure slabs made of limestone have been preserved from the tomb buildings of the necropolises in Palmyra, often with elaborately decorated portrait relief busts of the deceased, which were originally painted or even gilded. Now that these have been collected, examined, and studied particularly closely in the last few years, it has become clear that in less than 20 percent of the cases, the background of the respective portrait decorated with a cloth/curtain in relief. The velum is always attached to two medallions and additionally decorated with a palm leaf at these points (Fig. 5)[55]. In previous research, it was argued that the loculus slabs decorated in

this way should be dated to the second -third century AD and that they can be linked to those who had already died at the time of the tomb's construction[56]. Recent studies by Signe Krag, however, show that the origin of this design lies in the first century BC: The velum and palm leaf either form a boundary between life and death – the palms, evergreen like ivy, are signs of victory over death – or serve to mark a heroic act, so a heroization symbol, or could even merely be a means of emphasis. What is quite remarkable, however, is the consistent use of that this background in Palmyrene funerary sculpture for about three centuries from the first century BC onwards. Since one of the early Palmyrene stelae shows the half-figure of the deceased not in front of the velum but behind it[57], it cannot be ruled out that the velum was indeed conceived as a boundary between the worlds of the living and of the dead.

In the Roman Imperial period, the laterally stretched velum is frequently found on sarcophagus reliefs. Not only portrait busts of the tomb owner and full-length portraits[58] are backed by a velum, but also entire scenes. In the case of portraits, the cloth is usually attached on both sides by a decorative knot to an undefined background[59]. This is sometimes held on both sides by Erotes with[60] or without a raised torch[61], or by personifications of seasons[62]. This framing serves, as is usually inferred from the highly frequent occurrence in sarcophagus art, to emphasise the representation[63] shown in the foreground.

If a birth scene is framed by a parapetasma, as is the case on the left side of the lid of the Portonaccio sarcophagus in Rome[64], it is perhaps because a protected, specific area of a house is depicted or because special attention should be paid to this episode. In Roman funerary art of the second century AD, a velum often provides a backdrop for

53 Antakya, Archaeological Museum of Hatay, inv. 15747 (2nd c. BC): E. Laflı and J. Meischner, ›Hellenistische und römische Grabstelen im Archäologischen Museum von Hatay in Antakya‹, *Österreichische Jahreshefte*, vol. 77, 2008, pp. 149 – 150 fig. 6; Antakya, Archaeological Museum of Hatay, inv. 16831: Laflı and Meischner, ›Hellenistische und römische Grabstelen‹, pp. 157 – 158 fig. 19 (middle of the 1st c. BC); Antakya, Archaeological Museum of Hatay, inv. 8986: Laflı and Meischner, ›Hellenistische und römische Grabstelen‹, p. 157 fig. 18 (1st c. AD).

54 F. Sinn and K. S. Freyberger, *Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense, Vatikanstadt, Katalog der Skulpturen, 1. Die Grabdenkmäler, 2 Die Ausstattung des Hateriergrabes*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1996, p. 47.

55 S. Krag, *Funerary Representations of Palmyrene Women: From the First Century BC to the Third Century AD*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2018.

56 cf. M. Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 88.

57 Stele of Aitibel in the Museum of Palmyra, inv. A 91/90, 50 BC – AD 50: R. Raja, ›Funerary Portraiture in Palmyra: Portrait Habit at a Crossroads or a Signifier of Local Identity?‹, in M. Blömer and R. Raja (eds.), *Funerary Portraiture in Greater Roman Syria*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2019, p. 98 fig. 7.6.

58 On portraits on sarcophagi backed by a velum/parapetasma: M. Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, pp. 64 – 66. For a strigillated sarcophagus with full-body portraits of a woman and a man at both corners: Rome, Capitoline Museum, Palazzo Nuovo, inv. MCD 9/S (inner courtyard): S. Birk, *Depicting the Dead. Self-Representation and Commemoration on Roman Sarcophagi with Portraits*, Aarhus, University Press, 2013, p. 80 fig. 37, p. 222 cat. no. 82 (AD 320 – 330).

59 For example, on the sarcophagus lid of P. Aelius Myron and Aurelia Agrippina in Rome: Rome, Vatican Museums, Cortile del Belvedere: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 27 fig. 9; p. 253 cat. no. 269 (3rd c. AD), as well as on the sarcophagus lid with a female portrait in Rome: Rome, Catacombs of Praetextus, Museum, inv. 21: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 82 fig. 41, p. 216 cat. no. 49 (AD 260 – 270).

60 Sarcophagus lid in Avignon, Musée Calvet: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 25 fig. 6, cat. no. 15; p. 211 (early 4th c. AD).

61 Rome, in the Necropolis under St. Peter in the Vatican, Mausoleum H: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 28 fig. 10; p. 291 cat. no. 512 (AD 268 – 281); Rome, St. Peter, lion's hunt: G. Koch and H. Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, Munich, Beck, 1982, no. 86 with fig.

62 Koch and Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, p. 312 no. 338 (Tunis 3158).

63 Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, pp. 64 – 65; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 48.

64 Rome, National Museum, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 112327: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 57 fig. 23, p. 312 cat. no. 626 (Late Antonine).

Fig. 5 Palmyrene limestone loculus slab, second half of the second century AD, now in Damascus.

the laying out of the dead, e. g. on the sarcophagus of Crepereia Tryphaena in Rome from AD 150–160[65] and on the sarcophagus of a young girl[66] in London from the third quarter of the second century AD. This may well correspond to the real customs of a presentation ceremony[67]. Similarly, on a loculus plate from Ostia from the late second century AD, cloth panels are draped over a couple reclining on a kline at a banquet[68], because this was how it was actually used at outdoor banquets[69]. If in some cases it can be argued that the velum is depicted as it was actually used, this cannot be said in general. On the so-called wedding sarcophagi, the dextrarum iunctio[70] is backed by a velum. In the case of the dextrarum iunctio on the so-called Annona sarcophagus[71], this velum even extends over the entire scene.

On a sarcophagus in St. Petersburg[72], a woman and a man are depicted in full-body view on the left and right corners respectively, each of them being held up by the velum, while an opening door is depicted in the centre field, from which the soul guide Mercury/Hermes is peering out. In the search for patterns, a look at the ground-breaking work on Roman sarcophagi by Koch and Sichtermann reveals that all kinds of other themes are also frequently particularly emphasised, e. g. the god Dionysus is often surrounded by a velum, even the three Graces[73], and very often the central figure[74]. In the Imperial Period, vela were immensely popular in sarcophagi scenes. The mythological friezes of the Severan theatre in Hierapolis in Asia Minor reveal an almost inflationary use of vela. Here, vela are not only used to back mythical birth scenes[75] but also numerous other scenes of the same frieze were given this type of background[76], which would support the thesis that the velum is used for general emphasis.

From the first century BC onwards, painted vela appear in illusionist wall paintings and interior designs of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Pompeian styles. One of the best-known examples is found in a late

65 Rome, Capitoline Museum, Centrale Montemartini, inv. AC 459: A. Rottloff, *Lebensbilder römischer Frauen*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 2006, p. 25 fig. 10.

66 London, British Museum, inv. GR 1805.7–3.1994: A. Backe-Dahmen, ›Sandals for the Living, Sandals for the Dead. Roman Children and their Footwear‹, in S. Pickup and S. Waite (eds.), *Shoes, Slippers, and Sandals: Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity*, London, Routledge, 2019, p. 272 fig. 12.6.

67 E. g. at the tomb of the Haterii on the so-called crane relief: Vatican Museum, inv. 9998: Sinn and Freyberger, *Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense*, pp. 51–57 cat. no. 6, especially p. 53 and pls. 11; 13,2; 15,1. Sinn and Freyberger, *Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense*, p. 53: interpret the velum to mean the room is thereby defined as an interior space.

68 Rome, National Museum, inv. 115174: Koch and Sichtermann, Römische Sarkophage, no. 107.

69 The same applies to a sarcophagus lid of the 3rd quarter of the 3rd c. AD, with the depiction of an outdoor picnic, kept in the Vatican Museums, Galleria Lapidaria, inv. 160a: Dunbabin, Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World, p. 131 fig. 76.

70 Sarcophagus in Rome, S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura: Koch and Sichtermann, Römische Sarkophage, no. 97; strigillated sarcophagus in Rome, S. Saba: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 41 fig. 13, p. 317 cat. no. 646 (end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th c. AD); strigillated sarcophagus in Rome, S. Sabina: ibid., p. 30 fig. 16; p. 317 cat. no. 647 (late 3rd c. AD); ibid., p. 62 fig. 24, p. 321 cat. no. 668 (AD 180–190); Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, inv. 1987: ibid., p. 65 fig. 26, p. 317 cat. no. 648 (ca. AD 200).

71 Rome, National Museum, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 40799: Koch and Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, no. 102; Birk, Depicting the Dead, p. 320 cat. no. 666 (AD 270-ies); Koch and Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, no. 102.

72 St. Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. A 889: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 72 fig. 33 cat. no. 634.

73 Withington Hall (Chelford): Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 69 fig. 29, p. 239 cat. no. 183 (AD 220–230).

74 Strigillated sarcophagus: Rome, Palazzo Lazzaroni: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, p. 83 fig. 43, p. 246 cat. no. 228 (first half of the 3rd c. AD); columnar sarcophagus with representation of a family, Rome, Vatican Museums, Cortile del Belvedere, inv. 871: ibid., p. 83 fig. 44, pp. 227–228 cat. no. 114 (ca. AD 240); strigillated sarcophagus, Pisa, Camposanto C 10 est: ibid., p. 81 fig. 39, 225 cat. no. 102 (middle of the 3rd c. AD).

75 U. Kelp, *Grabdenkmal und lokale Identität: ein Bild der Landschaft Phrygien in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Bonn, Habelt, 2015, p. 202 pl. 65 fig. 1 (Leto giving birth to Apollon), and p. 202 pl. 65 fig. 2 (Leto giving birth to Artemis).

76 F. D'Andria and R. Ritti (eds.), *Hierapolis: Scavi e Ricerche 2, Le sculture del teatro: I rilievi con i cicli di Apollo e Artemide*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1985, pl. 16, l; Kelp, *Grabdenkmal und lokale Identität*, pp. 144–145 pl. 45 fig. 1 (Apollo playing the lyra); D'Andria and Ritti, *Hierapolis*, pl. 16,2; Kelp, *Grabdenkmal und lokale Identität*, pp. 144–145 pl. 45 fig. 2 (Marsyas and a Muse).

