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03
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Death

*Absence, anxiety, and
aesthetics*

The *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* was founded in 2013 to publish a selection of the best papers presented at the biennial LUCAS Graduate Conference, an international and interdisciplinary humanities conference organized by the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS). The peer reviewed journal aims to publish papers that combine an innovative approach with fresh ideas and solid research and engage with the key theme of LUCAS, the relationship and dynamics between the arts and society.

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CONTENTS

03

- 1** Foreword
Prof.dr. Frans-Willem Korsten, former Director of Education, LUCAS
- 4** Introduction
Editorial board JLGC-03
- 10** The Dialectics of Seeing and Not Seeing: the Paradoxical Image of Death in Schels' and Lakotta's *Life before Death*
Jadwiga Kamola
- 28** Dead Man Bathing: Assessing the Iconography of the Corpse in the Bathtub
Veronika Riesenber
- 48** Confronting Difficult Memory through Absence: Space in Contemporary Memorial Architecture
Sabina Tanovic
- 66** Dying Inayat Khan: Nature, Spirituality, and Mortality in the *Jahangirnama*
Cheryl Ann Palyu
- 82** "Instead of death there was light": a Spatial Analysis of Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich* and Zhukovsky's *Room in the Brasovo Estate*
Nur Soliman
- 96** Call for Papers JLGC-04

Death

FOREWORD

It may be safe to say that classical universities, with classical curricula and disciplines that find themselves well defined and located in the humanities, tend to read the present from a viewpoint of the past. It was therefore remarkable that the LUCAS Graduate Conference 2013, on the topic of death, invited Rosi Braidotti as a keynote speaker. One of the top scholars on issues of post-humanity in the Netherlands, Braidotti opened the conference with a demonstration of how she reads the present from the viewpoint of a scholarship that is deeply involved and concerned with current developments. In her recent work, Braidotti's in-depth explorations of a post-human era come to the conclusion that, contrary to Hannah Arendt's contention, life is no longer the highest good: death is.

When, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt is close to concluding her argument on the genesis of modern man, she states that with and for the labouring animal, *animal laborans*, life has become the greatest good. On the surface, this indeed appears to be the case. In modern societies life has become the obsessive goal of private and public bodies, an obsession that only appears to be tempered or restrained by calculation. If health care will lead to uncontrollable budgets, for instance, less energy is spent on reconsidering what we understand health to be or what forms of care we would like to develop, whereas more energy is spent on the pivotal point of who or what is costing the most. Reduction of costs will lead inevitably, consequently, to suggestions

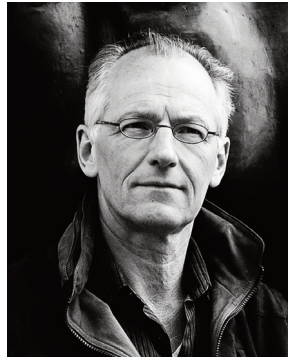
of whom we should let die, or better, to suggestions on which mass of people is too expensive to care for in such a way that their life can be extended.

Here we see the dark side of Arendt's contention. If life has become the highest good for the modern man, the labouring animal under capitalism, the highest good can of course not be achieved by all: perhaps the highest good can only be achieved by a relatively small number, of which the highest portion will probably not be labouring either. The vast majority of animals, meanwhile, in their not being human, will have lives that count only as exchangeable 'goods'. The lives of most animals count for nothing but the price of what they consist of as matter and material. For most of them, from the human perspective, death is the highest good. If we take into consideration, moreover, that Hannah Arendt was writing before the immense biotechnological revolutions that took place since the 1980s, we may start to see how in the current circumstances life is no longer the highest good, since bio-power and necropolitics – terms coined by Michel Foucault and Achille Mbembe – have become inseparable. It is this inseparability that is also central to the recent work of Rosi Braidotti.

How did we get here? Such is Hannah Arendt's question, and it is in a distinct sense a classical one. The suggestion might be that if we know how we got here, we can also find our way out of this mess, by following the track back or considering where we took the wrong turn. This is not only highly unlikely, however, it is also impossible. The explanation of how we got here is always falling behind in relation to the acceleration of modernity. Yet the question of how we got here is still of relevance if it helps us to see how past historical forms are still operative in the present, not so much as a potential but as a thickening of the complexity that we are in. When bio-power and necropolitics have become two sides of the same coin, this is not to say that classical considerations of life as a highest good have become irrelevant; but it serves to indicate that they have become framed by new media, new technologies, new forms of speed, new forms of destruction and resurrection, new forms of impotence, power and politics.

To Braidotti, it appeared, the question was not so much ‘How did we get here?’ The questions were: ‘Do we care to see, are we able to see, are we sensitive and knowledgeable enough, are we brave and sane enough, do we have the adequate theories and instruments to see what is really happening?’ I was happy and proud to be able to introduce Rosi Braidotti in my function as Director of Education of LUCAS in January 2013. Since then there has been a changing of the guard and I am back with the main task of teaching and researching. With respect to these, the questions posed by Braidotti serve the more as beacons a year later, and will remain so for years to come.

Frans-Willem Korsten
Former Director of Education, LUCAS



INTRODUCTION

What do a seventeenth-century Mughal painting, a Tolstoy novella, a series of modern memorials, a contemporary photo series by Walter Schels and Beate Lakotta, and images of bathtub corpses have in common? Their authors all share the desire to record death. A Mughal emperor, fascinated by the demise of a close court official whose body is emaciated by years of alcohol and opium abuse, has his portrait commissioned. In Tolstoy's portrait of Ivan Ilyich, the dying protagonist's fear of death becomes the novella's pivotal topic. Contemporary memorials create a physical locus to focus grief and commemorate death; their designers often capture loss by building spaces of absence. Photography may similarly seek to capture death: while Schels' and Lakotta's portraits of people just before and just after dying do not show death explicitly, images of violent deaths in bathtubs, both forensic and artistic, make its presence unmistakable. As the five articles in this issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* demonstrate, death inevitably prompts us to relate to it.

A variety of the resulting artworks, literature, and artefacts were introduced and investigated during the second LUCAS Graduate Conference (January 2013), on the theme of *Death: The Cultural Meaning of the End of Life*. The conference aimed to explore different ways in which conceptualizations of death, from classical antiquity to the present, have transformed our understanding of this universal, inescapable event. Organized by PhD researchers

at LUCAS (Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society), the conference included nearly fifty graduate speakers from universities around the globe. Framed by keynote lectures by art historian Joanna Woodall (Courtauld Institute of Art, London), and philosopher Rosi Braidotti (Utrecht University), the conference featured a wide and interdisciplinary range of subjects and fields.

Eight of the best papers presented at the conference have already been published in the second issue of this journal, titled *Death: Ritual, Representation and Remembrance* (February 2014). Its collection of articles focused on two different ways of engaging with death in the period from the late Middle Ages to the early 1900s: personal, intimate rituals of mourning, and more abstract modes of relating to death as occupying a space at the fringes of life and spirituality. The five articles of the current issue of the journal extend these concerns into more recent times, while introducing new ways of negotiating the topic of death. As in the previous issue, and at the 2013 LUCAS Graduate Conference where the articles were first presented, this third issue demonstrates the ambiguities of death as expressed across a variety of cultural representations.

While the current collection of articles took shape, it specifically brought to the fore the interplay between absence, anxiety, and aesthetics. An illustrative example is Jadwiga Kamola's comparative analysis of Walter Schels' portraits of hospice patients shortly before and just after death. Reading Schels' work in the context of other images of illness and death, Kamola argues that the portraits' monochrome and the arrangement (incorporating the deliberate division used in medical images) of 'before' and 'after' photographs, together with an absence of the "aesthetic anathema" of the opened or gory body, allow us to consider motifs of death in a new light. Kamola argues that Schels' portraits effectively perform a visual rhetoric of *dissimulatio*, showing death by not showing it, through obscuring the moment death sets in.

Veronika Riesenbergl likewise reflects on visual representations of death, with a focus on the unconventional motif of the 'dead man bathing', that is, cases

of death in a bathtub. Riesenbergs investigates the history of crime scene imagery through the lenses of science, journalism, and art, and discusses the contentious aesthetic appreciation of photographs of violent death, by using images – historical and contemporary, forensic and artistic, documentary and staged – that have never before been selected for comparative study. Two major pictorial traditions are identified, both originating from famous bathtub deaths of public figures shown post-mortem: Jean Paul Marat (1743-1793) and Uwe Barschel (1944-1987). She traces these iconographical axes through the work of numerous historical and contemporary artists, and illustrates that, again, death can be shown without being shown, residing in highly suggestive absence.

Similarly, contemporary memorials often address the representation of a difficult memory with spaces of absence as the most tangible answer to loss and trauma. To understand this memorial trend, Sabina Tanovic offers an enlightening analysis of the function and architecture of contemporary public memorial spaces such as the Atocha 11M Memorial in Madrid, as well as designs for planned memorials in Oslo and Utøya. She argues that memorials are more powerful when they engage the visitor through personal interaction with the site and offer a sense of vacancy, as opposed to simply offering a commemorative monument or structure. Tracing this development back to the Second World War, Tanovic shows how designers faced with representing the tragedy of the Holocaust delivered radical approaches to spaces of memory, in many cases promoting oblivion in place of commemoration, or memorializing loss through symbolic and physical spaces of absence.

In contrast, Cheryl Ann Palyu's analysis of the visual representation of death in an Eastern royal court transports us back to early modern times, and to one man's fascination with death. A preparatory drawing and a painting, both titled *Dying Inayat Khan* (1618), depart considerably from conventions of Mughal court portraiture in their meticulously detailed rendering of a gaunt, ghostly pale, opium-addicted courtier. Commissioned by emperor Jahangir, whose interests in natural and preternatural wonders were

renowned, the works reflect the interconnected yet ambiguous conceptualizations of nature, imperial (im)mortality, and political potency described in Jahangir's own memoirs, the *Jahangirnama*. Palyu explains how the emperor's Sufi spiritualism sustained his self-perception as a divinely ordained ruler. In Palyu's analysis, Inayat Khan's agonizing demise foretells personal and political anxieties for its patron, revealing the entanglement of private death and public politics, and the timeless concern with death and immortality.

In the closing article of this issue, Nur Soliman traces the materialization and visualization of death by means of representations of the home. Comparing Leo Tolstoy's novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), famously portraying a man facing his own imminent death, with Stanislav Zhukovsky's painting *Room in the Brasovo Estate* (1916), Soliman analyses the nature and function of space as a narrative device. Her comparison illustrates that Ivan Ilyich's fear of death is initially kept at a distance and concealed by means of his beautiful home – a gilded, bourgeois interior similar to that depicted by Zhukovsky. Yet as his health deteriorates, death creeps in from the uncontrollable outside world through the dark corners of his house, establishing a

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tension between the conscious and unconscious that underscores and emphasizes the novella's pivotal theme of anxiety – a tension that is also present in Zhukovsky's painting.