Republican sanctuary in Brescia and dated to the second quarter of the first century BC.[77].Here, the plinth zone is decorated with a painted white curtain hanging from rings suspended on a white cord. A garland is either woven into the curtain fabric or it additionally hangs in front of it. An explanation for such curtains in the plinth area could be the fact that in Antiquity, fabric was sometimes stretched between the legs of kline[78], as can also be seen in a scene of the tomb of the Haterii[79] from around 120 AD. However, the primary function of the curtain bases in the wall paintings of houses, just as with the curtains within architecture, lies in the painterly illusion that they create[80], i. e. in the enhancement of three-dimensionality and depth effect, as well as in the pleasure gained by adding confusion with different levels[81]. The same can be said for the lateral velum within architectural representations in Pompeian wall painting. In the 2nd style in the House of the Labyrinth, there is a curtain between the architecture in the foreground and in the background in the so-called oecus corinthius[82]. On another wall of the same house, this cloth is even guided by eyelets along a wire[83]. This results in a sophisticated play on aspects of closeness and distance, three-dimensionality, and an element of surprise. By using such stretched cloths, which are parts of a painted three-dimensional system like objects and architecture, the boundaries are tested by setting limits but at the same time questioning them[84].

Theatre Curtains as a Source of Inspiration?

Since laterally stretched vela were used in Pompeian wall painting and also in the context of theatres, an association between the two uses it at least suggested. A villa with 4th Pompeian style wall paintings, dating to the years shortly before AD 79, discovered under the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Positano[85], offers glimpses of the villa's triclinium[86]. On the north wall of this triclinium, two stuccoed Erotes, each holding a

77 A. Haug, *Decor–Räume in pompejanischen Stadthäusern. Ausstattungsstrategien und Rezeptionsformen*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020; Pollitt, *The Cambridge History of Painting*, pl. 8.7; M. Salvadori, ›Das spätrepublikanische Heiligtum in Brescia und die frühen Formen des Zweiten Stils‹, in I. Baldassarre (ed.), *Römische Malerei. Vom Hellenismus bis zur Spätantike*, Cologne, DuMont, 2002, pp. 81 – 85; Salvadori, ›La decorazione parietale nella tarda Repubblica‹, p. 81 with fig.; Baggio and Salvadori, ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica‹, p. 300 fig. 3.

78 In several wall paintings of the so-called Lupanar in Pompeii, the empty space created between one kline leg and the other is adorned by cloths draped in this way: s. A. Haug, *Öffentliche Räume in Pompeji. Zum Design urbaner Atmosphären*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023, p. 332 fig. 334.

79 Rome, Vatican Museums, inv. 9999: Sinn and Freyberger, *Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense*, pp. 45 – 51 cat. no. 5, p. 47 pl. 8, pl. 9.2; Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, fig. p. 166, pp. 196 – 199, p. 196 fig. 164.

80 The examples have been collected by: Salvadori, ›La decorazione parietale nella tarda Repubblica‹, pp. 84 – 85 with figs.; Baggio and Salvadori, ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica‹, p. 301.

81 S. O'Connell, ›Surface and Suggestion: The Materiality of Curtains in Roman Wall Painting‹, in M. C. Beaulieu and V. Toillon (eds.), *Greek and Roman Painting and the Digital Humanities*, London, Routledge, 2022, pp. 150 – 151.

82 House of the Labyrinth, oecus corinthius (43): Sauron, *Römische Kunst*, p. 217 (colour foto); Haug, *Decor–Räume in pompejanischen Stadthäusern*, p. 231 fig. 154.

83 House of the Labyrinth, cubiculum (46), vestibule, west wall and north side of the alcove: Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, *Fresques des villas romaines*, p. 172; Cited by Baggio and Salvadori, ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica‹, p. 301 fn. 46 with further references; Haug, *Decor–Räume in pompejanischen Stadthäusern*, p. 250 fig. 173. On the detail of the birds sitting on the curtain wire: ibid., p. 250 fig. 174.

84 O'Connell, ›Surface and Suggestion‹, p. 156.

85 G. Di Maio et al., *Nella villa romana di Positano*, Archeologia vesuviana, Archeologia Viva, no. 183, 2017, pp. 8 – 19; L. Jacobelli, ›Decorazioni pittoriche e maestranze nella villa romana di Positano‹, in A. Campanelli and M. A. Iannelli (eds.), *La villa d'ozio*, *MarPositano*, 2017, pp. 162 – 176.

86 Jacobelli, ›Decorazioni pittoriche e maestranze nella villa romana di Positano‹, p. 162 pl. 1; pp. 165 – 166 fig. 5; A. Campanelli et al., ›The Roman Villa of Positano‹, in A. Marzano and G. Métraux (eds.), *The Roman Villa in the Mediterranean Basin: Late Republic to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 122 fig. 7.3 pl. 5.

green curtain with both hands, is also executed in one piece and embroidered in golden yellow. The curtain is slightly folded, depicting fabulous sea creatures and diving dolphins, followed by architecture. The east wall[87] is decorated with blue curtains integrated into and in front of the architectural decoration. In the 4th Pompeian style, the decoration is designed in the pattern of the so-called »luxury façades«, exhibiting a high degree of three-dimensionality, for which scaenae frontes could have been the model, but there is also a connection to the lateral vela that were suspended between the columns in the house[88]. On the other hand, within this style, vela can also be reduced to an ornament. For example, a monochrome blue architectural painting can be seen in Herculaneum in the House of the Great Portal and, at mid-height, a white curtain with weapons and tropaion[89]. Several vaults of the 4th style in Nero's Domus Aurea also use the curtain motif in a set-piece and ornamental manner[90]. In a wall painting from Herculaneum, from the apsidal hall of the palaestra, one sees at least four different levels of representation packed into one mural. The foremost level is defined by a heavily pleated curtain at the very top[91]. In this case, one is reminded of an aulaeum/theatre curtain. Among theatre curtains, the aulaeum, the stage curtain that is dropped into a trench at the beginning of the performance and raised at the end – so exactly opposite to today's practice[92] – is to be distinguished from the curtain that serves as the background to individual scenes, the siparium. According to written sources[93], the aulaeum is a huge piece of cloth, often decorated with mythological depictions, and attached to wood. In most cases, its presence can only be proven by finding traces of where it was stored on the stage. A marble relief from Pompeii depicting a theatre scene shows a scenic background used on stage, a siparium[94], temporarily mounted on stage in the background. A smaller rectangular cloth, also called velarium/velum, which was carried around the theatre on strings[95], was used to distribute gifts, called sparsiones to the audience. As seen in this depiction within a 4th style fantasy architecture[96], dried fruits, flowers and bread were dropped from it into the crowd, as well as birds escaping, much to the surprise and delight of the audience[97].

87 Jacobelli, ›Decorazioni pittoriche e maestranze nella villa romana di Positano‹, p. 168 fig. 11, p. 169 fig. 12: Campanelli, ›The Roman Villa of Positano‹, p. 123 fig. 7.4.

88 For the occurrence of draperies in the wall paintings of Herculaneum and Pompeii: Jacobelli, ›Decorazioni pittoriche e maestranze nella villa romana di Positano‹, p. 172.

89 Herculaneum, House of the Great Portal, diaeta (6), south wall, 4th style, Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, *Fresques des villas romaines*, p. 371.378 – 379; Guidobaldi and Esposito, *Ercolano*, fig. pp. 206 – 207.214 – 215.

90 P. G. Meyboom and E. M. Moormann, *Le decorazioni dipinte e marmoree della Domus Aurea di Nerone a Roma,* Leuven, Peeters, 2013, fig. 23,4; Volta delle Civette: I. Iacopi, *Domvs avrea*, Milano, Electa, 1999, p. 138 fig. 131; Meyboom and Moormann, *Le decorazioni dipinte e marmoree della Domus Aurea*, fig. 29.3; yellow vault: Iacopi, *Domvs avrea*, p. 143 fig. 135; Meyboom and Moormann, *Le decorazioni dipinte e marmoree della Domus Aurea*, fig. 31,7.

91 Naples, MANN, inv. 9735, from the palestra of Herculaneum, Apsidal Hall, 4th style: Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, pp. 142 – 143 cat. no.139; Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, *Fresques des villas romaines*, fig. p. 373; Guidobaldi and Esposito, *Ercolano*, fig. p. 231.

92 P. v. Möllendorf, ›Technologies of Performance. Machins, Props, Dramaturgy‹, in M. Revermann (ed.), *A Cultural History of Theatre in Antiquity*, vol. 1, New York, Bloomsbury, 2017, p. 164. 219 fn. 7.

93 Sear, *Roman Theatres*, p. 90.

94 Sear, *Roman Theatres*, p. 8; For a definite depiction of a siparium see: Graefe, *Vela erunt*, pl. 116,1.

95 In detail: Graefe, *Vela erunt*, pp. 114 – 116.

96 Naples, MANN, inv. 9863, from Herculaneum: Aßkamp, *Luxus und Dekadenz*, p. 221 cat. 3.8 (S. Vendito).

97 Naples, MANN, inv. 9624; From the House of M. Fabius Rufus, Triclinium, AD 50 – 79: Graefe, *Vela erunt*, p. 114 pl. 119; For a similar wall painting in the House of the Wild Boar: Graefe, *Vela erunt*, pls. 120 – 122,3; see also the wall painting in Naples, MANN, inv. 8963, from Herculaneum, 3rd style: Borriello, *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, pp. 130 – 131 cat. no. 55.

Results

For the ancient terms velum/parapetasma, i. e. large, stretched cloths, their design, possible uses, and functions were examined on the basis of diverse ancient reliefs and paintings. Vela often have an ephemeral, space-structuring effect, and their depictions reflect one facet of ancient living habits. Many paintings reflect the real use of a velum at entrances and doorways within ephemeral (festive) architectures as horizontally stretched awnings. The laterally stretched version was popularly used as sunshades, windbreaks, as a means of directing the focus toward what is in front, or to create a more intimate area within a larger space, including at banquets, and it but particular emphasis on the scene in the foreground. According to the evidence in the images, the use of these »curtains«, however, is also an emerging phenomenon in Hellenistic art and an artistic means of simultaneously adding another level of meaning within an image. The claim that the velum is used to cover or hide something cannot be supported; instead, on the Hellenistic tomb stelae from Asia Minor, a laterally stretched velum creates the possibility of a second, allegorical narrative level. The same applies to Roman mural paintings starting with the 2nd Pompeian style where the laterally stretched velum, in interplay with the similarly painted architecture, creates a clear expansion of spatial perspective and an optical challenge by suggesting several levels of reality. The velum appears in contexts of festivities, ephemeral happiness, and special serenity. Sometimes it serves to create and enhance the sacred atmosphere of a pictorial representation. It is questionable whether it can also mean a demarcation between life (in front of the curtain) and death (behind the curtain) in some images, or a heroization symbol. It is true that the parapetasma/velum is often depicted in funerary art but the worldly aspects of happiness are indeed emphasised within them. Vela/parapetasmata are attached to architecture, e. g. pillars or tree branches, or are inconspicuous and not specially placed in the picture. Curtains, in the sense of cloths strung from rings on a wire or rope, are known from the late second century BC onwards in Pompeian illusionist wall painting. In Pompeii, there is also evidence of door curtains being guided by eyelets and rings on ropes or poles, which are often depicted in the funerary art of the North-Western provinces in the Roman Imperial period, in order to set a scene as being indoors or as a ›pars pro toto‹ for the house. In this line of tradition, Late Antique and Byzantine two-part curtains hanging from wires or ropes running through eyelets or from rods, the so-called ›cortinae‹, come the closest to our modern idea of curtains.