Each interacting with themes of absence, anxiety and aesthetics, together the articles in this issue illustrate how humankind devotes a considerable part of its cultural production to grappling with the end of life, through visual art, architecture, and literature. As a cross-cultural phenomenon, the end of human life fascinates us, scares us, and puzzles us, but never leaves us indifferent. We paint and photograph its victims, we write about its process, we detect patterns in the ways people meet the end of their existence, and produce lasting works of art in the process. Nonetheless, it continuously escapes our grasp, even if we actively seek to take hold of it. Death, with all the attempts to capture it in images, words, objects, or built structures, remains the great unknown.

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Before we continue to this issue's articles, grateful acknowledgement is due to those involved in producing this third edition of the journal. First and foremost we would like to thank our publisher, Leiden University Library, for its continued assistance and enthusiasm after the journal's successful launch in 2013. We owe particular thanks to Birte Kristiansen at Leiden University Library and to Joy Burrough-Boenisch for their kind help and advice in the fields of publishing, information technology, and academic editing. We are also grateful to all speakers who submitted their conference papers, and particularly to the five authors selected for this issue for their patient cooperation and hard work in the revision and editing process.

We also would like to thank our fellow PhD candidates at LUCAS and research institutes elsewhere who acted as peer reviewers, and Nenke van Wermerkerken for this issue's layout design. A final word of thanks goes to Frans-Willem Korsten, former Director of Education of LUCAS and author of this issue's foreword, and to the LUCAS management team, Kitty Zijlmans, Thony Visser, Geert Warnar, and Korrie Korevaart, for their continued support.

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Jenneke Janzen, Odile Bodde, Stephanie Glickman, David Louwrier, Frederik Knegtel, Heribert Korte, Sara Polak, and Linda Bleijenberg

THE DIALECTICS OF SEEING AND NOT SEEING THE PARADOXICAL IMAGE OF DEATH IN SCHELS' AND LAKOTTA'S *LIFE BEFORE DEATH*

Jadwiga Kamola

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg, Germany

ABSTRACT – *This paper addresses a series of contemporary black-and-white photographs of terminally ill people, before and immediately after the moment of their deaths, from Life before Death – An Exhibition of Photography on Dying by German photographer Walter Schels and journalist Beate Lakotta. Paradoxically, these photos show death by refraining from showing it. They do not give unequivocal evidence of death because no mutilated bodies are shown. The moment of death is insinuated by the juxtaposition of a living body in the photo on the left and a presumably dead body on the right. The photos entail an aesthetic paradox; death is simultaneously shown and concealed. As such, they employ a rhetoric of dissimulatio – concealment of an uncomfortable truth by displaying something else – and engage in a dialectics of not seeing and seeing. Schels' photos dissociate death from the body, producing grief in the viewer and undermining the popular fear of death. The photos are novel in their assemblage of existing motifs associated with death: the sleeping figure of the death mask, and the before-and-after treatment views of medical illustrations. Death confined to the dividing line between the images remains ineffable where the body appears intact.*

INTRODUCTION

Images showing “aesthetic anathema” – images of bodies mutilated by illness, war, and natural disasters – manipulate both the gaze and the body of the observer. They elicit a visceral perception such as fear or disgust. This

article focuses on images that show a ‘disgusting’ dead body by paradoxically refraining from showing its deadness by addressing a series of photographs compiled for *Life before Death – An Exhibition of Photography on Dying* (*Noch mal Leben – vor dem Tod. Eine Fotoausstellung über das Sterben*), 2003-2012, by photographer Walter Schels and journalist Beate Lakotta.¹ The series depicts terminally ill people in a portrait format. The photos, which were arranged into diptychs, present the subjects before the moment of death with their eyes open on the left, and after that moment with their eyes closed on the right. Outright proof that the body on the right is dead is omitted; death is confined to a dividing line – a gap – between the images. By doing so, the images obstruct the manifestation of disgust – which is linked to one’s awareness of one’s own body – and instead prompt emotional empathy with the depicted subject; that is, the photos transpose a visceral reaction related to one’s own body to an emotion towards the other. The viewer experiences empathy before a body that seems alive.² In this sense, Schels’ photos entail an aesthetic paradox, which is twofold: the photos obstruct an aesthetics based on engagement with one’s own body, and they are able to produce grief in the viewer because a mutilated, and therefore disgusting, dead body is absent.

The present article elucidates this paradoxical aesthetics. It argues that the image of death in *Life before Death* is informed by a dialectics of not seeing and seeing: that which is missing produces empathic arousal. As such, Schels’ photos refer to the ancient rhetoric of *dissimulatio*; a rhetoric that conceals the subject of speech and thereby paradoxically underlines the presence of the missing subject. It produces a spontaneous and authentic affect in the receiver.³ This rhetoric is art historically associated with the portrait of the ancient king Antigonos Monophthalmos (382-301 BCE), who was blind in one eye. The portrait, painted by Apelles, showed the subject’s intact side in a three-quarters view, concealing his blind eye.⁴ The rhetoric is relevant to the agenda of *Life before Death*; Antigonos’ defect is concealed so as not to diminish his authority, just as the sight of a dying body is omitted in order to acknowledge the personality of the terminally ill.

1. The series is published in print and available online at <http://www.randomhouse.de/Buch/Noch-mal-leben-vor-dem-Tod-Wenn-Menschen-sterben/Beate-Lakotta/e226825.rhd>.

2. See for instance Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010).

3. Fanny Népote-Desmarres and Thilo Tröger, “Dissimulatio artis” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 2, ed. Gert Ueding (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 1994), columns 886-888.

4. J.J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece: Sources and Documents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 162.

Schels' photos do not show death. Rather, they insinuate death by proposing a relationship with existing motifs and formats related to death. The spectator is familiar both with the applied format (before and after treatment) and the motif (the portrait of a sleeping figure understood as dead). The insinuation of a theme or subject evoked by its omission becomes evident in medical illustrations, which show the subject before and after treatment, but do not disclose the medical procedure. Such illustrations present intact bodies; the sick-but-still-whole body before and the intact-and-healed body after the operation. They omit the intrusion into the body's insides. In a similar vein, death masks show the dead as intact; the subject's face seems asleep, free of contortions suggesting pain. In this context, Schels' photos merge the motif of the seemingly-alive-but-dead figure extracted from death masks with the before-and-after format of medical illustrations. While the motif of the sleeping figure *indicates* a dead body through the suggestion of sleep, the gap of medical illustrations *conceals* the physical deformation involved in the process of dying.

Along these lines, this article investigates the image of death shown in Schels' photos and continues to propose that the photos indicate death in terms of a "pseudo-absence" which is informed by a double absence: the absence of a mutilated body, compounded by the absence of colour in the black-and-white photograph. According to the early modern trope of colour as flesh, established by Cennino Cennini (1370-1440) in a treatise on painting, I understand colour precisely as indicating life and presence. The black-and-white of the photographs establishes the aura of a past moment, so that photography becomes a metaphor for memory. In this sense, the depicted subject becomes a distant other. Death is dissociated from the seeing self and becomes transposed onto a deceased relative. The gap in the presentation of before-and-after images, which informs the reading of Schels' photos, suggests a demarcation line between a normal and an abnormal state. Death becomes readable as an intrusion into the body, a view that should be concealed. To demonstrate the contrast with depicting an evidently dead body, the article turns to Théodore Géricault's *Study of Two Severed Heads* (c.

1819), which depicts the moment of death as frozen in the decapitated and bloody subjects. With their explicit view of death, Géricault's paintings produce disgust, which triggers a reception related to one's own body.

In sum, Walter Schels' photos do not explicitly show death, just as they do not produce an engagement with one's own corporeality and mortality. They allude to formats and motifs that obfuscate death. In *Life before Death* Schels accesses a set of existing motifs and the novelty of this series lies in the particular arrangement of these motifs.

LIFE BEFORE DEATH

As death is anathema in Western society, it is rarely shown in images of popular media. In particular, the aspect of dying in a hospice has seldom been considered by popular contemporary art. *Life before Death* brings the often solitary death in a hospice from society's margins to its centre of attention. The series consists of 45 diptychs showing terminally ill people before and after the moment of death; on the left their eyes are open and they are alive, while on the right their eyes are closed, immediately after the moment of their deaths.

The photographer, Walter Schels, is known for his black-and-white portraits of politicians, animals, and premature children, which he photographed for the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. For *Life before Death* Schels and Lakotta randomly approached the subjects in hospices in Berlin and Hamburg and asked if they could document their last days. Lakotta recorded their interviews, and Schels photographed them. The exhibition was shown at several museums, art galleries, and churches in Europe, Israel, and the UK between 2003 and 2012, most prominently at the Wellcome Collection in London in 2008. According to an interview published by *The Guardian* in 2008, the artists' motivation was to overcome their own fear of dying and the helplessness it implied. In the interview Lakotta stated: "We all know we are going to die, but we do not really believe it will happen to us. Death is some-

thing that happens to other people. Astonishingly enough, people in the hospice have the same feeling.”⁵ Their intention, Lakotta added, was not to break a taboo or to shock people but to share experiences.

Each subject is depicted in two large (60cm by 70cm) black-and-white portraits (Figs. 1, 2, and 3). On the left, before death, the subject is facing the viewer frontally. On the right, set in the same light and perspective the deceased subject is portrayed as possibly sleeping. A visible gap is left between the hanging pictures in the exhibition spaces. Each diptych is accompanied by a text recording the person’s first and last name, age, date of birth, and date of death, as well as a brief narrative on his or her life and last days in the hospice. Some entries in the catalogue include personal photos with family and friends. Contrary to the notion of death as ‘the Great Equalizer’ the subjects portrayed by Schels cannot be considered uniformly equal or anonymous. The large portrait format redefines them as individuals and, with the photo on the left, indicates the personality of a once-living human being. As such, the photo on the left refers to the title of the series, *Life before Death*. The subtitle, “an exhibition of photography on dying” – which was omitted in exhibitions outside of Germany – is not represented in an equally explicit manner. The image of the person on the right is ambivalent, the subject neither evidently sleeping nor evidently dead. The photo shows the subject between a state of alive-nearly-dead and dead-still-breathing. It conceals the moment of dying and banishes it to the dividing line between the images.

DEATH AS SLEEP

Despite the exhibition’s emphasis on showing persons with individual lives, the photographs also attempt to show death. But where exactly can death be seen? Setting the biographical records aside, how can spectators be certain that the subjects are dead and not merely asleep? There is no mutilated body, so the viewer infers the person is dead from the motif of the sleeping figure. The photos strictly refrain from showing motifs related with pain or

5. Joanna Moorhead, “This is the End,” *The Guardian* (1 April 2008).

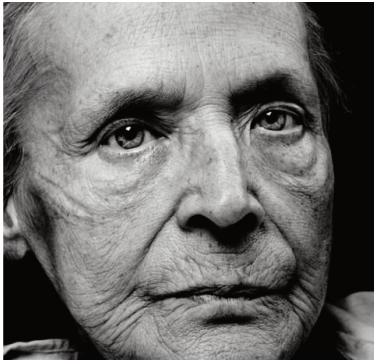


Fig. 1

Walter Schels: Klara Behrens (2004) in *Noch Mal Leben vor dem Tod: Wenn Menschen Sterben*. (München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2004)

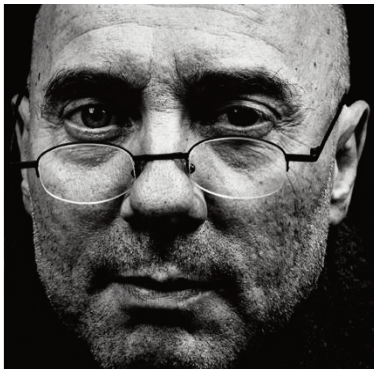


Fig. 2

Walter Schels: *Heiner Schmitz* in in *Noch Mal Leben vor dem Tod: Wenn Menschen Sterben*. (München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2004)



Fig. 3

Walter Schels: Maria Hai-Anh Tuyet Cao in *Noch Mal Leben vor dem Tod: Wenn Menschen Sterben*. (München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2004)

disgust. Instead, the photos obfuscate the moment of dying by referring to the postmortem motif of *thanatos* as *hypnos* – death as sleep – which is framed by the portrait format.⁶ Death acquires the positive connotation of sleep, euphemistically avoiding any indication of pain or illness.