Figure Credits

Fig. 1: akg-images, Naples, National Archaeological Museum; Fig. 2: after Wikimedia, photo Daderot, retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Relief_rural_votive_place_-_206_-_Glyptothek_Munich_-_DSC07363.jpg&oldid=670424446; Fig. 3: after Pfuhl and Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1899, pl. 273; Fig. 4: after Laflı and Meischner, ›Hellenistische und römische Grabstelen im Archäologischen Museum von Hatay in Antakya‹, 2008, p. 158 fig. 19, courtesy of E. Laflı; Fig. 5: akg-images / Erich Lessing AKG184337.

Bibliography

Allason-Jones, L., ›Pillow Talk‹, in T. Ivleva, J. De Bruin, and M. Driessen (eds.), *Embracing the Provinces: Society and Material Culture of the Roman Frontier Regions, Festschrift Carol van Driel-Murray*, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2018, pp. 181 – 188.

Allison, P. M., *The Insula of the Menander at Pompeii, Vol. III: The Finds, A Contextual Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2006.

Anguissola, A., *Intimità a Pompei: Riservatezza, condivisione e prestigio negli ambienti ad alcova di Pompei*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2010.

Aßkamp, R. (ed.), *Luxus und Dekadenz: römisches Leben am Golf von Neapel*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007.

Backe-Dahmen, A., ›Sandals for the Living, Sandals for the Dead. Roman Children and their Footwear‹, in S. Pickup and S. Waite (eds.), *Shoes, Slippers, and Sandals: Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity*, London, Routledge, 2019, pp. 263 – 282.

Baggio, M., ›Amorosi gesti‹, in M. L. Catoni and G. Zuchtriegel (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022, pp. 95 – 109.

Baggio, M. and Salvadori, M., ›Tessuti, velari e tende nella pittura parietale antica: alcune riflessioni‹, in M. Cupitò, M. Vidale, and A. Angelini (eds.), *Beyond Limits. Studi in onore di Giovanni Leonardi*, Padua, LIT, 2017, pp. 295 – 303.

Balty, J. C. (ed.), *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum*, vol. 4, Los Angeles, Getty, 2005.

Birk, S., *Depicting the Dead. Self-Representation and Commemoration on Roman Sarcophagi with Portraits,* Aarhus, University Press, 2013.

Borriello, M. R., *Le collezioni del Museo Nazionale di Napoli: 1,1: I mosaici, le pitture, gli oggetti di uso quotidiano, gli argenti, le terrecotte invetriate, i vetri, i cristalli, gli avori*, Rome, De Luca Ed. d'Arte, 1989.

Bosche, S., *Die Selbstrepräsentation von Handwerkern und Händlern im Grabkontext in der Provinz Gallia Belgica. Aspekte der Vermittlung sozialer Identität in einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft*, Heidelberg, Propylaeum, 2015.

Calandra, E., ›L'occasione e l'eterno. La tenda di Tolomeo Filadelfo nei palazzi di Alessandria. Parte prima. Materiali per la ricostruzione‹, *Lanx*, vol. 1, 2008, pp. 26 – 74.

Calandra, E., ›A proposito di arredi. Prima e dopo la tenda di Tolomeo Filadelfo‹, *Lanx*, vol. 5, 2010, pp. 1 – 38.

Campanelli, A. et al., ›The Roman Villa of Positano‹, in A. Marzano and G. Métraux (eds.), *The Roman Villa in the Mediterranean Basin: Late Republic to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 120 – 124.

Carroll, M., *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Catoni, M. L. and Zuchtriegel, G. (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022.

Cecamore, C., ›La base di Sorrento: le figure e lo spazio fra mito e storia‹, *Römische Mitteilungen*, vol. 111, 2004, pp. 105 – 141.

D'Andria, F. and Ritti, T. (eds.), *Hierapolis: Scavi e Ricerche 2, Le sculture del teatro: I rilievi con i cicli di Apollo e Artemide,* Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1985.

De Caro, S. (ed.), *Alla ricerca di Iside: analisi, studi, restauri dell'Iseo pompeiano nel Museo di Napoli,* Soprintendenza Archeologica per le Province di Napoli e Caserta, Rome, Arti, 1992.

Di Maio, G. et al., ›Nella villa romana di Positano‹, *Archeologia vesuviana, Archeologia Viva*, no. 183, 2017, pp. 8 – 19.

Dunbabin, K. M. D., *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Dunbabin, K. M. D., *The Roman Banquet Images of Conviviality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Eberlein, J. K., *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis: Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 1982.

EDR Epigraphic Database Roma, http://www.edr-edr.it/

Emme, B., ›Zur Rekonstruktion des Bankettbaus von Ptolemaios II‹, *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, vol. 1, 2013, pp. 31 – 55.

Esposito, D., ›Decorative Principles between the Public and Private Spheres in Pompeii: Contexts, Patrons and Artisans‹, in A. Haug and M. Taylor Lauritsen (eds.), *Principles of Decoration in the Roman World*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021, pp. 53 – 69.

Fabricius, J., *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs: Grabrepräsentation und Wertvorstellungen in ostgriechischen Städten*, Munich, Pfeil, 1999.

Ghedini, F. (ed.), *Ovidio – amori, miti e altre storie*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2018.

Ghedini, F., ›Seduzione e eros fra parola e immagine‹, in M. L. Catoni and G. Zuchtriegel (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022, pp. 47 – 59.

Graefe, R., *Vela erunt: die Zeltdächer der römischen Theater und ähnlicher Anlagen*, 2 vols., Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1979.

Guidobaldi, M. P. and Esposito, D. (eds.), *Ercolano, colori da una città sepolta*, San Giovanni Lupatoto, Arsenale, 2012.

Guimier-Sorbets, A.-M. et al., *Mosaics of Alexandria: Pavements of Greek and Roman Egypt*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press and Alexandrie, 2021.

Haug, A., *Decor–Räume in pompejanischen Stadthäusern. Ausstattungsstrategien und Rezeptionsformen*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020.

Haug, A., ›Wohnen mit neuen und alten Bildern‹, in A. Haug and A. Hoffmann (eds.), *Die neuen Bilder des Augustus. Nacht und Medien im antiken Rom*, Bucerius Kunst Forum Hamburg, 8. Oktober 2022 bis 15. Januar 2023, Munich, Hirmer, 2022, pp. 146 – 161.

Haug, A., *Öffentliche Räume in Pompeji. Zum Design urbaner Atmosphären*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023.

Hurschmann, R., ›Vorhang‹, in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), Der Neue Pauly, vol. 12, no. 2, Stuttgart, Metzler, 2002, pp. 334 – 335.

Iacopi, I., *Domvs avrea*, Milan, Electa, 1999.

Jacobelli, L., ›Decorazioni pittoriche e maestranze nella villa romana di Positano‹, in A. Campanelli and M. A. Iannelli (eds.), *La villa d'ozio*, *MarPositano*, 2017, pp. 162 – 176.

Kelp, U., *Grabdenkmal und lokale Identität: ein Bild der Landschaft Phrygien in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Bonn, Habelt, 2015.

Koch, G. and Sichtermann, H., *Römische Sarkophage*, Munich, Beck, 1982.

Kondoleon, C. (ed.), *Exhibition Antioch: The Lost Ancient City, 2000 – 2001*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

Krag, S., *Funerary Representations of Palmyrene Women: From the First Century BC to the Third Century AD,* Turnhout, Brepols, 2018.

Kremer, G., *Antike Grabbauten in Noricum: Katalog und Auswertung von Werkstücken als Beitrag zur Rekonstruktion und Typologie*, Vienna, Austrian Archaeological Institute, 2001.

Laflı, E. and Meischner J., ›Hellenistische und römische Grabstelen im Archäologischen Museum von Hatay in Antakya‹, *Österreichische Jahreshefte,* vol. 77, 2008, pp. 145 – 183.

La Rocca, E., *La pittura di un'impero*, Milan, Skira, 2009.

Lauritsen, M. T., ›The Form and Function of Boundaries in the Campanian House‹, in A. Anguissola (ed.), *Privata Luxuria,* Munich, Utz, 2012, pp. 95 – 114.

Longfellow, B. and Swetnam-Burland M. (eds.), *Women's Lives, Women's Voices. Roman Material Culture and Fe-*

male Agency in the Bay of Naples, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2021.

Maguire, H., ›The Disembodied Hand the Prokypsis, and the Templon Screen‹, in J. D. Alchermes (ed.), *Anathemata Eortika: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 2009, pp. 230 – 235.

Mazzoleni, D. and Pappalardo, U., *Fresques des villas romaines*, Paris, Citadelles et Mazenod, 2004.

Mazzoleni, D., ›Parapetasma‹, in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 3, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2014, pp. 68 – 69.

Meyboom, P. G. and Moormann, E. M., *Le decorazioni dipinte e marmoree della Domus Aurea di Nerone a Roma*, Leuven, Peeters, 2013.

Michielin, L., *Fores et Fenestrae. A Computational Study of Doors and Windows in Roman Domestic Space,* Oxford, Archaeopress, 2021.

Miramontes Seijas, E., *Latin Lexicon of Textiles: Clothes, Adornments, Materials and Techniques of Ancient Rome*, Oxford, Bar Publishing, 2021.

Möllendorf, P. v., ›Technologies of Performance. Machines, Props, Dramaturgy‹, in M. Revermann (ed.), *A Cultural History of Theatre in Antiquity*, vol. 1, New York, Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 163 – 179.

Nava, M. L., *Rosso pompeiano: la decorazione pittorica nelle collezioni del Museo di Napoli e a Pompei*, Milan, Electa, 2007.

O'Connell, S., ›Surface and Suggestion: The Materiality of Curtains in Roman Wall Painting‹, in M. C. Beaulieu and V. Toillon (eds.), *Greek and Roman Painting and the Digital Humanities*, London, Routledge, 2022, pp. 144 – 161.

Osanna, M., *Pompeji. Das neue Bild der untergegangenen Stadt*, Darmstadt, von Zabern, 2021.

Pfuhl, E. and Möbius, H., *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, vols. 1 – 2, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1977 – 1979.

Pollitt, J. J., *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Pollitt, J. J. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Painting in the Classical World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Queyrel, F., *L'Autel de Pergame: Images et pouvoir en Grèce d'Asie,* Paris, Picard, 2005.

Raja, R., ›Funerary Portraiture in Palmyra: Portrait Habit at a Crossroads or a Signifier of Local Identity?‹, in M. Blömer and R. Raja (eds.), *Funerary Portraiture in Greater Roman Syria*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2019, pp. 95 – 110.

Roberts, P., *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, London, The British Museum, 2013.

Roberts, P., ›Eros e convivialità‹, in M. L. Catoni and G. Zuchtriegel (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022, pp. 153 – 165.

Rose, H., ›Wer will fleißige Handwerker sehen… Ein Überblick über die reliefverzierten Grabmäler von Metz unter ikonographischen Gesichtspunkten‹, in A. Binsfeld et al. (eds.), *Stadt – Land – Fluss. Grabdenkmäler der Treverer in lokaler und überregionaler Perspektive: Akten der Internationalen Konferenz vom 25. – 27. Oktober 2018 in Neumagen und Trier*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2020, pp. 117 – 127.

Rothe, U., *Dress and Cultural Identity in the Rhine-Moselle Region of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2009.

Rottloff, A., *Lebensbilder römischer Frauen*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 2006.

Salvadori, M., ›Das spätrepublikanische Heiligtum in Brescia und die frühen Formen des Zweiten Stils‹, in I. Baldassarre (ed.), *Römische Malerei. Vom Hellenismus bis zur Spätantike*, Cologne, DuMont, 2002, pp. 81 – 85.

Salvadori, M., ›La decorazione parietale nella tarda Repubblica: il »secondo stile»‹, in I. Baldassarre et al., *Pittura Romana dall'ellenismo al tardo antico*, Milan, Motta, 2006, pp. 79 – 128.

Salvadori, M., ›Concubitos varios Venerisque figuras: fortuna di un repertorio erotico nell'arte romana‹, in M. L. Catoni and G. Zuchtriegel (eds.), *Arte e sensualità nelle case di Pompei*, Naples, Arte'm, 2022, pp. 123 – 131.

Sampaolo, V. (ed.), *Gladiatori*, exhibition catalogue, Naples, Archaeological Museum, Milan, Electa, 2020.

Sauron, G., *Römische Kunst. Von der mittleren Republik bis Augustus*, Darmstadt, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 2013.

Sear, F., *Roman Theatres. An Architectural Study*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Settis, S. and Catoni, M. L., *La forza del bello: l'arte greca conquista l'Italia*, exhibition catalogue, Mantova, Palazzo Tè, 29 marzo – 6 luglio 2008, Milan, Skira, 2008.

Sinn, F. and Freyberger, K. S., *Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense, Vatikanstadt, Katalog der Skulpturen, 1. Die Grabdenkmäler, 2. Die Ausstattung des Hateriergrabes*, Mainz on the Rhine, von Zabern, 1996.

Squire, M., ›Word and Image‹, in L. K. Cline and N. T. Elkins (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Imagery and Iconography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 51 – 91.

Stark, M., ›Blick- und Betrachterführung auf den Grabdenkmälern der Gallia Belgica‹, in A. Binsfeld et al. (eds.), *Stadt – Land – Fluss. Grabdenkmäler der Treverer in lokaler und überregionaler Perspektive: Akten der Internationalen Konferenz vom 25. – 27. Oktober 2018 in Neumagen und Trier*, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2020, pp. 63 – 72.

Stefanidou-Tiveriou, T., ›The Late Hellenistic Private Portraits in Macedonia: From the Heroic Realm to Realism‹, in S. Dillon, M. Prusac-Lindhagen, and A. K. Landgren (eds.), *The Portrait Face. Understanding Realism and Verism in Greek and Roman Portraits*, Athens, Norwegian Institute at Athens, 2021, pp. 47 – 89.

Stephenson, J. W., ›Veiling the Late Roman House‹, *Textile History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1 – 31.

Studer-Karlen, M., *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012.

Ungaro, L., ›L'Aula del Colosso nel Foro di Augusto: architettura e decorazione scultorea‹, *Escultura romana en Hispania*, vol. 5, 2008, pp. 29 – 64 with illustrations.

Wagner, F., Gamer, G., and Rüsch, A. (eds.), *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani. Corpus der Skulpturen der römischen Welt. Deutschland 1, 1. Raetia (Bayern südlich des Limes) und Noricum (Chiemseegebiet)*, Bonn, Habelt, 1973.

Fig. 1 A painting that exactly reproduces the external reality framed by curtains – and that within the image. René Magritte, La Condition Humaine, 1933, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

Curtains in Mind

Franz Alto Bauer

»We are surrounded by curtains. We only perceive the world behind a curtain of semblance. At the same time, an object needs to be covered in order to be recognized at all.«
René Magritte[1]

Curtain up!

The stage curtain is a magical dividing line between reality and imagination. When closed, it forms a visual barrier, separating the here and now from the fictional world of the stage. The closed curtain raises expectations, makes one wonder what is hidden behind it, stimulates the phantasy to imagine the world beyond the curtain. It is the portal to another world, the partition between reality and possibility, between expectation and fulfilment, life and art. The magic of the curtain lies in not knowing what is going on behind it, in the simultaneous promise that it can be lifted. It is erotic in that it creates desire for what is not seen and turns us into voyeurs in hopeful anticipation of what we will get to see (fig. 2).[2] When the curtain rises, we become spectators of a temporary illusory world that whisks us away into the realm of fantasy. We decouple ourselves from our reality and immerse ourselves in the world of performance, forgetting the staginess of the theatre world and allowing ourselves to be captured by the immediacy of what is presented. But only for the duration that the curtain is raised: The moment it falls, this illusory world dissolves, and we are catapulted back into our reality – just like the stage actors: They leave their roles and transform back into contemporaries who step in front of the curtain and accept the audience's applause.

Even if the audience participates emotionally in what is happening on stage, they have no influence on the action – at least in classical theatre. The actors play their roles independently of the audience, which can be grand or small, enthusiastic or bored. During the performance, communication between actors and audience is suspended, the audience remains in this world while the actors act

1 Quote from an interview with Pierre Mazars in 1964 (R. Magritte, *Écrits complets*, Paris, Flammarion, 2009, p. 599). Pierre Mazars: »On voit beaucoup de rideaux sur vos toiles. Pourquoi?« René Magritte: »Nous sommes entourés par des rideaux. Nous ne percevons que le monde derrière un rideau d'apparence. En même temps, un objet doit être couvert afin d'être reconnu à tous.«
2 G. Brandstetter, ›Lever de Rideau – die Szene des Vorhangs‹, in G. Brandstetter and S. Peters (eds.), *Szenen des Vorhangs – Schnittflächen der Künste*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Rombach Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2008, p. 25; G. Stadelmaier, ›Vorhang auf? Vorhang zu? Gar kein Vorhang da!‹, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22. September 2012, B3; C. Dössel, ›Stoff der Träume‹, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 10./11. October 2015, p. 17; J. Marre, *Wenn der Vorhang fehlt. Zum Bedeutungswandel des Theatervorhangs an deutschen Schauspielhäusern*, Weinheim, Deutscher Theaterverlag, 2016, pp. 13–15; J. Fischer, ›Theatervorhang: Eine Grenze zwischen Wirklichkeit und Illusion‹, Bühne 18. February 2021, https://www.buehne-magazin.com/a/theatervorhang-eine-grenze-zwischen-wirklichkeit-und-illusion/ (accessed 27. December 2023).

Fig. 2 What is about to appear on stage must be assigned to the world of fiction. Curtains help us to separate our real space from the fictional space of the stage, 1751 – 1753 (relocated and rebuilt 1956 – 1958), Cuvilliés Theatre, Munich.

in the fictional world of the stage. In this sense, the theatre curtain can be understood as an imaginary wall that can be removed, creating a visual transparency from the auditorium to the stage space, but without any interaction between the audience and the stage actors. This idea can already be found in Denis Diderot. Diderot imagined the theatre curtain as an imaginary wall, which, when raised, opens up the view of the stage space, but works with the fiction that the stage is a closed space in which the theatre characters are unobserved and among themselves – like in a painting or a novel, so to speak.[3] Diderot gives actors the following advice: »Imagine a huge wall across the front of the stage, separating you from the audience, and behave exactly as if the curtain had never risen.«[4] This so-called fourth wall is transparent to the audience, so that they can follow the performance, but opaque to the actors, who remain shielded from the audience. The performers behave as if they are alone in the theatre, resisting the temptation to address the audience directly and thus leaving the spectator with the illusion of being a voyeur who observes without being observed.

3 D. Diderot, *Le père de famille: comédie en 5 actes et en prose. Avec un Discours sur la poésie dramatique*, Amsterdam, privately printed, 1758.

4 Diderot, *Le père de famille.* The quotation is found on p. 86 of the section ›De la poésie dramatique, a Monsieur Grimm‹.