6. See for instance Ovid, “Book Eleven” in *Metamorphoses*, trans. John Dryden (Cambridge: Nabu Press, 2014).

A rhetoric based on a withholding of knowledge links Schels' photos to *dissimulatio*. The rhetoric of *dissimulatio*, which conceals something existent and thereby makes it present, demands empathy from the observer. In this sense, the photos contain a paradox: that which is supposed to be revealed, the moment of a solitary death in a hospice as a social anathema, is not disclosed. Instead, the spectator's gaze focuses on the large head shown in the portrait; a format historically linked with presence and beauty in artistic representation.

Yet the aesthetic effect of *dissimulatio* seems temporary. Disgust, an experience of the abject, confronting us with the imminent decomposition of our own bodies, is kept from the observer.⁷ Instead, the observer engages in a collective aesthetic experience of grieving: many visitors cry at the exhibition. The spectator is not located in the position of the dying individual; rather, the viewer finds himself in the position of the bereaved. In this context, colour insinuates bodily fluids and serves as the prime stimulus of disgust. Colour also suggests presence, as will be argued later in my discussion of Géricault. Devoid of colour, Schels' photos neither elicit disgust nor identification with the subject. Instead, the interpolation of memory by means of the photograph causes empathic arousal, a process which begins with the view of the subject after death. This view is linked to a picture, a photo of the dead, which elicits an emotion akin to grief felt upon the loss of a close friend or relative. As a result, the spectator does not experience reflection on his or her own mortality but rather re-experiences the loss of loved ones. Based on an understanding of photography as a medium linked with memory and past as opposed to actuality, the photos transpose the possibility of a self-centred emotion to an emotion towards the other. Death becomes entangled with a black-and-white image that at the same time stands for the past. The medium of photography becomes a metaphor for memory, the freezing of a vibrant moment to a stable image.⁸ Here, too, lies a paradox: it is the black-and-white surface – not the depicted theme – that suggests death. The black-and-white photograph renders life lifeless.

7. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1-5.

8. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida – Reflections of Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 89.

POST-ABSENCE VERSUS PSEUDO-ABSENCE

Research conducted in the field of cultural studies recognizes an analogy between death and portrait.⁹ The portrait makes the subject eternal and at the same time evanescent. It implies that the depicted individual has existed. At the same time, the portrait paradoxically outlives the subject. It renders the body redundant. As opposed to painted colourful portraits, colourless death masks and black-and-white photos of deceased individuals are seen as media of duplication. As such, they are considered as incapable of indicating the presence associated with the painted portrait's representation. Instead, these media *duplicate* the moment of death by duplicating the face in size and form and simulating its texture. Death masks capture the face of the deceased after death but before decomposition. They depict the body while it gradually ceases to exist, in a state between life and death. In his text on "The Visibility of Death in Photography", Martin Schulz referred to the original meaning of the Italian term for portrait, *ritratto*, as "dragging or pulling the face out of the body". According to Schulz, black-and-white photography and the death mask do not *drag*, that is, make present, but rather *double* the dead body by being colourless imprints.¹⁰ The imprint of the shadow of man becomes analogous to the plaster cast imprint. These media echo the dead body only to show the absence of presence, an absence of colour and liveliness. In photography, the moment of dying is projected onto a black-and-white surface, while death masks reiterate the dead face in achromatic plaster cast. Along these lines, the artistic representation of death is a phenomenon that must involve colour to acquire a sense of presence. Death signifies an absence, but it is the absence of life in terms of a presence. Both death masks and black-and-white photography indicate the absence of presence. They display death as a distant phenomenon.

The black-and-white photograph of a death mask of an unknown subject from Florence (Fig. 4) depicts the plaster likeness of a person's face after the moment of death. It displays individual traits; a prominent nose, oblong lips, a furrowed complexion. The spectator can assume that the person was old,

9. See *Die Neue Sichtbarkeit des Todes*, eds. Thomas Macho and Kristin Marek (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2007); or *Kopf, Schädel, Gesicht, Trajekte Zeitschrift des Zentrums für Literatur- und Kulturforschung* ed. Sigrid Weigel (Berlin: Kadmos, 2012).

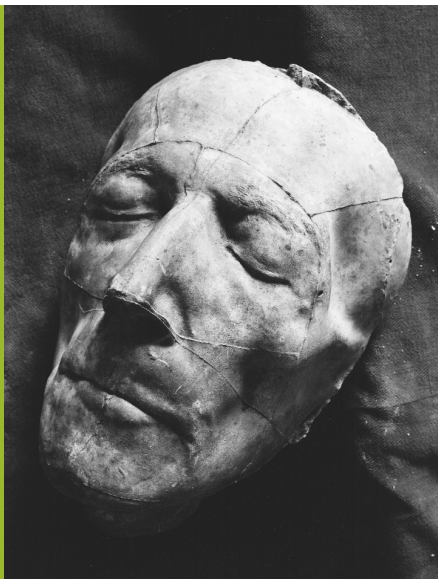
10. Martin Schulz, "Die Sichtbarkeit des Todes in der Fotografie," in *Die Neue Sichtbarkeit des Todes*, eds. Thomas Macho and Kristin Marek (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2007), 411.

lean and male. But neither the man's individuality, nor signs of an affiliation to a social collective, nor his hair or clothing are visible. Initially the spectator encounters a bald head with closed eyes, but as the head is fragmented the man cannot be mistaken as asleep. The death mask freezes the moment *after* death, the moment after the eyes of the subject closed. In this sense, the plaster cast signifies a "post-absence", that is, an absence that can be seen in the physically empty space of the verso of the mask. This absence does not suggest presence, neither of the man nor of death; it is entirely vacant.

A photograph of an anonymous dead woman (Fig. 5) shows the moment before the woman's funeral depicting her with her eyes closed, dressed and laid out in an open coffin. The picture focuses on the woman's face, which is old, framed by a pillow and the coffin's padding. The photograph seems to serve as a posthumous portrait that outlines the individuality of the subject. It shows an intimate moment of farewell. The man to the right of the coffin emphasizes this moment. A friend or a relative, he takes leave with a farewell gesture by touching the casket. At the same time, this gesture foreshadows

Fig. 4

Artist unknown. Death Mask.
Anonymous. Florence. Palazzo Pitti e
Giardino di Boboli



the ritual of carrying the coffin to the cemetery. Both the death mask and the photo of the dead woman show a deceased subject but do not entail either the presence of a living human being, nor of death. As an imprint of the moment after death, this image likewise depicts a post-absence.

Unlike the death mask or the photograph of the dead woman, Schels' photos embrace the view before and after death, where death is understood as oscillating between presence and absence. This juxtaposition implies that death is a phenomenon that can be neither clearly classified nor shown. In the diptych of Maria Hai-Anh Tyet Cao (Fig. 3), the portrait on the left suggests a living person, who looks directly at the observer. The photograph shows a piece of clothing; the woman wears makeup. These aspects stress the subject's individuality, and indicate the presence of a living being. Paradoxically, being black-and-white, the photograph on the left as signifying presence becomes the picture of absence. The picture on the right does not negate presence; it shows an intact, seemingly sleeping individual. It can be read as an image showing a "pseudo-absence" informed by a double absence; the lack of a mutilated body and the lack of colour.



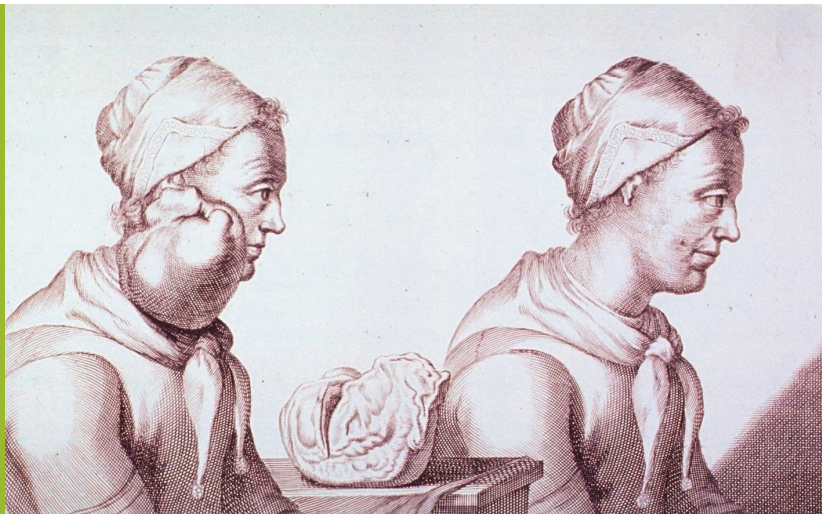
Fig. 5

Anonymous dead woman in a coffin

THE GAP

The view before and after death in Schels' photographs links the series to conventional medical illustrations showing the view before and after treatment, employed from the seventeenth century onwards. The Flemish engraving of Clara Jacobi depicts the patient with an enormous tumour on the right side of her face (Fig. 6). In the same frame, the woman is shown before the extraction of the growth on the left and after the procedure on the right. While the extracted tumour, which lies on a wooden table between the subjects, shows a deep incision, the woman's face after the treatment seems cured and unscarred. The extracted tumour on the table and the lack of tumour in the woman's face on the right indicate the intervention of a second party who is not displayed. The extracted tumour both links and separates the view before and after the treatment. The tumour suggests that the subjects can be understood as the same individual; the growth on the table is both linked to the growth attached to the person's face and to the face without the tumour. At the same time, the tumour separates both sides of the picture. It serves as a demarcation line between that which was and that which is. This division is further stressed by the positions of Clara Jacobi, who sits on opposite sides of the table. The tumour as linking and separating

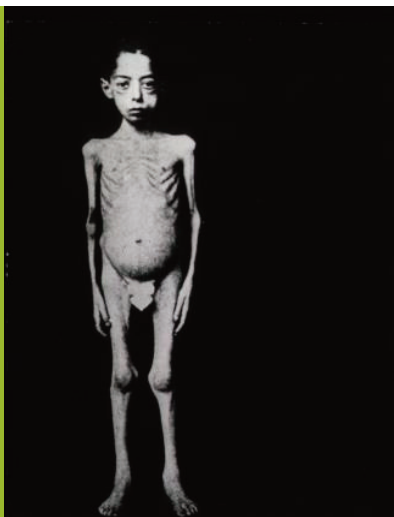
Fig. 6
Artist unknown. *Clara Jacobi*. 1689.
The Netherlands. Engraving.
National Library of Medicine.
Bethesda, USA



the two sides of the picture implies a reading of the women as the same person while at the same time suggesting that they are not shown simultaneously, but rather chronologically. In this sense, the tumour stands for something ontologically different; it indicates time. The juxtaposition of the view before and after the extraction indicates the progression of the disease, the operation and the convalescence. The extracted tumour reifies a non-material entity by its fleshiness. The tumour on the table seems bigger than the tumour attached to the woman's face and suggests the growth of the disease. The tumour also acquires an immaterial quality: it becomes congruent with the gap between both views of Clara Jacobi and indicates a time sequence – the progression of the disease – but it also suggests a chronology that implies medical intervention.