Admittedly, the stage curtain no longer plays a major role in today's theatre.[5] This may have something to do with the fact that smaller theatres do not have the technical facilities for a stage curtain, but the real cause is a fundamental change in the understanding of ›theatre‹. If the curtain is dispensed with in post-dramatic productions today, this is often a deliberate act on the part of directors who want to break down the boundary between reality and fiction in order to create immediacy. Today's theatre wants to say goodbye to the »as if«, wants to break through the imaginary barrier between audience and performers and involve the audience in the theatrical event or – vice versa – move from the stage into real life.[6] In modern theatre, the strict separation between actual reality and stage reality is just as outdated as the separation between spectators and actors: the actors address the audience directly, just as the spectators are expected not to just make themselves comfortable in their seats, but to feel addressed and actively participate. At the same time, the understanding of the theatre stage changed: Stage and auditorium merged into one unit, the traditional frame or peep-box stage became the space stage, which also included the auditorium. This also meant that the theatre curtain had to disappear: The avant-garde rejected the stage curtain as a rigid barrier between actors and audience, between fiction and reality.[7] In today's »Sprechtheater«, which has broken with the illusionistic representational theatre of the old school, the stage curtain has no place anymore. Today, the stage curtain is mainly encountered in decidedly dramatic performances, in the musical theatre of the great opera houses and in performances that have a deliberately nostalgic habitus – or as an ironically understood prop. If the stage curtain is experiencing a modest renaissance today, it is because it is itself becoming an object of attention. It is no longer understood as a dividing wall between the real world and the illusory world, but can be consciously staged as an instrument for directing the gaze and the imagination in the context of post-dramatic theatre performances – entirely in line with the intention of the colloquium organised by Corinna Mairhanser: to focus on the curtain itself and its staging potential.[8]

»As if«: Mimesis or the Willing Suspension of Disbelieve

Behind the »as if« of a traditional theatre piece is something that, since Antiquity, has been described with the term mimesis (μίμησις).[9] For Plato, mimesis was still inadequate imitation. It stood for the hopeless attempt to lend perceivable vividness to a higher idea. For this reason, Plato was not only an avowed opponent of theatre, which produced an illusory world, but was also very sceptical about images. If real things were only an insufficient reflection of a higher idea, how much more deficient did images have to be as imitations of real things? If the sensually comprehensible world was already only an ontologically inferior reproduction of the world of ideas, how

5 Cf. V. Stoichita, *Das selbstbewußte Bild. Vom Ursprung der Metamalerei*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1998, pp. 74 – 83, and A. Cevolini, ›Der Rahmen der Kunst‹, in C. Filk and H. Simon (eds.), *Kunstkommunikation: »Wie ist Kunst möglich?«. Beiträge zu einer systemischen Medien- und Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin, Kadmos, 2010, pp. 79 – 90.

6 Stadelmaier, ›Vorhang auf? Vorhang zu? Gar kein Vorhang da!‹.

7 Marre, *Wenn der Vorhang fehlt*, pp. 16 – 19, 22 – 32; on Brecht's Curtain System and the so-called »Brechtvorhang« see K. Bachler, *Gemalte Theatervorhänge in Deutschland und Österreich*, Munich, Bruckmann, 1972, pp. 144 – 145; G. Brandstetter, ›Lever de Rideau – die Szene des Vorhangs‹, pp. 39 – 41.

8 Cf. K. Jäger, ›Mehr als ein Stück Stoff‹, *taz. die tageszeitung*, 17. June 2004, p. 1; Brandstetter ›Lever de Rideau – die Szene des Vorhangs‹, pp. 31 – 41.

9 J. J. Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974, pp. 37 – 41; W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics I: Ancient Aesthetics*, The Hague, Mouton, 1970, pp. 121 – 122 and 141 – 144; W. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas. An Essay in Aesthetics*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1980, pp. 94 – 109 and 266 – 269.

much inferior did the theatre have to be as a mirror of life in the real world? Unlike Plato, Aristotle understood mimesis in the context of perception and communication. Humans have the ability to imitate what they perceive with their senses and to transfer this to their (interpersonal) behaviour: Works of visual art, but also theatre, express things that affect everyone and can contribute to the purification of negative affects in the sense of catharsis. The question is not so much whether a piece or a picture is deceptive, but what communicative and moralising value they have.

Neoplatonic thinkers advocated an expanded definition of mimesis and at the same time offered a justification for imitating the non-imitable.[10] Mimesis imitates not only with the hand but also with the mind. A true artist requires not only the skill of art, but also the ability to express a mental image. Mimesis is no longer understood as a flat imitation of a sensually tangible object, but as the visible realisation of a higher idea that the artist drew from the transcendent. The same applies to the viewer: The viewer also needs this extended mimetic ability so that he does not see in a work of art or a performance only a simple copy of an object or an action, but to grasp the higher essence, the idea, behind what he perceives sensually. This mimetic capacity of the viewer prevents him from seeing reality in a picture or a theatre performance and enables him to recognise them for what they are, despite the most intense mental and emotional involvement: Approximations of reality provided a figurative meaning, but by no means total simulations of reality.

We viewers intuitively realise this. We don't perceive a theatre play as real any more than we see a painting as a photograph. As long as we do not expose a re-enacted everyday scene as staged or fall for a trompe l'oeil, an instance becomes active in us that filters the fictional out of the real. It prevents us from taking the murders in a play like Macbeth at face value or from crying out at the sight of the magic trick of the sawn-up virgin. And yet, under the protection of this awareness of the fictionality of what is being presented, we allow ourselves to become involved and participate mentally and emotionally. The poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge described this ability to maintain distance from fiction as the willing suspension of disbelief.[11] Viewers of a play or a picture or readers of a novel temporarily allow themselves to be drawn into the illusion of what is being presented in order to derive aesthetic pleasure or entertainment from it. They can empathise with the plot, become emotionally involved, allow themselves to be surrounded by a fictional world, but can withdraw from the fictional world at any time. The willing suspension of disbelief allows us to immerse ourselves in the fantasy universe of J. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth with its own civilisations, ages and languages without being completely absorbed by it. We allow ourselves to enter this world with its own stringent causality without being swallowed up by it, because although we temporarily suspend our disbelief, we never lose our distance from the fictionality of what is presented.

This is just as true for theatre as it is for literature. How you read a book depends on the pact you make with the book as a reader.[12] The author's name alone promises a certain genre, and the publisher allows the work to be categorised in a certain way. The title, layout and blurb raise certain expectations that must not contradict the

10 B. Bäbler and H.-G. Nesselrath, *Philostrats Apollonios und seine Welt. Griechische und nichtgriechische Kunst und Religion in der ›Vita Apollonii‹*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 111 – 115; D. J. V. dos Anjos, *Mimesis in Plato, Plotinus und Proclus*, Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa, 2021, https://repositorio.ul.pt/bitstream/10451/51261/1/ulfldjvanjos_tm.pdf (accessed 27. December 2023), pp. 44 – 118.

11 S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, New York, Krik and Mercein, 1817, II, pp. 3 – 10 (= c. xiv).

12 P. Lejeune, *The Autobiographical Pact*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1989; L. Missinne, ›Autobiographical Pact‹, in M. Wagner-Egelhaaf (ed.), *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, *Vol. I: Theory and Concepts*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 222 – 227.

content. A book published by Oxford University Press is likely to be a hard-to-read, serious academic treatise, while a publication by Macmillan Publishers promises light fiction. The layout of the book provides clarity of purpose, frames how the book is intended to be understood and facilitates the pact between author and book. This pact can be of various kinds. Book and reader can, for example, enter into a novel pact, in which it is assumed that the content is partly or entirely fictional. In a novel, fiction must be accepted, exaggerations, satire and irony must not be misunderstood as fact. Or book and reader can make an autobiographical pact. In this case, the reader can assume that the content of the book tells something about the author, that it reflects his or her life without fictionalisation, exaggeration or lies. Those who enter into the scientific pact expect correct research from a book and receive the assurance that all results have been worked out in a methodically stringent manner and that, if ideas and results of others are taken up, these are labelled accordingly. Anyone who enters into an esoteric pact, on the other hand, will not necessarily be looking for scientific rigour, but rather hoping for spiritual guidance. The task of the book is to fulfil the promise made in the text by the title, the author's name, the layout of the book and the introductory words. The reader's task, in turn, is not to read the text with the wrong glasses.

Take a look at the cover of this book: what does it promise? If there are still doubts about the character of the book, it will become clear in the preface or on the introductory pages at the latest whether the reader is dealing with fiction or reality, whether the work is satirical or serious, whether it is characterised by science or esotericism, whether the characters are fictitious or real. A text in sober scientific language promises facts, while a poetic text takes you into the realm of fantasy. If the text contains illustrations, these can emphasise the illusionary or scientific character, depending on their design. Tables and diagrams suggest a precise investigation, while atmospheric landscape photographs are more appropriate for a travel novel. The same applies to newspapers: The soberly presented stock market section of the Financial Times promises accurate economic data, while the glossy posters of the Yellow Press promise entertaining half-truths about celebrities. Nobody would read the stock market section of the Financial Times with the intention of finding out about the relationship status of actors, and conversely nobody would think of looking for the current share price in the Sun. The style of language also helps with the judgement. Despite the many traps that can be found on the internet, these rules also apply here: A restrained layout promises serious information, while intrusive design, pop-up windows and an overabundance of adverts raise doubts about what is on offer. Websites of public institutions dispense with an exuberant layout and inspire trust, while clicking on aggressively designed private websites is accompanied by a fundamental scepticism.

Images also require a kind of pact with the viewer. The baroque painting of an Ascension of Christ will always be read allegorically (fig. 3). The viewer will intuitively sense this when he sees the play of light and shadow, the dramatic structure of the painting, the floating figures, the rapt faces of the participants re-enacting the biblical narrative. The image will portray to the viewer the uniqueness, indeed the inexplicability of the event, but it will not be a reflection of a real scene. This must have been as intuitively clear to the viewer at the time as it is today. Even if a picture »lies«, for example by depicting the simultaneity of non-simultaneous states, this happens under the protective umbrella of artistic freedom, on the assumption that the viewer recognises the inner logic of the picture and can, as it were, decode it.

Similarly, we enter into various pacts with films. Their effect on the viewer is decisively determined by the knowledge of their reality content. We can even watch brutal horror films without lasting disturbance because we know from the outset that it is fiction, that the many brutal deaths do not take place in reality but are the product of fiction. How different and disturbing are the often blurred film sequences that are available on YouTube at any time and offer insights into the horrors of global

Fig. 3 Is this exactly how the Assumption of Mary took place? Intuitively, we realise that this depiction is to be understood metaphorically. Peter Paul Rubens, Assumption of Mary, 1611/12, Royal Collection, Buckingham Palace, London.

warfare, such as the latest footage from the Ukraine or Middle East. So while the mass deaths in the feature film can be seen as unreal without empathy, the short film sequence showing the real execution of prisoners of war makes us shudder (fig. 4). Here, killing and death are no longer fiction, but real. Anyone looking at a photograph enters into a pact of credibility with the image, as it were. The preliminary assumption is that this image is not a subjective interpretation, but an objective reflection of reality. What it depicts has actually happened. In the meantime, this pact is

Fig. 4 Here our willful suspension of disbelief fails, as these are images of an undoubted reality. We fail to dismiss what we see as fiction: Image of the massacre of civilians in Bucha (Ukraine) in 2022.

only entered into with reservations – depending on the context – due to the manifold possibilities of digital manipulation.