Two early twentieth-century black-and-white photographs assembled in a diptych show a boy before and after treatment with insulin (Fig. 7). The photos were taken for the World Health Organization and are drawn from the archive of the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda (USA). The boy is naked except for an ivy leaf covering his genitals. He is facing the viewer. On the left, he appears skeletal. On the right, he is evidently well-nourished. A dividing line separates the photographs. This juxtaposition of images showing two extreme states of the same body triggers a comparative gaze. The habitual reading direction guides the gaze from left to right and vice versa, eventually resting on the image on the right. Interestingly, the gap between the images does not initially catch the onlooker's attention even though it lies at the centre of the diptych. It only becomes visible through the back and forth movement of the eyes. While the tumour and the space between the subjects in the engraving of Clara Jacobi were seen as linking and separating both sides of the image, the gap between the photos can only be understood as dividing both views of the boy. The dividing line stands for the application of medical treatment. It seems to metaphorically block the progression of the disease. It further promotes a reading in terms of normality and abnormality while privileging the view of normality on the right. The white stripe implies a chronological sequence with a positive outcome: the picture on the left stands at the begin-

Fig. 7
Photographer unknown. *Child suffering from diabetes, the before-and-after views reflect the change after treatment with insulin.* Photos taken for the World Health Organization. National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, USA



ning of the sequence, and the picture on the right showing that the boy has recovered stands at the end of the sequence. The time frame, the continuous application of medicine, overlaps with the boy's recovery. The juxtaposition of these images, and the body's drastic change, implies improvement and promotes the application of insulin. In this sense, the gap shows the progression from an abnormal to a normal state. The gap, however, must be understood critically as a boundary between the pathological and the normal, which dissimulates contradictions of the positivistic logic of the diptych, such as complications of the medical treatment, pain, or side effects.

As part of our iconic memory, the logic of medical illustrations informs the spectator's perception of Schels' photographs. With the view before and after death the diptychs seem to indicate a temporal progression. Read with the logic of medical illustrations one can also interpret Schels' photos as promoting euthanasia, which allows for a peaceful death as suggested by the photo on the right. Such a reading would overlap with the artists' agenda of advocating overcoming the fear of dying. Read as the progression from an abnormal to a normal state, Schels' diptychs indicate the abnormal state in the picture on the right, the image of death, while the white stripe could be understood as the progression of a disease that kills the subject and is there-

fore withheld from view. Both deliberately pointed interpretations show that viewing Schels' work in the same manner as the before-and-after medical treatment images leads the photos to adapt a positivistic logic. They privilege the view of an intact body and exclude aberrations from the normal.

GÉRICAULT'S DECAPITATED HEADS

Following these images that *dissimulate* death, the focus switches to the depiction of dead bodies shown as pierced and wounded. Géricault's paintings of the decapitated heads of cadavers of criminals, today located at the National Museum in Stockholm, form a strong counterpoint to the ubiquitous black-and-white faces of Schels' photos. They explicitly show death by means of colour and the depiction of an injured body. Géricault acquired the heads from the morgues of the Beaujon and Bicêtre hospitals and kept them in his studio until the stench of decomposition became unbearable.¹¹ Until recently, due to the lack of a signature, date, and title, art historical research discarded the paintings, five in all, as preparatory studies for Géricault's monumental *Raft of the Medusa* shown at the Paris Salon in 1819. The paintings of severed heads are therefore dated to the same year. The anonymous heads are believed to prefigure the shipwrecked sailors of the *Raft*, although none of the heads appears in the painting.¹²

Géricault's studies render death as caused by the guillotine. *The Study of Two Severed Heads* (c. 1819, Fig. 8) shows the result of execution; the decapitated heads of a woman and a man. The incision performed by the guillotine is indicated by the cuts underneath the throats. The heads were placed on a white cloth, which is stained by the blood coming from the severed necks. The heads show different stages of decomposition; the head on the left, which belonged to a woman, is white and blue. The white impasto indicates the lack of blood circulation while the brownish complexion of the man's head signifies life; his head still seems to be losing blood. Already corpses with their individual traits still apparent, the heads indicate the presence of a once-living human being.

11. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Géricault's Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Scaffold," in *The Art Bulletin* 74 (December 1992), 599.

12. Ibid. 599.

Fig. 8
Théodore Géricault: *Study of Two Severed Heads*. Oil on canvas. About 1819. The National Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm, Sweden.



Géricault's study drastically proposes an analogy between death and colour. Since Cennino Cennini's treatise on painting written in 1400, pigment became entwined with flesh. In *The Book of Art* Cennini elaborates on the mixing of colours, which, when layered correctly, can suggest liveliness and flesh:

Take a little *verdeterra*, and a little well-tempered *biacca*, and go twice over the face, hands, feet, and all the naked parts. [...] Then [...] you must prepare three gradations of flesh-colour, one lighter than the other, laying every tint in its right place in the face, taking care not to cover over the whole of the *verdaccio*, but shading partially on it with the darkest flesh-colour, making it very liquid, and softening off the colour in the tenderest manner.¹³

13. "How to Color Faces, Hands, Feet, and Flesh Generally," in Cennino Cennini: *The Book of Art* (London: George Allen, Ruskin House, 1899), 127.

For Cennini, colour not only signifies flesh, but becomes flesh in the act of painting. Strikingly, Cennini advises the painter to use the same ground colour, the *verdaccio*, in order to paint the face of a dead man:

On a panel you must lay it [the colouring] on in the usual way as directed for colouring living faces, and also shade it in the same way with *verdaccio*. You must use no rosy tints, because dead persons have no colour; but take a little light ochre for your three gradations of flesh-colour, mixed with white, and temper in the usual manner, laying each tint in its place, and softening them into each other, as well on the face as on the body. And in the same manner, when you have nearly covered your ground, make the lightest flesh tint still lighter, reducing it to pure white for the highest lights. Then mark the outlines with dark *sinopia*, mixed with a little black [...]¹⁴

Géricault painted the dead body in an almost Cenninian manner. The head of the man shows a brownish complexion covered with white and black spots indicating hollows, protruding bones and the insides of his mouth. A stream of red sullies the cloth. In Cenninian terms, the painting not only shows the materiality of the dead body, but becomes its surrogate body where the colour of decomposing flesh is linked to living flesh, which is in turn linked to blood. Moreover, the view of the decapitated heads produces a visceral emotion in the viewer, creating a synesthetic experience; the viewer imagines the stench of decomposition and the sticky and soft surface of decomposing flesh. By means of disgust the spectator acknowledges death as linked to his own body.

Another aspect that explicitly promotes the sight of death is the subjects' open mouths. According to Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, decapitation, far from bringing instant death, caused excruciating pain to victims, whose senses were believed to remain alive for several minutes after severance of the head.¹⁵ The agony of a gruesome death by guillotine is especially inscribed onto the head on the right with its eyes staring wide open, its features distorted by pain, and the open mouth shown as a black hole. The female head with its slightly open mouth and the closed eyes signifies a moment after the agony, the ceasing of life. By showing an open mouth, Géricault's studies reject a doctrine notoriously acclaimed by the German writer and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his *Laokoon* (1766):

14. "How to Color a Dead Man, His Hair and Beard." Ibid. 128.

15. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Géricault's Severed Heads and Limbs", 609.

The simple opening of the mouth, apart from the violent and repulsive contortions it causes in the other parts of the face, is a blot on a painting and a cavity in a statue productive of the worst possible effect.¹⁶

Lessing considers the marble statue of the dying Laocoön and his sons, with their mouths wide open, an artistic antithesis. The ancient statue associated with the Greek sculptors Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus shows the Trojan priest fighting sea serpents, which, according to the Greek myth, eventually kill him and his sons. Their facial contortions and open mouths suggest their pain. Laocoön's body entangled by the serpents becomes the centre of attention; he is bigger than the figures of his sons and positioned centrally so the viewer's gaze is directed towards his strained body, and his open mouth suggests his agony.

With his study of the severed heads Géricault seems to surpass Lessing's doctrine. In the tradition of Laocoön, Géricault not only provides an insight into that which should not be disclosed by art – the body's inside – but he also shows a fragmented body, indicating the act of killing. The open mouths of the decapitated heads pinpoint corporeal fragility and further mirror the incision of the guillotine. The open mouth formed into a scream in response to the violent fragmentation of the body serves as an actual premonition of death. The body's opening was initiated by the opening of the mouth, which references the incision and the missing body.

16. "Die blosse weite Öffnung des Mundes, – bei Seite gesetzt, wie gewaltsam und ekel auch die übrigen Theile des Gesichts dadurch verzerret und verschoben werden, –ist in der Malerei ein Fleck und in der Bildhauerei eine Vertiefung, welche die widrigste Wirkung von der Welt thut." Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001), 21. English translation in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. E.A. McCormick (London: Johns Hopkins University Press), 45.

Hence, Géricault's heads could fruitfully be considered in opposition to the portraits of Schels' series. The depicted heads are the material remains of a once existing body. But they are also the remains of the act of killing. They are mere stumps, not even corpses. Géricault's paintings show what Schels' images dissimulate; death as the result of an opening of the body where colour evinces the presence of death. In showing anonymous severed heads frozen in the agony of dying and in the process of decomposition, the study becomes a portrait of death.

CONCLUSION

In this article Schels' photos have been discussed as dissimulating death, and shown in the context of death masks, photos of dead subjects, and medical illustrations of the view before and after the treatment. Compared to Géricault's paintings, which evince the presence of death by an open body and the application of colour, Schels' photos can be viewed as merely showing a pseudo-absence. This absence is informed by the lack of an open body and colour. Rather than elucidating mortality as integral to our physical existence, Schels' photos show death as an abstract phenomenon. Death is projected onto the old and sick other. Agonies of dying, medical treatments and their side effects, which entail an engagement with one's own body, are withheld from vision. Through a collective *aisthesis* of grieving, the viewer is dissociated from the body. The photos seem to claim that death can be made visible by a juxtaposition of presence and absence. Death, then, is confined to the dividing line between the image of a living body and that of a dead, yet seemingly sleeping body. As such, Schels' photos customize death as a portrait of a seemingly living individual and make it understandable in the context of the intact bodies of popular media where photography becomes a tool of *dissimulatio*.

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DEAD MAN BATHING ASSESSING THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CORPSE IN THE BATHTUB

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ABSTRACT – *This article investigates the history of crime scene imagery from both forensic and artistic perspectives. It elucidates the entanglement of the rise of photography and the establishment of modern criminalistics, discusses the appropriateness of attributing aesthetic qualities to photographs of violent death, and traces the photographs' contextual and semantic shifts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The author examines a number of historical and contemporary, forensic and artistic, documentary and staged crime scene images that have never before been selected for comparative study. All of the images – including contemporary artworks by Izima Kaoru, Melanie Pullen, Eileen Cowin, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Thomas Demand, Michael Schirner, Johann Kresnik, Angelika Bader and Dietmar Tanterl – share the same motif: a case of death in a bathtub. Two major pictorial traditions are identified, both initiating from the deaths of public figures and their post-mortem depictions: Jean Paul Marat (1743-1793) and Uwe Barschel (1944-1987). By tracing the motif along and beyond these axes, a specific iconography of the corpse in the bathtub unfolds.*

INTRODUCTION

In its early history, photography was generally regarded as a true record of reality, directly impressed into the light-sensitive layer of the photographic plate by the sun or, according to photo pioneer Henry William Fox Talbot, by the “pencil of nature”.¹ Unlike the potential subjectivity of an artist’s skill and interpretation, photography promised a consistently reliable, authentic,

‘natural’, or at least apparatus-based recording technique. Although image manipulation can be traced back to the nineteenth century, faith in photography’s realism was unbroken until the 1970s, when the ‘new’ medium was recognized as art, and digitality presented possibilities to undermine the indexical relationship between the picture and its referent.² Nevertheless, photography continues to be widely employed for documentary purposes today.

As objective documentation is “the key to a successful crime scene investigation”,³ photography contributed significantly to the advancement of criminalistics. Crime scene photography dates back to the 1860s.⁴ At that time, a distinction was made between “descriptive” and “explorative” crime scene photographs: the former served to visually fix the crime’s aftermath and secure ephemeral evidence, whereas the latter was dedicated to enabling the discovery of details invisible to the human eye or overlooked by on-site investigators.⁵ Crime scene images therefore share with other photographic genres a quality of presenting what “has been” in the Barthesian sense⁶ – a quality of particular relevance for crime detection. Yet they are photographs unlike any others. In particular, they are unflinching records of violent and untimely deaths, which are typically accessible to only a small number of police investigators and forensic scientists, and may elicit shock, sadness, or disgust in a general audience.

The status, visibility, and reception of crime scene images have changed in recent decades. Likely fuelled by a number of high-profile murder cases in the 1990s, an increasing vogue for forensic sciences and a broad “sensational fascination” with crime scene photos is readily apparent in popular media.⁷ As with other sub-genres, such as private or scientific photography, formerly marginal and highly specialized crime scene images have undergone re-contextualization, re-evaluation, and institutionalization. Since the 1990s, they have been recognized for their aesthetic value and displayed in gallery spaces and museums. Simultaneously, artists have brought criminalistics and forensics into focus by following investigative methodologies,⁸ or by making a

1. William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (New York: Da Capo Press, [1844] 1969).

2. Hubertus von Amelnunx, “Fotografie nach der Fotografie: Das Entsetzen des Körpers im digitalen Raum,” in *Fotografie nach der Fotografie* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995), 118.

3. Max M. Houck, Frank Crispino, and Terry McAdam, *The Science of the Crime Scene* (Oxford: Elsevier Inc., 2012), 113.

4. Since the 1880s crime scene photography has been directly linked to the anthropometric identification system established by Alphonse Bertillon in Paris. In addition to the “Bertillonage”, he also developed a standard for crime scene photography consisting of an overview of the whole scene, a view from above, and a side view of the victim. The photos were fixed on cardboard and accompanied by technical inscriptions to create a three-dimensional reconstruction of the corpse and its spatial conditions. Katharina Sykora, *Die Tode der Fotografie. Totenfotografie und ihr sozialer Gebrauch* Vol. I (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), 502.

5. Wilhelm Urban, *Kompandium der gerichtlichen Photographie: Ein Handbuch für Beamte der Gerichts- und Sicherheitsbehörden, sowie den Unterricht an kriminalistischen Instituten und Gendarmerien* (Leipzig: Otto Nemnich, 1910), 2-3. See also

Sykora, *Die Tode der Fotografie*, 502-503.

6. Barthes' characterisation of photography's "noème" as "ça a été" is probably the most-quoted dictum in his groundbreaking essay *La chambre claire* (1980). See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

7. For example, the serial killings by Jeffrey Dahmer and the O.J. Simpson murder trial. See Houck et al., *The Science of the Crime Scene*, Introduction, xx.

8. In the same way analogies between crime detection and medicine, psychology, archaeology, or art history were drawn, movements and groups like "artistic research" or the German "Spurensicherung" ("evidence securing") movement emerged that were devoted to quasi-investigative methodologies. For more concerning the widespread "evidential paradigm" see Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," *History Workshop Journal* 9 (1980), 5-36. For an example of an exhibition focusing on investigative artistic strategies, see *Scene of the Crime*, ed. Ralph Rugoff (Los Angeles: MIT Press, 1997).

9. *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, ed. James Ellroy and Deborah Aaronson (Los Angeles: Harry N. Abrams, 2004).

crime scene their motif, either by working with existing footage or by staging their own scenes. Before substantiating the crime scene image's theoretical aestheticism, this development will be illustrated by examples of historical crime scene photography and contemporary artistic practice.

Exhibitions like *To Protect and Serve: The LAPD Archives* demonstrate the curatorial interest in historical crime scene imagery.⁹ Initially debuting at Fototeka Gallery in Los Angeles in 2001, the exhibition presented long-forgotten photographic material from the 1930s to 1960s, mostly originating from the Special Investigations Division of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Like other exhibitions based on police archives,¹⁰ it revealed that crime scene photographs – particularly historical ones – are not objective reports of reality but rather subjective documentation of personal perceptions, inextricably linked to their contemporary social and cultural conditions in the same way that products of traditional artistic genres respond to their own.

One of the exhibited images is a 1931 black-and-white police photograph of a dressed male corpse in a bathtub. It features a clear composition dominated by the diagonals of the bathtub and verticals of the hanging towel and shower curtain, structuring the image plane and dividing it into areas of finely modulated grey tones. The man's legs, in dark trousers, are bent with his shins pressed to the white bathtub wall, which reinforces angularity in the composition and provides contrast. In addition to the aesthetic qualities inherent in framing and photographing the scene, the image bears a 'signature' directly engraved into the negative. It contains the Division of Record (DR) code, an abbreviation identifying the case, the name of the photographer (Maxwell), and the date (4-17-1931). It was customary at that time for photographers to claim authorship of their photos in this quasi-artistic manner.¹¹ A distinct self-identification as photographer-artist is particularly evident in the images of crime scene photographer and photojournalist Arthur Fellig (1899-1969), well known by his pseudonym "Weegee", who operated between investigation and sensation throughout his life. As Tim B. Wride describes, Weegee

and his kind demonstrated a “tremendous sense of their own mastery of the process, an overlay of humour and irony, and a cinematic sensibility that at its best borders on the operatic”.¹² Despite the quasi-artistic identities and practices of these photographers in their own time, only today do we recognize the artistic qualities in the crime scene images they took; they were not originally valued as artistic, but retrospectively they radiate historical, social, cultural, and aesthetic significance.

Another historical crime scene photograph to which aesthetic qualities can now be attributed is found in the *Compendium of Forensic Photography* (1910) by German criminologist Wilhelm Urban. It depicts a female corpse in a bathtub (Fig. 1). Urban used it to discuss and exemplify the best possible way of photographing crime scenes and bodies. Here, the body of a young girl was found partially submerged in a wooden high-boarded bath in a washing cellar, and no other picture than one from above would have been possible.¹³ This view from above onto the scene was usually applied in the early years of crime scene photography by means of a ladder pod and was associ-

10. Exhibitions have been based on police archives in New York, San Francisco, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other cities. See for example Luc Sante, *Evidence: NYPD Crime Scene Photographs: 1914-1918* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006), and *Plaats Delict Amsterdam: Foto's uit het Amsterdamse politiearchief '65-'85* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers, 2006).

11. Wride, Tim B. “The Art of the Archive”, in *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, 21.

12. Ibid. 21.

13. Urban, *Kompendium der gerichtlichen Fotografie*, 16.



Fig. 1
Wilhelm Urban, Historical crime scene photograph, c. 1910
Credits: Wilhelm Urban, *Kompendium der gerichtlichen Photographie: Ein Handbuch für Beamte der Gerichts- und Sicherheitsbehörden, sowie den Unterricht an kriminalistischen Instituten und Gendarmerien* (Leipzig: Otto Nemnich, 1910), 18.

ated with scientific distance. Additionally, as a temporal coincidence, it can also be related to new perspectives in avant-garde art, for example in Russian (constructivist) photography and film that employed bird's-eye and frog's-eye views.¹⁴ The proximity of scientific and artistic modes is crucial; although the photograph conflicts with our conventional aesthetic perception, the forensic photographer has unconsciously internalized aesthetic principles that are utilized intentionally in artistic works.

One contemporary artwork perfectly demonstrates this juxtaposition of scientific and artistic: the C-print *Matsuyuki Yasuko wears Gucci #1* (1996, Fig. 2) by Japanese photographer Izima Kaoru (born 1954). It also depicts a female corpse in a bathtub photographed from above, but unlike Urban's photo, which presents the subtle crudity of the site without euphemism, Kaoru has staged the whole scene and exaggerated its artificiality with the corpse's unnatural pose and an almost fish-eye effect of distortion. It is part of his long-running series *Landscapes with a Corpse* (1995-2008), which fluctuates between crime scene and fashion photography, risking transgression of the boundaries

14. Susanne Regener, "Verbrechen, Schönheit, Tod: Tatortfotografien", in *Fotogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 78 (2000), 31.

Fig. 2
Izima Kaoru
Series: *Landscapes with a Corpse*
Matsuyuki Yasuko wears Gucci
#1, 1996
100 x 127cm, C-Print/Diasac
© Izima Kaoru, Courtesy Van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne, Germany



between ‘good’ taste and kitsch. In this series, Kaoru captures Japanese models dressed in *haute couture* and staged gracefully as dead bodies. For each work he photographs “the victim in various pictorial steps until the corpse – always with her eyes wide open – is visible in a long shot.”¹⁵ Thereby the artist adheres to police photography conventions: from the periphery to the centre, from the overview to the detailed image. Yet Kaoru’s “neoromantic portraits” and “modern visions of Pre-Raphaelite heroines” as Roy Exley describes them,¹⁶ do not convey the horror of a real crime scene. Although his works never completely abandon their disturbing components, the scenes seem surreal, and their protagonists appear calm and peaceful, even beautiful.