Obviously, two instances struggle within us: A readiness for emotional immediacy that spontaneously takes images seriously, and a rational distance that disarms images, determines their fictionality and their degree of fantasy, or at least dampens their emotional impact. When we stand in front of a painting, we are intuitively faced with a fundamental decision: Do we have to understand the painting as a reproduction of reality in the sense of a photograph? Or does the image convey an illusion or even an untruth? The fact that we are able to ask ourselves this question at all is thanks to something that has been described as human image competence: the ability to recognise what is depicted not as reality, but as an image and to examine it for its message and intention.

Image Competence

Let's imagine the following experiment: Astronauts leave Earth in search of intelligent life. They land on an Earth-like planet, but find no living beings there because, let's say: All life perished long ago as a result of a climatic catastrophe. In addition to animal remains, the astronauts come across artefacts, tools, graves and fireplaces, from which they learn that higher beings once lived here alongside animals, but they are not sure whether these beings were on a par with humans. They still lack a clear, unambiguous distinction between humans and animals. Then the following happens: »Our explorers enter a cave, and on its walls they discern lines or other configurations that must have been produced artificially, they have no structural function, and that suggests a likeness to one or another of the living forms encountered outside. The cry goes up: ›Here is evidence of man!‹«.

The quotation and thought experiment go back to the German-American philosopher Hans Jonas (1903 – 1993), who, in a well-known essay from 1961, had spacemen ask what the *differentia*, the

difference between humans and animals, was.[13] They find the answer in a kind of counterpart to Neolithic cave paintings, for there they see representations of objects and beings that were once found outside the cave. These images can only be products of »symbolical« beings, that is, beings that potentially speak, think and invent. While all animal artefacts, such as a bird's nest or a spider's web, serve vital functions, nourishment and reproduction, the astronauts realise that these representations serve no practical function that they are the product of beings appropriating objects in images in a non-purposeful way.

But what constitutes an image according to Jonas?

Regardless of its artistic quality, a picture has to be similar to the depicted object. A fresco by Michelangelo shares with a »most childish drawing« the claim to depict something, intends the similarity of the image to the depicted object. According to Jonas, this intention of the image-creating painter lives on in the image as an inner intentionality. No matter what it represents, every picture is accompanied by this intention of representation. A picture is not a simulation. It picks up some distinctive characteristics of the original without wanting to produce a copy. A picture chooses. Picking up a few characteristic traits, although it means a minus in completeness, can produce a plus in essential similarity. »If I copy a hammer in every respect, I have another hammer and not an image of a hammer.«[14]

When an object is pictured, it is lifted out of the »causal commerce of things«, transplanted, as it were, into another dimension and thus banished. The image withdraws from space and time. The reality in the picture happens within its frame and does not jump over into the here and now – and vice versa. The dangerous can be represented without being dangerous, the harmful without harming and the desired without being fulfilled. Human image consciousness prevents us from seeing what is depicted as real. The image of a spider may be unpleasant, but it does not threaten us. This image consciousness separates humans from animals. A crow will either see a human being in a scarecrow or nothing at all. In the crow's perception, the intermediate level »image« does not exist. A human being sees the representation of a human being in a scarecrow. Human »image faculty« means to create images as well as to recognise images as such.

One could raise a number of objections to Jonas' concept of the image: For him, an image more or less freely reproduces something. But this definition excludes pictures of abstract or monochromatic painting that deliberately do not represent anything concrete or give expression to an abstract idea. It reduces the effect of the image to the viewer's reception of what is depicted. More recent theories are based on an expanded concept of the image and, not only since the theory of the pictorial act, grant images a quasi-personal capacity for action. This theory states that an image is more than just an image and that its effect is not limited to perception. Rather, an image can exert power over its subject and provoke an action.[15] Apart from these points of criticism, which arise from recent research on visual culture, Jonas' concept of the human image-capacity remains quite valid, as can be seen from the following experiment:

Image versus Image Support

Have you ever approached a painting very closely? Perhaps because you were interested in a detail of the painting or the brushstroke? Because you wanted to read the painter's signature or you were interested in the way the paint was applied? Because you wanted to explain the effect of the

13 H. Jonas, ›Homo Pictor and the Differentia of Man‹, *Social Research*, vol. 29, 1962, pp. 201 – 220.
14 Jonas, ›Homo Pictor and the Differentia of Man‹, 204.
15 Cf. H. Bredekamp, *Image Acts. A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2018.

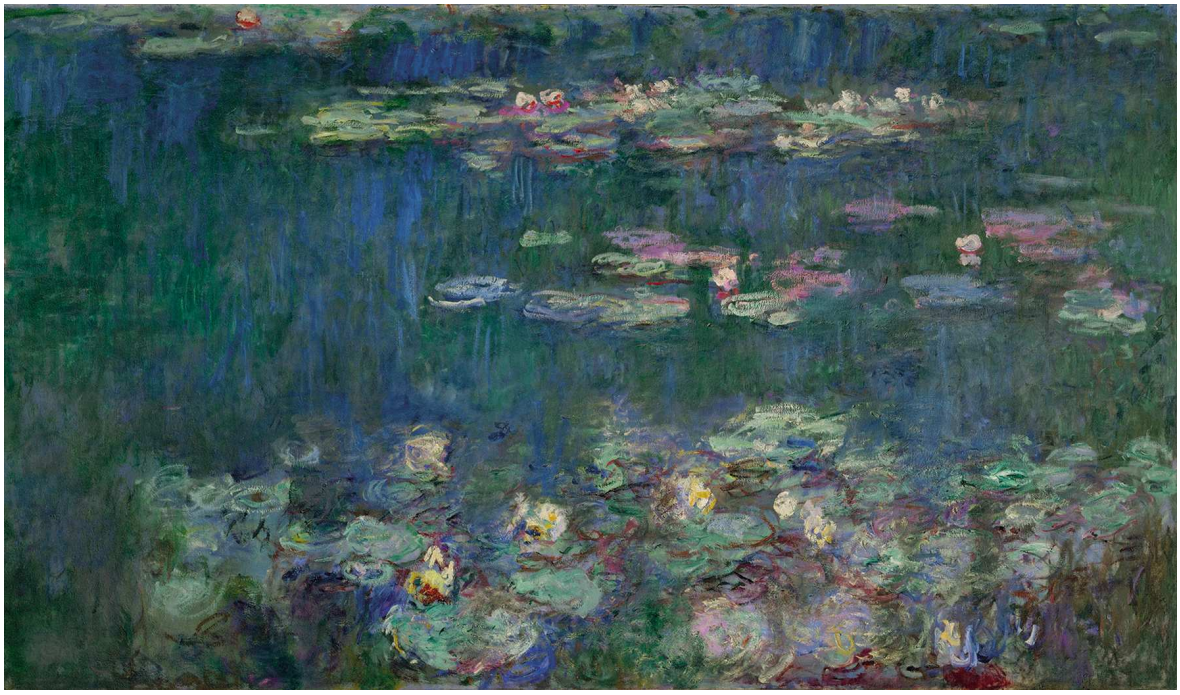


Fig. 5 A moment ago, it was a lush garden with a pond covered with water lilies.

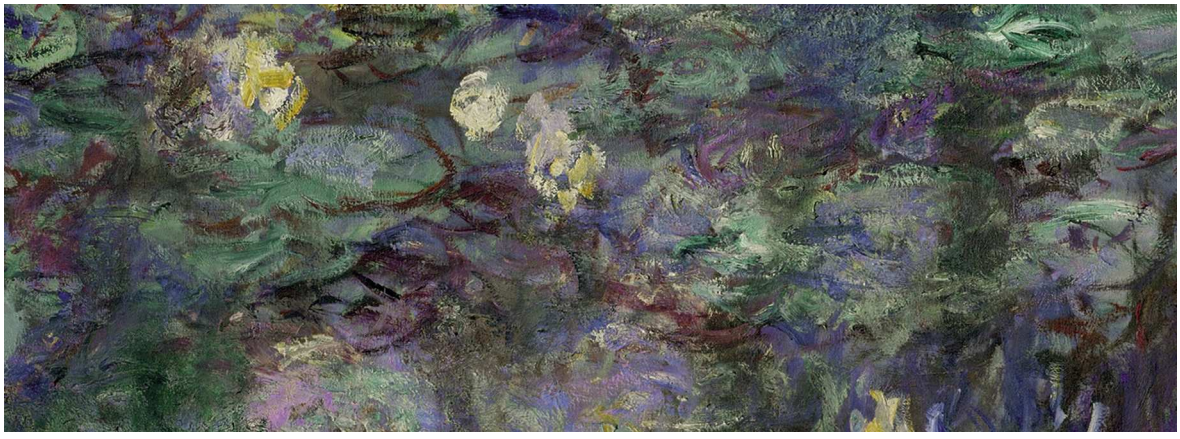


Fig. 6 … and now there is a chaos of different oil colours covering the canvas. Claude Monet, Water Lilies, 1920 – 1926, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris.

shimmering of an impressionist painting by looking at it close up? If you did so, then you also know that a remarkable effect occurs in the transition from the overall view of a painting to the close-up view of a detail. The eye switches, as it were, from the perception of the object of the painting, i. e. of what is actually depicted, to an observation of the surface of the painting and the painting technique. Suddenly one no longer sees the water lilies in Claude Monet's water garden in Giverny, but wild splashes of colour, a storm of brushstrokes. Now unevenness also becomes visible, mountains and valleys within the application of paint. More and more, the eye gets lost in this overflow of colours wrestling with each other until one slowly moves away from the painting again and, from an appropriate distance, the water lilies become visible once more. Instead of the surface of the painting and the brush technique, the content of the representation becomes visible again, the viewer's eye is opened to

the pond with the water lilies that appears in so many of Monet's paintings (fig. 5 and 6). That is the special thing about images: Only they can depict and at the same time show that they depict.

We can repeat this game as often as we like – and it is worth doing so: The same thing will happen again and again. Our eye loses sight of the content of the representation and switches to the perception of the background of the picture – and back again from the surface of the picture to the illusion of what is represented. In the process, we become increasingly aware of what constitutes an image: there is this moment in us when the image ›tilts‹ like a conundrum: if we see the furrowed surface of powerfully applied colours a moment ago, all of a sudden we see a garden pond again.[16] Vasari praises the »vivacity that Titian has given to the figures with his colours, making them natural and as if alive.« This mode of representation differs from that of the youthful Titian, »for the reason that the early works are executed with a certain delicacy and a diligence that are incredible, and they can be seen both from near and from a distance, and these last works are executed with bold strokes and dashed off with a broad and even coarse sweep of the brush, insomuch that from near little can be seen, but from a distance they appear perfect.«[17] Here, Vasari impressively demonstrates human image competence: His perception oscillates between the picture and the picture support. Viewed from a distance, the picture is like an open window through which one looks behind the canvas; viewed from close up, this window closes and the picture is reduced to the picture support and the application of colour.