With her series *High Fashion Crime Scenes* (1995-2005), American photographer Melanie Pullen (born 1975) also explores the line between the documentation of death and its aesthetization via photography. In intertwining crime scene and fashion photography, her artistic method is remarkably similar to Kaoru’s: in a costly and time-consuming process, she dresses her models in high fashion and uses cinematic light and staging. However, unlike Kaoru, who depicts fictional death scenes, Pullen refers to real crimes and re-stages photographs from police archives, including LAPD images like those in the abovementioned *To Protect and Serve* exhibition. The artist explains how her work was motivated by the richness in detail captured by forensic photographers like Weegee, such as “the perfume bottle on the dresser, the knocked-over lamp” and the additional mundane yet illustrative elements that told “those people’s stories”. These details fascinated her so much that she “totally overlooked the crime scenes altogether”.¹⁷ While denying any affinity towards violence, she emphasizes being “curious about the response people have to violent images”,¹⁸ an aspect of artistic intention and viewer reception that will be elaborated on in the course of this article.

AESTHETICIZING THE CRIME SCENE IMAGE

The images discussed above demonstrate that crime scene photographs in general, and particularly photographs of bathtub deaths as discussed here,

15. Translation by the author. Peter Weiermair, “Everybody Dies Someday,” in *Landscapes with a Corpse*, ed. Izima Kaoru (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 174.

16. Roy Exley, “Die Exotik der Entfremdung: Die Fotografie des Izima Kaoru,” in *Landscapes with a Corpse*, 178.

17. Melanie Pullen cited in Jessica Hundley, “Fashion victims. Old-style crime scenes mix with haute couture in Melanie Pullen’s photographs,” in *Los Angeles Times* (17 June 2004), 14.

18. Interview Whitecanvas/Melanie Pullen, undated.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e25apFmrc_I. Accessed November 13, 2014.

can be forensic, artistic, or both; the line between “those images that are aesthetic statements masquerading as evidence and those that are forensic images masquerading as art”¹⁹ is blurred and can better be drawn on the basis of the original function and context of use than on the basis of aesthetics. But how appropriate is it, after all, to attribute aesthetic qualities to crime scene images, especially photographs of corpses? As discussed below, the perception of the aesthetic qualities of both forensic and artistic crime scene photographs are best understood in relation to the images’ three potentialities for the viewer: voyeuristic attraction, historical distancing, and narrativization.

The first, voyeuristic attraction simultaneously draws and repulses viewers to and from visual records of violence. Death scenes – including suicides – elicit voyeuristic curiosity by permitting viewers to transgress spatial and moral boundaries and break social taboos.²⁰ With regard to Melanie Pullen’s *Rebecca* (2004, Fig. 3), for example, the viewer glimpses into the spheres of privacy and intimacy, and the body appears both offensive and attractive at the same time, aligning eroticism and atrocity. In cases where the bodies appear revolting, mangled and deprived of their dignity, voyeuristic curiosity nevertheless arises from the viewer’s emotional response and sense of involvement in the scene. Fascination with crime scene photos also results from a certain multiplication and power of the gaze: by looking at the image, the viewer replicates the viewing of the real crime scene and of the victim by both the criminal and the police; the violent view of the perpetrator and the scrutinizing perspective of the investigator are appropriated by the viewer’s gaze.²¹

19. J. Ellroy and T. B. Wride, “Introduction,” in *Scene of the Crime: Photographs from the LAPD Archive*, 21.

20. Sykora, *Die Tode der Fotografie*, 516. For a broader discussion of the monstrous and repellent in visual culture and the arts, see Umberto Eco’s study *On Ugliness* (Milan: Rizzoli 2011).

21. Sykora, *Die Tode der Fotografie*, 516.

Regarding the second aspect, historical distancing, most of the exhibited material originates from the first half of the twentieth century. The images’ subjects as well as the photographic quality can easily be recognized as bygone. This provides the viewer with a comfortable temporal distance that, along with the presentation environment (exhibition design, hanging, and framing, for example), separates the images from the viewer’s present. As



Fig. 3
Melanie Pullen
Series: *High Fashion Crime Scenes*
Rebecca, 2004
109.2 x 144.8cm, C-Print
© Melanie Pullen

with Maxwell's and Urban's photos, the use of black-and-white photography may foster the impression of a time gap. This allows the viewer to avoid emotional response, especially to gruesome and shocking subjects. Through this more objective approach he or she is better able to regard the images as part of cultural and pictorial history, separate from contemporary events and reality.

The third aspect, narrativization, concerns not only pictorial narration but also the unfolding of the image's narrative according to the imagination of the viewer. As stated by narratologist Christine Walter, an image reaches its highest narrative potential when it depicts a "decisive moment" as defined by Henri Cartier-Bresson,²² which enables the viewer to reconstruct a certain degree of 'beforehand' and 'afterwards'.²³ Crime scene photos, however, do not feature the distinct decisive moment: the moment of death itself. As they show the remnants of an event – an attack, an assault, a fight – they enclose fragments of what happened 'beforehand', but they do not indicate specifically what will happen 'afterwards'. In that respect crime scene images capture a narrative 'zero point' with a unilateral back-

22. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952).

23. Christine Walter, *Bilder erzählen! Positionen inszenierter Fotografie: Eileen Cowin, Jeff Wall, Cindy Sherman, Anna Gaskell, Sharon Lockhart, Tracey Moffatt, Sam Taylor-Wood* (Weimar: VDG/Verlag für Datenbank und Geisteswissenschaften, 2002), 57-59.

ward orientation.²⁴ While the actual narration of the image is poor in this context, the possibilities for narrativization by the viewer are rich: the clues implying the ‘before’ event provoke imagination. The images “engage the viewer in a process of mental reconstruction” of prior events, prompting him or her to take on the role of investigator.²⁵ However, whereas the latter must solve the case, the former is free to reach across and beyond the actual events “in a goalless activity of speculation and interpretation”.²⁶ Crime scene photos therefore create a productive reception momentum: they initiate imaginary and interactive processes between image and viewer.

With the blurred lines between fact, fiction, forensics and art in mind, the iconography of the corpse in the bathtub can now be articulated along two major axes, which can be called the Marat and the Barschel lines. In addition to the iconic motif established by Jacques-Louis David’s famous *The Death of Marat* painting (1793), the relatively recent (1987) photograph of Uwe Barschel’s body in a hotel bathtub can be identified as an iconographically similar, yet separate, branch of the pictorial corpse in a bathtub tradition.

TOWARDS AN ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CORPSE IN THE BATHTUB: DAVID’S *DEATH OF MARAT*

The archetypal antecedent of artistic crime scene imagery, which introduces the bathtub corpse to visual arts, is Jacques-Louis David’s *The Death of Marat* (Fig. 4). It depicts the French revolutionary Jean Paul Marat stabbed to death in his bath. Marat was president of the Jacobin Club, a fanatic advocate of popular sovereignty and one of the most radical leaders of the French Revolution, which had become totalitarian by this time. To ease his itching skin disease, he spent several hours each day in a medicinal bath. On July 13, 1793 Charlotte Corday, a Girondist who hoped to help the cause of the moderates, murdered him in his bath. David, himself a radical Jacobin and influential political figure, not only painted Marat’s death scene at the behest of the National Convention, but was also significantly involved in the quasi-

24. The idea of a spatial-temporal ‘zero point’ is also brought up by Sykora, *Die Tode der Fotografie*, 508. In this context a particular death in a bathtub piece is noteworthy: the music video for the song “Breezeblocks” by British pop band Alt-J seems to literally allegorize this narrative ‘zero point’ by playing in reverse a story in which a girl is drowned in a bathtub following a fight. Accessible at <http://vimeo.com/39435342>, last accessed November 13, 2014. For bringing this video to my attention, I want to thank Imma Ramos.

25. Ralph Rugoff: “Introduction” in *Scene of the Crime*, 18.

26. Ibid. 18.

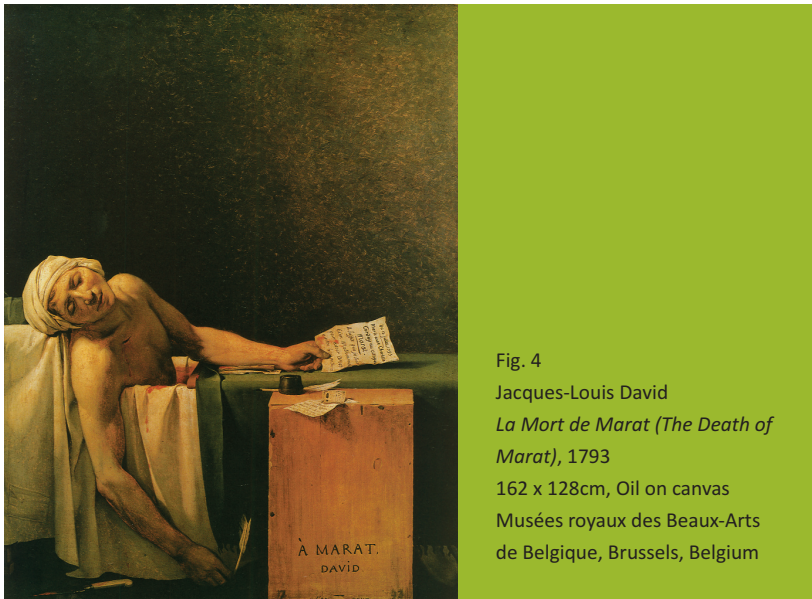


Fig. 4
Jacques-Louis David
La Mort de Marat (The Death of Marat), 1793
162 x 128cm, Oil on canvas
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts
de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium

royalistic and pseudo-religious martyr cult which quickly developed around Marat. He organized the presentation of Marat's body in his apartment, arranged a public funeral procession and ceremony, prepared Marat's tomb, and commissioned Marie Tussaud to make his death mask.²⁷ With his painting, David 'returned' Marat to the people, as he put it, having taken vengeance for him by visually memorializing his assassinated body "so that enemies would blanch with fear when beholding the distressed face of the man who has become a victim of his love of freedom."²⁸

In the painting, the dying Marat is slumped in a wooden bathtub. With his last ounce of strength he holds a letter; his right arm, with quill in hand, sinks downwards in *pietà*-like manner.²⁹ His upper body leans against the right wall of the bathtub, and his head tilts towards his right shoulder so that his face turns to the viewer with closed eyes. Blood drips from a wound at his clavicle, while the murder weapon lies in front of the bathtub. By depicting the aftermath of the murder instead of the act itself, as is conventional in history paintings,³⁰ and by including the dagger and centring the body in a close-up view, David anticipates the customary rules of crime scene photog-

27. Mme Tussaud's uncle, Dr. Philippe Curtius, later created a wax figure of Marat and exhibited it in his cabinet. Thomas W. Gaetgens, "Davids *Marat* (1793) oder die Dialektik des Opfers," in *Kritische Berichte* 2 (2008), 67-80.

28. Translation by the author. Richard Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert. Erster Teil* (Paderborn: Klassik Art [1893] 2013), 139.

29. This comparison was elaborated by Klaus Lankheit, *Jacques-Louis David. Der Tod des Marat* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1962). A comprehensive summary of research can be found in Jörg Traeger, *Der Tod des Marat: Revolution des Menschenbildes* (München: Prestel Verlag, 1986), 10-11.