And yet, even when we look at a landscape, people, actions and events through the canvas, there remains a residual awareness that it is just an image.[18] That is why we are not thrown off-guard when we see a picture at an extreme angle, when the objects and people depicted are strongly distorted in perspective. What would be disturbing for the viewer under normal circumstances, such as strongly disproportionate faces or people, is accepted as a matter of course because we are aware of surface on which the image is applied, i. e. the canvas.[19]

Perspective painting is particularly suitable for explaining the oscillation of an image between a view through and the painted surface. The term »perspective« derives from the Latin verb *perspicere:* to see through. It is defined, in relation to painting, as the technique of depicting objects and their spatial context as the viewer perceives them from a fixed position. In central perspective representations, the painted surface coincides with the projection surface, i. e. with an intersecting surface that runs through the visual pyramid and on which a distant object is projected. However, such images only work when seen from a precisely defined standpoint. As soon as the viewer moves, the image structure becomes distorted, revealing the image to be an artificial perspective construction. However, this fixation on one spot does not correspond to the natural behaviour of a viewer. The viewer is often in motion, but above all, the eye is constantly jumping instead of being paralysed and fixing on one point at a time. However, perspective images force the viewer's eyes to look from a fixed point, otherwise the image is exposed as a deceptive structure. This is just one of the reasons why Erwin Panofsky described central perspective painting not as a discovery but as an invention.[20] Another reason is a new kind of

16 G. Boehm, ›Die Bilderfrage‹, in G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, 1994, 325 – 343, especially p. 332.
17 G. Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Vol. 9, transl. G. du C. de Vere, London, Philip Lee Warner and the Medici Society, 1915, pp. 173 – 174.
18 See M. H. Pirenne, ›Les lois de l'optique et la liberté de l'artiste‹, *Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*, vol. 60, 1963, pp. 151 – 166.
19 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1960, pp. 225 – 318; see M. Polanyi, ›Was ist ein Bild?‹, in G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1994, pp. 150.
20 E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, New York, Zone Books, 1991.

relationship between the viewer and the world around him. The perspective presupposes a gazing subject and thus clearly reflects the contrast between subject and object. The world is a seen world, a world perceived by the viewer. The image becomes a screen, a kind of window through which the viewer grasps the world. The tilting or the »visual either-or« does not consist here in approaching the picture, which allows the perception of the painted surface, but in leaving the prescribed viewer's standpoint: At this moment, the illusion of a spatial structure collapses and the viewer becomes aware of the pictorial nature of the central perspective representation.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that central perspective, picture frames and theatre curtains emerged in the same era, the Renaissance. Artfully designed picture frames can be observed from the 15th century onwards, whereby architectural forms were often used: Pilasters, cornices and pediments, which had to reinforce the impression that one was looking through a portal or a window opening to a world beyond.[21] The frame encloses a »peephole«, as it were, behind which an infinite world unfolds. This function is not unique to the picture frame in the Renaissance: Our entire concept of the picture is essentially based on the frame, which, like a window, allows us to look from our reality into the reality of the picture. It is only through this opening into a world behind the frame that a representation becomes a picture, that a window opens behind the painted surface. A frame selects, channels the gaze, chooses. It determines what we have to see, directs our attention to the motif it encloses. If a frame is missing, it makes orientation more difficult.

A comparison with Palaeolithic cave paintings, which were applied to natural rock, shows how much the frame of a picture contributes to its pictorial quality: »Palaeolithic cave paintings do not have a prepared ground, but were applied directly to the bare cave wall, so that the irregularities of earth and stone are visible in the picture. At that time, the artist worked in a surface without fixed boundaries … and regarded the surface so little as an independent ground that he often placed his animal figure over an already painted picture without removing it, as if it were not visible to the viewer at all«.[22] For Meyer Schapiro, to whom we owe this quote, the lack of a frame and a smoothed surface is in some respects a loss of pictoriality – at least for the viewers of the time: The animals depicted would have had an increased reality, which is expressed, among others, in the fact that individual animals were repeatedly painted over with other animals. This did not obscure or devalue them, but added to and enriched them. This was only possible in this form because no importance was attached to the painting ground, because one did not see a picture worthy of protection, but rather an a-pictorial reflection of reality. Anyone who visits the famous Chauvet Cave, the furiously painted herds of animals seem to gallop across the rock faces, walls that move back and forth in an almost wave-like motion, making the depictions of reindeer, buffalo and horses even more dynamic (fig. 7). While the frame defines an image as such, the separation of real space and pictorial space in the Stone Age caves is fluid. If the frame is missing, the viewer's gaze is not directed, but is lost in the unlimited expanse of the depiction. If we take Schapiro's argument further, then the makers of these cave

21 On the genesis of the picture frame in the Renaissance see W. Bode, ›Bilderrahmen in alter und neuer Zeit‹, *Pan*, vol. 4, 1898, pp. 246 – 251.

22 M. Schapiro, ›Über einige Probleme in der Semiotik der visuellen Kunst: Feld und Medium beim Bild-Zeichen‹, in G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1994, p. 253: »Die Höhlenmalereien der Altsteinzeit haben keinen präparierten Bildgrund, sondern wurden unmittelbar auf die nackte Höhlenwand aufgetragen, so dass die Unregelmäßigkeiten von Erde und Stein im Bild sichtbar sind. Der Künstler arbeitete damals auf einem Feld ohne feste Grenzen … und betrachtete die Oberfläche so wenig als eigenständigen Grund, dass er seine Tierfigur häufig über ein bereits gemaltes Bild setzte, ohne dieses zu entfernen, so als ob es für den Betrachter gar nicht sichtbar wäre«.

Fig. 7 Image, reality or something in between? The lack of a frame in neolithic cave paintings has led to the assumption that there was a limited image quality to these depictions. Detail of the cave painting in Lascaux.

paintings would have had a diminished image competence, then these depictions, which are strangely enough found in dark and impassable cave sections, had an increased presence. Hans Jonas' astronauts, who found comparable cave paintings on an alien planet, would thus have found evidence of human-like beings, but of those with reduced image competence.

But what does all this have to do with curtains?

The drawn back curtain has the effect of a picture frame. A picture frame makes it easier to recognize the pictorial nature of what is inside it. It draws the viewer's attention to the picture by clearly communicating: »This is a picture!« It separates the picture from its context, defines the boundary between the present space-time system and that of the image, and opens up access to a detached sphere. Curtains have a similar effect. They offer the certainty that everything between them is not part of this reality, but belongs to a Transworld. Like picture frames, drawn curtains increase the awareness of the fictional character of what is happening between them. In both cases, the viewer's or spectator's gaze passes through a framed window into another intrinsic world.

Curtains in Mind

Like few before him, René Magritte was preoccupied with the relationship of an image to reality. His paintings repeatedly provoke the mimetic expectations of the viewer, but at the same time mislead them. In this way, he points to the limitations of human cognition by mixing up the real with the pictorial, by confusing different ontological levels and shaking up our system of ordering the world based on perception. »The

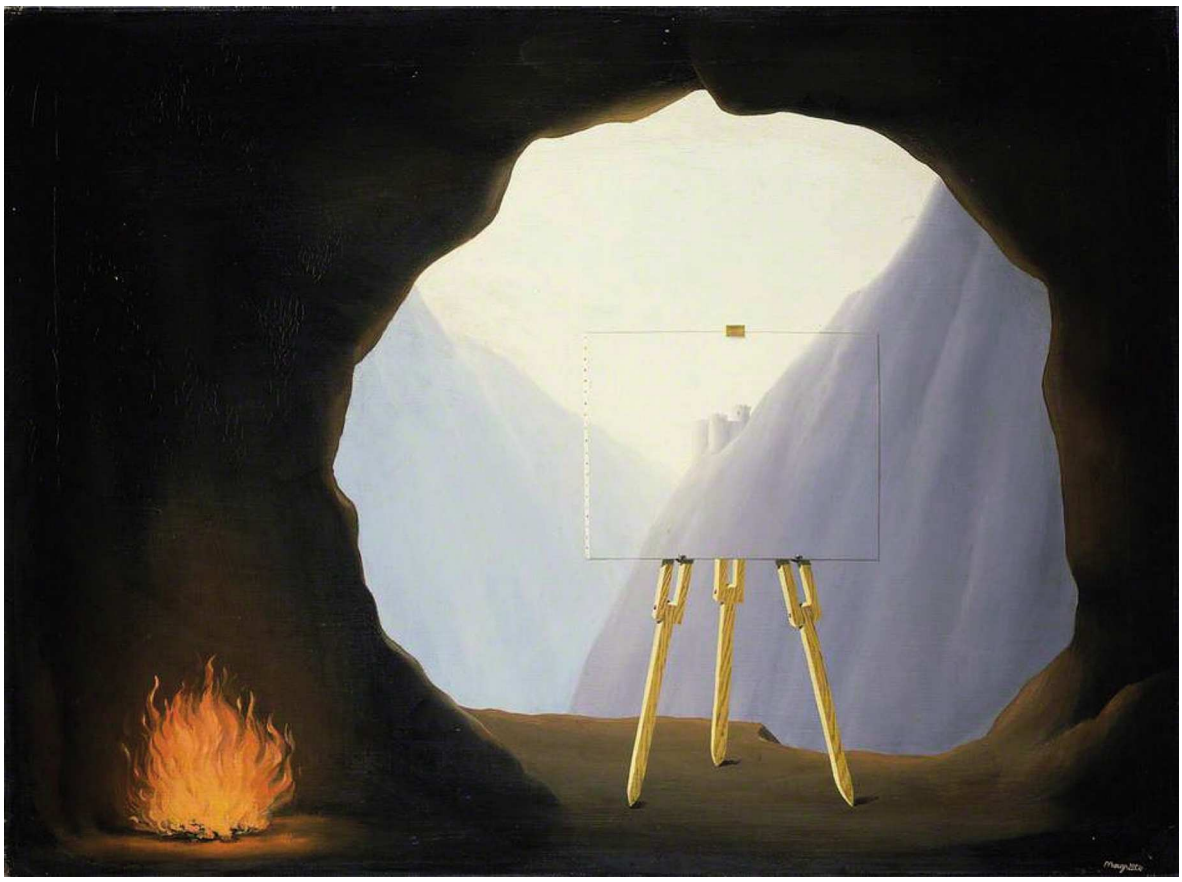


Fig. 8 When we escape our cognitive jail and emerge from the darkness of the cave into the light, we realise that external reality and image-reality are congruent. René Magritte, La Condition Humaine, 1935, Art Gallery and Museum, Norwich.

Human Condition« (*la condition humaine*) is the title of several paintings created between 1933 and 1945.[23] What these four paintings have in common is that they show a canvas on an easel that partially obscures the view through a window or other opening – but the hidden reality behind the canvas is precisely depicted on it. However, this canvas is only discovered at second glance. In the 1933 version, the canvas partially conceals the easel, and shows it's nailed edge; it protrudes slightly beyond the edge of the window and covers a small area of the curtain – and thus puts our visual perception to the test, as curtains usually frame the pictorial and are not covered by it (fig. 1). In Magritte's painting, the curtains are less of an attribute of a window opening but first and foremost a means of putting the boundaries between various levels of reality to the test.[24] Although on Magritte's painting the drawn-back curtain frames the window, through which the world beyond is seen, it is simultaneously declared irrelevant, as external reality and pictorial reality seem to be congruent.

23 S. Gablik, *Magritte*, Greenwich, New York Graphic Society, 1971, pp. 75 – 101; A. Müller, *René Magritte. Die Beschaffenheit des Menschen*, Frankfurt on the Main, Insel-Verlag, 1989; A. Köhler, *Das Bild im Bild als Reflexionsmedium: Über die Doppelnatur von Malerei und das Verhältnis von Kunst und Wirklichkeit im Werk René Magrittes*, Saarbrücken, Akademiker Verlag, 2012, pp. 93 – 103.

24 See V. Stoichita, ›Das Bild der Ähnlichkeit von Giotto bis Magritte‹, in C. Blümle and B. Wismer (eds.), *Hinter dem Vorhang. Verhüllung und Enthüllung seit der Renaissance – von Tizian bis Christo*, Munich, Hirmer, 2016, pp. 66 – 73; V. Stoichita, ›Magrittes Vorhänge‹, in D. Ottinger (Hg.), *Magritte. Der Verrat der Bilder*, Munich, Prestel Verlag, 2017, pp. 142 – 159.

The image claims to present a truth that is not more inferior than reality.

But what is the *condition humaine?* It apparently consists in the human idiosyncrasy of separating images from reality, although ultimately – at least in Magritte's perception – there is no such difference. In obvious reference to Plato's allegory of the cave, a further version of the Human Condition was created in 1935 (fig. 8).[25] The view from a cave is of a brightly lit mountain landscape, and this time, too, a rectangular canvas on an easel blocks the view, but reproduces exactly what one would see behind the canvas: a castle on a mountainside. This is precisely the moment when man leaves his cave prison, in which – according to Plato – he only saw silhouettes of real objects created by an artificial light source – the fire at the bottom left of the picture. Now, however, he becomes aware of the higher reality revealing itself in the glistening light outside the cave, but recognises – in a reversal of Plato's theory of ideas – that the external reality is no more than pictorial. In this sense, Magritte's *condition humaine* turns Hans Jonas' concept of human image competence on its head. If Jonas recognises the image competence as an essential distinguishing feature of human beings, Magritte declares it irrelevant.

And yet it is there: Our ability to recognise images as such is like curtains in the mind. We are able to mentally pull them open and immerse ourselves in a fiction that we believe to be true, if we want to believe it to be true. At the same time, these mind curtains form a protective barrier that prevents us from letting the tragic and threatening get too close to us – because it only happens between the curtains. They can be drawn at any time if we want to withdraw from the fictional and re-establish the clear boundary between what is real and what is not.

Figure Credits

Fig. 1: Washington DC, National Gallery; Fig. 2: Bayerische Schlösser- und Seenverwaltung; Fig. 3: Wikipedia Commons (Royal Collection, RCIN 405335), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rubens,_Peter_Paul_-_The_Assumption_of_the_Virgin_-_ca._1611–1612.jpg?uselang=de; Fig. 4: Wikipedia Commons (Ukrinform TV), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Місто_Буча_після_звільнення_від_російських_окупантів_01.jpg; Fig. 5: akg-images / Erich Lessing AKG97593; Fig. 6: akg-images / Erich Lessing AKG97593 (detail); Fig. 7: akg-images / Glasshouse Images AKG2541468; Fig. 8: Norwich, Art Gallery and Museum.

Bibliography

Anjos, D. J. V. dos, *Mimesis in Plato, Plotinus und Proclus*, Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa, 2021, https://repositorio.ul.pt/bitstream/10451/51261/1/ulfldjvanjos_tm.pdf (accessed December 27, 2023).

Bachler, K., *Gemalte Theatervorhänge in Deutschland und Österreich*, Munich, Bruckmann, 1972.

Bäbler, B. and Nesselrath, H.-G., *Philostrats Apollonios und seine Welt. Griechische und nichtgriechische Kunst und Religion in der ›Vita Apollonii‹*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016.

Bode, W., ›Bilderrahmen in alter und neuer Zeit‹, *Pan*, vol. 4, 1898, pp. 243–256.

Boehm, G., ›Die Bilderfrage‹, in G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1994, pp. 325–343.

Brandstetter, G., ›Lever de Rideau – die Szene des Vorhangs‹, in G. Brandstetter and S. Peters (eds.), *Szenen des Vorhangs – Schnittflächen der Künste*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Rombach Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2008, pp. 19–41.

Bredekamp, H., *Image Acts. A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2018.

Cassin, B., ›Der Maler-König‹, in D. Ottinger (ed.), *Magritte. Der Verrat der Bilder*, Munich, Prestel Verlag, 2017, pp. 114–141.

Cevolini, A., ›Der Rahmen der Kunst‹, in C. Filk and H. Simon (eds.), *Kunstkommunikation: »Wie ist Kunst möglich?«. Beiträge zu einer systemischen Medien- und Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin, Kadmos, 2010, pp. 79–90.

Coleridge, S. T., *Biographia Literaria*, New York, Krik and Mercein, 1817.

Diderot, D., *Le père de famille: comédie en 5 actes et en prose. Avec un Discours sur la poèsie dramatique*, Amsterdam, privately printed, 1758.

Dössel, C., ›Stoff der Träume‹, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 10/11, 2015, p. 17.

25 Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery. Köhler, *Das Bild im Bild als Reflexionsmedium*, p. 99; B. Cassin, ›Der Maler-König‹, in D. Ottinger (ed.), *Magritte. Der Verrat der Bilder*, Munich, Prestel Verlag, 2017, pp. 116–120.

Fischer, J., ›Theatervorhang: Eine Grenze zwischen Wirklichkeit und Illusion‹, *Bühne*, February 18, 2021, https://www.buehne-magazin.com/a/theatervorhang-eine-grenze-zwischen-wirklichkeit-und-illusion/ (accessed December 27, 2023).

Gablik, S., *Magritte*, Greenwich, New York Graphic Society, 1971.

Gombrich, E. H., *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1960.

Jäger, K., ›Mehr als ein Stück Stoff‹, *taz. die tageszeitung*, June 17, 2004, p. 1.

Jonas, H., ›Homo Pictor and the Differentia of Man‹, *Social Research,* vol. 29, 1962, pp. 201 – 220.

Köhler, A., *Das Bild im Bild als Reflexionsmedium: Über die Doppelnatur von Malerei und das Verhältnis von Kunst und Wirklichkeit im Werk René Magrittes*, Saarbrücken, Akademiker Verlag, 2012.

Lejeune, P., *The Autobiographical Pact*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1989.

Magritte, R., *Écrits complets,* Paris, Flammarion, 2009.

Marre, J., *Wenn der Vorhang fehlt. Zum Bedeutungswandel des Theatervorhangs an deutschen Schauspielhäusern*, Weinheim, Deutscher Theaterverlag, 2016.

Missinne, L., ›Autobiographical Pact‹, in M. Wagner-Egelhaaf (ed.), *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, *Vol. I: Theory and Concepts*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 222 – 227.

Müller, A., *René Magritte. Die Beschaffenheit des Menschen*, Frankfurt on the Main, Insel-Verlag, 1989.

Panofsky, E., *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, New York, Zone Books, 1991.

Pirenne, M. H., ›Les lois de l'optique et la liberté de l'artiste‹, *Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*, vol. 60, 1963, pp. 151 – 166.

Polanyi, M., ›Was ist ein Bild?‹, in G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1994, pp. 148 – 162.

Pollitt, J. J., *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974.

Schapiro, M., ›Über einige Probleme in der Semiotik der visuellen Kunst: Feld und Medium beim Bild-Zeichen‹, in G. Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1994, pp. 253 – 274.

Stadelmaier, G., ›Vorhang auf? Vorhang zu? Gar kein Vorhang da!‹, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* September 22, 2012, B3.

Stoichita, V., *Das selbstbewußte Bild. Vom Ursprung der Metamalerei*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1998.

Stoichita, V., ›Das Bild der Ähnlichkeit von Giotto bis Magritte‹, in C. Blümle and B. Wismer (eds.), *Hinter dem Vorhang. Verhüllung und Enthüllung seit der Renaissance – von Tizian bis Christo*, Munich, Hirmer, 2016, pp. 66 – 73.

Stoichita, V., ›Magrittes Vorhänge‹, in D. Ottinger (ed.), *Magritte. Der Verrat der Bilder*, Munich, Prestel Verlag, 2017, pp. 142 – 159.

Tatarkiewicz, W., *History of Aesthetics I: Ancient Aesthetics*, The Hague, Mouton, 1970.

Tatarkiewicz, W., *A History of Six Ideas. An Essay in Aesthetics*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1980.

Vasari, G., *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Vol. 9, transl. G. du C. de Vere, London, Philip Lee Warner and the Medici Society, 1915.

Notes on Contributors

Corinna Mairhanser
corinna.mairhanser@gmx.de
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte
Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1
80539 München
Germany

Tina Bawden
tbawden@umich.edu
Department of History of Art
855 South University Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
USA

Matko Marušić
mmarusic@ipu.hr
Institut za povijest umjetnosti
Ulica grada Vukovara 68/III
10000 Zagreb
Croatia

Friederike Kranig
F.Kranig@gmx.de
Heidkamp 17
49186 Bad Iburg
Germany

Priscilla Pfannmüller
priscilla.pfannmueller@armeemuseum.de
Bayerisches Armeemuseum
Postfach 210255
85017 Ingolstadt
Germany

Eva Christof
eva.christof@uni-graz.at
Universität Graz
Institut für Antike / FB Archäologie
Universitätsplatz 3/2
A-8010 Graz
Austria

Franz Alto Bauer
Franz.Alto.Bauer@lmu.de
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte
Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1
80539 München
Germany