30. For example, see the different depictions of Judith decapitating Holofernes by Michelangelo Caravaggio (1598-99), Artemisia Gentileschi (1620), Valentin de Boulogne (1626), or Francesco del Cairo (1648-54).

31. Thomas W. Gaethgens, "Davids Marat (1773) oder die Dialektik des Opfers"; This interpretation was first presented by Klaus Lankheit in *Jacques-Louis David*.

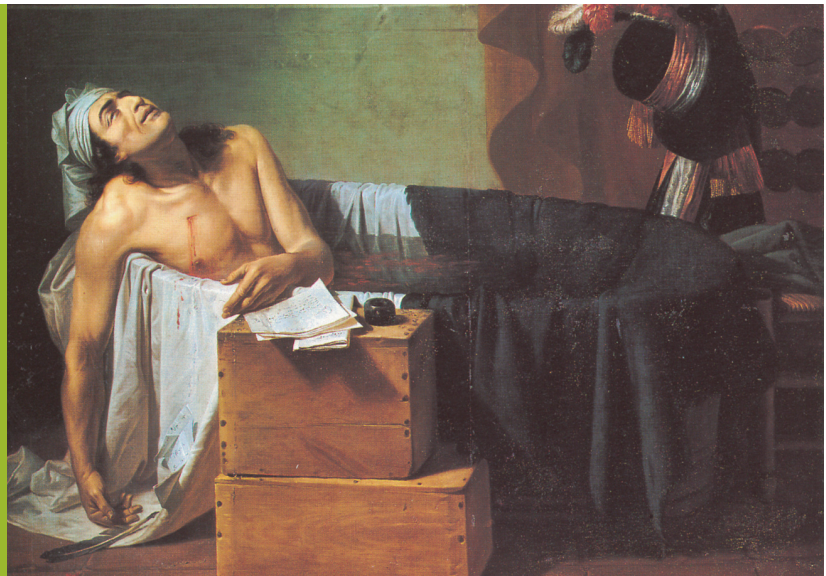
32. Modern and contemporary interpretations of the Marat theme can be found in the work of Pablo Picasso, Renato Guttuso, Valerio Adami, He Xiangyu, Janis Kounellis, and the Lake Stage set by David Fielding in Bregenz, Austria (2011).

raphy. Nonetheless, the painting is not an authentic record of Marat's murder, but an artistic portrait that presented him as a hero and martyr.³¹

David's painting is iconic in two ways: not only do references to Marat's death necessarily evoke David's painting, but other depictions of corpses in bathtubs also seem to be associated with this ubiquitous work. Along this iconographical axis and directly referencing David's *Marat*, some artworks, such as Joseph Roques' painting of the same year and name (Fig. 5), focus on Marat's corpse after the murder. Other works depict the murder itself, showing Charlotte Corday in or immediately after the act of stabbing, thereby maintaining the narrative but diverging from David's iconography. Paul Jacques Aimé Baudry's *Charlotte Corday* (1860) and Edvard Munch's *Marats død* (1906-07) focus on the murderer, depicting Corday as a fierce and beautiful aristocratic heroine and as an eroticized *femme fatale* (Figs. 6 and 7).

The iconography of Marat's death is neither restricted to David's immediate successors, nor to Marat's body as the subject. Numerous artistic approaches to the theme can be discovered even in recent art history.³² The photograph

Fig. 5
Joseph Roques
La Mort de Marat (The Death of Marat), 1793
125 x 161cm, Oil on canvas
Musée des Augustins Toulouse,
France



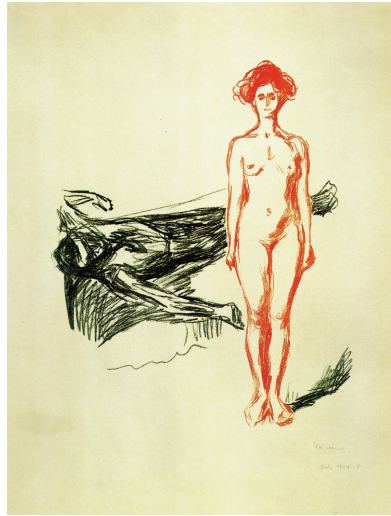


Fig. 6
Paul-Jacques-Aimé Baudry
Charlotte Corday, 1860,
203 x 154cm, Oil on canvas
Musée des Beaux-Arts de
Nantes, France

Fig. 7
Edvard Munch
Marats død, 1906-07
44 x 35.5cm, Lithograph
Kulturhistoriske Museer Oslo,
Norway

Untitled (Set of Marat) (1997, Fig. 8) by American artist Eileen Cowin (born 1947) provides an illustrative example. As indicated in the subtitle, it suggests theatre photography, depicting Marat's bathtub as a carefully lit prop standing out against the dark background as though on stage. While directly referencing David's iconography, which can easily be recognized, it establishes a more distanced viewing perspective than does the painting, and in contrast to the former, Cowin's bathtub is deserted. The blank space where the body once rested invites the viewer to re-play the 'stage' imaginatively and initiates the interactive processes between image and viewer. At the same time, the theatricality inherent in David's painting is directly thematized by Cowin to reflect a newly-emerged phenomenon in contemporary art: the blurring of dividing lines between traditional artistic genres – such as theatre and two-dimensional arts – and the potential performativity of a (photographic) image traditionally considered static.

Another contemporary artwork using the corpse in a bathtub motif is Hiroshi Sugimoto's (born 1948) silver gelatin print *The Brides in the Bath Murderer* (1994, Fig. 9). Although the subjects bear no narrative link to David's *Marat*, the formal analogies between this image and Baudry's painting *Charlotte Corday* help in approaching this contemporary photograph with the same

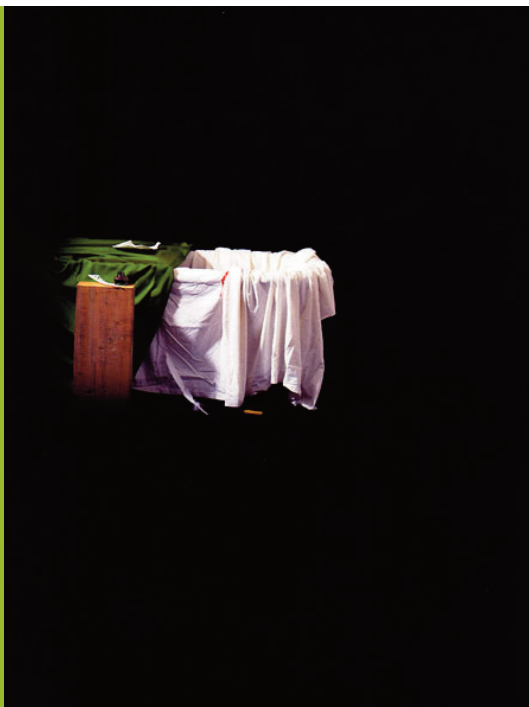


Fig. 8
Eileen Cowin
Untitled (Set of Marat), 1991
127 x 101.6cm, Cibachrome,
Edition of 5
© Eileen Cowin



Fig. 9
Hiroshi Sugimoto
Series: *Chamber of Horrors*
The Brides in the Bath
Murderer, 1994
50.8 x 61cm, Silver gelatin print
© Hiroshi Sugimoto

iconography. In comparing the two works, an inversion of the genders to male victim and female murderer is apparent, while the pose of the figure in the bathtub is likewise inverted. Whereas Marat's upper body protrudes from the water in a sitting position in *Charlotte Corday*, the upper body of the woman in *The Brides in the Bath Murderer* is completely underwater whilst her lower extremities extend over the foot of the bathtub. Corresponding to Marat, whose armpit rests on the edge of the bathtub with his arm hanging towards the ground, it is the hollow of the woman's knee that rests on the edge, her lower right leg and foot dangling, and her left leg protruding from the water with foot outstretched. As in Marat's case, her limbs do not look relaxed and limp, but tense and stiff as if after mortal agony.

The early twentieth-century furniture and decoration, the turn-of-the-century clothing and grooming of the murderer, and Sugimoto's use of black-and-white photography suggest the image's historical authenticity. Its medial complexity is however heightened: this crime scene is not real, but staged, and moreover staged with wax figures, as part of a series called *Chamber of Horrors* (1990-1994) taken at Madame Tussaud's in London.³³ While reminiscent of *Marat*, Sugimoto explicitly refers to the British "Brides in the Bath Murderer", George Joseph Smith, who married three women between 1912 and 1914 and, to snatch their possessions after their deaths, drowned them in a bathtub by yanking up their legs. This image is simultaneously forensic and artistic; while iconographically reflective of depictions of Marat's murder, it references journalistic representations of crime. Sugimoto's subject and medium recall the Victorian mass media's portrayal of shocking serial killings, such as the elaborate reporting of London's "Jack the Ripper" murders at the end of the nineteenth century. This sensational journalism might have stimulated the establishment of the crime scene picture as a modern artistic genre.³⁴

CONTINUING THE TRADITION: THE DEATH OF BARSCHEL

The second axe of the corpse in the bathtub iconography was launched by a relatively recent incident in German history: the death of politician Uwe

33. Notably, a life-size wax representation of David's *Death of Marat* is also staged at Madame Tussaud's in London.

34. Artistic crime scene images can be found in the work of the late Expressionist and New Objectivity artists Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Rudolf Schlichter, who depicted murders of women in an exacting way. See Regener, "Verbrechen, Schönheit, Tod", 35.

35. The controversial copyright-protected image can be viewed on *Stern's* website here: <http://www.stern.de/politik/geschichte/uwe-barschel-deal-mit-todesfolge-597976.html>. Accessed 13 November 2014.

36. The murder theory was, for example, argued by attorney and chief investigator Heinrich Wille, while the death by suicide theory was argued by Attorney General Erhard Rex. Heinrich Wille, *Ein Mord, der keiner sein durfte: Der Fall Uwe Barschel und die Grenzen des Rechtsstaates* (Zürich: Rotpunktverlag, 2011); Erhard Rex, "Der Tod des ehemaligen Ministerpräsidenten des Landes Schleswig-Holstein, Dr. Dr. Uwe Barschel, am 11. Oktober 1987 in Genf: Mord oder Selbstmord?", http://www.schleswig-holstein.de/GSTA/DE/Informationsmaterial/Dokumentation/Beitrag_GStA_Rex/doku_teil1_rex__blob=publicationFile.pdf, last accessed 13 November 2014.

37. Norbert F. Pötzl, *Der Fall Barschel: Anatomie einer deutschen Karriere* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989), 288.

38. Sebastian Knauer, *Barschel – Die Akte: Originaldokumente eines ungelösten Kriminalfalls* (Berlin: B&S Siebenhaar Verlag, 2009), 437.

Barschel in 1987. Barschel was found dead in the bathtub of his hotel bathroom in Geneva by German journalist Sebastian Knauer (born 1949). Knauer photographed his corpse, which was then published on the front cover of the widely-read German magazine *Stern*.³⁵ Although it was proven that Barschel died of a prescription drug overdose, the particular circumstances of his death remain largely unexplained; neither murder nor suicide has been ruled out.³⁶ However, the actual scandal – and a key difference from Marat's case – resulted from the publication of the journalistic photo depicting his corpse rather than from his death itself. Knauer's intrusion into the private sphere of Barschel's hotel room and his exploitation of Barschel's dignity for journalistic purposes caused a heated reaction, which pushed his death and its circumstances into the background. In response to the negative reception of the photograph's publication, the German Press Council ruled that *Stern* magazine had offended the professional ethics of journalism by supporting Knauer in entering the hotel room and by printing the image more than once – whereas the initial publication was deemed acceptable as a historical document.³⁷

Of particular interest in the Barschel case is the fact that photos taken by the Geneva police were actually unusable due to a technical defect causing over-exposure, making Knauer's journalistic photos the only 'real' evidence records.³⁸ Knauer's case is one of the rare recent examples of a capital crime scene entered by a journalist and a current crime scene photo made accessible to the public. In this context, the photograph inherits a substantial complexity by equally touching the fields of criminalistics and journalism in an unusual and rare manner. It intertwines aspects of politics, sensationalism, and voyeurism, and it sparked a debate on the morally defensible limits of (photographic) reportage. Further, by serving as a model for manifold artistic reactions, it extended its influence on the arts, thereby demonstrating anew that the shifts between different applications of photography in general and of crime scene images in particular – criminalistics, journalism, and art – may sometimes be inseparable.

In the same way that the publication of Barschel's crime scene photo elicited a stronger reaction than his death and the political affair he was enmeshed in, most of the artistic approaches to the Barschel theme are less approaches to the event than approaches to the image, its circumstances of production, and the modes of image distribution in general. This has implications for the best-known work appropriating the Barschel image: *Badezimmer/Bathroom* (1997, Fig. 10), a large-scale photograph by German contemporary artist Thomas Demand (born 1964). Since the early 1990s, Demand has been reconstructing and photographing life-size cardboard models of historical, political, and cultural sites, including crime scenes. By means of replicas, Demand's works refer to real crime scenes but omit the criminal event, the



Fig. 10
Thomas Demand
Badezimmer / Bathroom, 1997
160 x 122cm, C-Print/Diasc
© Thomas Demand/VG Bild-Kunst,
Bonn, Germany

victim's body, and any traces of the crime in favour of depicting only the site. Demand thus intentionally undermines the function of the forensic photograph as a record of the visual remnants of a crime. Furthermore, the abstraction or removal of the human protagonists intensify the crime scene photo's general gaps and omissions of narrative content, leaving even fewer traces of a 'beforehand', as discussed above. By detaching the images from their former context and original meaning, Demand potentiates the crime scene image's need of viewer narrativization.



Fig. 11

Michael Schirner

BYE BYE, GEN 87, 2002-2011,

207 x 160cm, Digigraphie by

EPSON,

© Michael Schirner, Courtesy
Galerie Crone, Berlin, Germany

Additional artworks appropriate and vary the Barschel theme in the same manner as Demand by reflecting on the conditions of Knauer's photograph, as in Michael Schirner's (born 1941) series *BYE BYE*. It is made up of iconic mass media images with the human subject digitally removed, including Knauer's Barschel image, titled *BYE BYE, GEN 87*, (2002-2011, Fig. 11). By eliminating the protagonists – as Cowin also does – Schirner removes the event while retaining recognition, thereby reflecting on the mechanisms of mental imagery and collective memory. In a way that is comparable to the reception of Demand's works, the viewer is torn between remembrance and oblivion, recognition and confusion.

Other works direct the political dimensions of the case into new channels. This applies to Johann Kresnik's (born 1939) highly acclaimed dance drama *Macbeth*, which premiered in Heidelberg, Germany in 1988, shortly after Barschel's death. Kresnik distinctly analogized the Scottish king Macbeth and Uwe Barschel by interpreting the junction between power and violence, finding common ground in the effects of political ambition and power plays. While retaining Shakespeare's story, Kresnik employed imagery evocative of the still-recent *Stern* photograph. In collaboration with controversial Viennese painter Gottfried Helnwein (born 1948), who created the stage setting and equipment, Kresnik integrated bathtub scenes into his production: at the beginning, a huge bathtub stands before the stage in the orchestra pit and a priest repeatedly fills it with buckets of blood and offal. Subsequently, a dozen bathtubs standing in a mortuary-like background become visible, each one holding a bandaged person. Towards the end of the play, Macduff wraps a white towel around Macbeth's wrist in the same way Barschel was found and beds him in a bathtub. The play ends with the curtains closing from both sides, hiding everything on stage but the well-known and closely appropriated 'image' of a dead man bathing.

EPILOGUE

Although the corpse in the bathtub is a relatively rare and unconventional artistic motif, the interpretations of it are numerous enough to foster specific

traditions that together create a unique and identifiable iconography. Two traditions have been defined here as constitutive for this iconography: those of Marat and Barschel. The crucial difference between them lies in the specific characterization of the subjects, as conducted by the image and author; while David's painting laid the basis for interpreting Marat's death as a martyrdom and contributed essentially and intentionally to his posthumous heroification, Knauer's intrusive journalistic photo and its hasty publication further tarnished Barschel's already negative reputation by broadcasting his untimely death in a spontaneous and degrading way. Further, while David's painting served as the pictorial climax of the political devotion central to Marat's life and death, Knauer's photo summarized the misfortune and failures of Barschel's political career by damaging his dignity in a situation where he could no longer defend himself. Additionally, while David's *Death of Marat* is a masterfully painted and highly aesthetic work of art, inspiring imitation yet unsurpassed, Knauer's photographic depiction of Barschel was never intended as art but was rather aestheticized and transferred into an artistic context by subsequent artistic interpretations.

In conclusion, the friction between artistic interpretation and journalistic documentation – being equal starting points for (further) artistic approaches despite the differences between them – can be illustrated by one last work: Angelika Bader and Dietmar Tanterl's *Es lebe der Tod* (*Long live death*, 1987).³⁹ The triptych consists of two Cibachrome close-ups of David's Marat painting and Knauer's Barschel photograph and a central panel on which is written "Es lebe der Tod". It is the first and, as yet, only known work to explicitly connect Marat and Barschel artistically, and thus visually thematizes what has been elaborated in this article by theoretical means: the possible nexus between Marat and Barschel as initiated by their "lowest common denominator",⁴⁰ that is, their pictorially-documented bathtub deaths. The temporal proximity of Bader and Tanterl's work to Barschel's death garnered it a generally negative reception,⁴¹ which reflects what has been outlined: that, although the depictions of Marat's and Barschel's deaths share a comparable motif and contribute to one overall iconography, the tempting analogies

39. Angelika Bader and Dietmar Tanterl, *Es lebe der Tod*, 1987, Cibachrome, 132 x 189cm, 132 x 225cm, 132 x 189cm.

40. Martin Blättner, "Das Gedächtnis öffnet seine Tore", in *Kunstforum International* 149 (2000), 397. Translation by the author.

41. The work was regarded as shameless and irreverent and provoked a scandal after its release in 1990. Gaehtgens, "Davids Marat", 78.

between them must be considered carefully, and the single examples of corpses in bathtub images must be individually assigned to one of the two lines, or to neither, as with the forensic and forensically-inspired images offered in the first part of this article.

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CONFRONTING DIFFICULT MEMORY THROUGH ABSENCE SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY MEMORIAL ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT - Contemporary Western society often strives to confront and cope with loss through projects that commemorate various events, both long past and recent. This is particularly true in cases of the trauma-laden remembrance of modern atrocities. Memorials are perceived as spaces that can provide necessary healing environments for the victims and their relatives, but are also planned to encourage remembrance by future generations. After the Second World War, designers faced with representing the Holocaust delivered radical approaches to spaces of memory, in many cases promoting oblivion or questioning the motives of memorializing in the first place. Contemporary memorials often address the representation of difficult memory with spaces of absence as the most tangible answer to loss and trauma. To understand this approach, this article investigates several memorial spaces responding to recent traumatic events, such as the Atocha 11M Memorial in Madrid, designs for planned memorials in Oslo and Utøya, the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

A century after the outbreak of the First World War, Western society recognizes a spectrum of traumatic events, supported by the explanatory vocabulary for modernity's multiple wounds – total war, genocide, and terrorism –

and their resulting anxieties – shell shock, survivor’s guilt, and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹ These inevitably affect commemorative practices, both personal and public. Consequently, the contemporary memorial is an expanding architectural genre commemorating not only present-day atrocities, but also traumas from a rather distant past, as demonstrated by the recent Norwegian memorial to seventeenth-century victims of the infamous witchcraft trials in Vardø (2011). Although many participating nations buried their Unknown Soldiers much earlier, the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* dedicated in 2004 in New Zealand similarly indicates the still-present influence of First World War commemorative practices. Many established memorials and monuments standing on the sites of World War One battlefields are being enlarged to satisfy contemporary needs. The same is true of numerous Holocaust memorials, proliferating in number across Europe, but perhaps even in greater numbers across the United States. However, an often-asked question is whether contemporary Western culture, equipped with sophisticated and convenient data banks, encourages oblivion instead of remembrance, as some sort of destructively efficient *pharmakon*.² At the same time, there are doubts about whether the burgeoning genre of memorial architecture forgot about the “wound” and focused on the “knife”.³

After the Great War the construction of a vast number of war memorials commemorating millions of casualties was understood as part of a collective mourning process. These sites were recognized as psychological focal points, enabling the bereaved to mourn both individually and collectively. Still, the commemoration of such a large number of victims required a kind of spirituality that religion and existing rituals were unable to provide. Understanding loss and trauma was necessary to develop a framework of mediation, and was spontaneously channelled through different forms, such as the above-mentioned *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* which was a focal point for “remembering everyone by remembering no one in particular.”⁴

Disillusionment following the Second World War urged for an appropriate language of memorialization that needed to reflect on the hopelessness of

1. Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 131.

2. The consequence of this fast-growing architectural field has been recognized as fostering a specific ‘hybrid’ way of remembering that over time reinforces amnesia instead of active memory. See Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

3. Paul Virilio, *Art and Fear* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003). Paul Virilio criticized the pitiless character of our age and that of modern art. Virilio used Baudelaire’s phrase: “I am the wound and the knife” where the knife allegorizes the violence of war and the wound represents how people respond to it.

4. J.R. Gillis, “Memory and Identity: The History of the Relationship,” in *Commemorations: the Politics of National Identity*, ed. J.R. Gillis, Princeton University Press, 1994, 11; See also Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

5. Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).
6. Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Building after Auschwitz: Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 47.
7. Steven Connor, *Postmodern Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 218.
8. Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 145.
9. Nicholas Watkins, Frances Cole, and Sue Weidemann, "The War Memorial as Healing Environment: The Psychological Effect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Vietnam War Combat Veterans' Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms," *Environment and Behavior* 42 (2010), 351-375.
10. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 243, 256. In his watershed essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Freud argued that mourning was necessary in order to avoid melancholia, since melancholics lack focus and are unable to put their loss into perspective. According to Freud, two psychological liaisons, recognized as strength of the attachment and the attachment

post-war Western culture in which traditional commemorative plaques and statues appeared as futile attempts at redemptive language.⁵ While responses to the tragedy of war were significant in art, literature, and philosophy, architects refrained from responding to the devastation in general, and the Holocaust in particular.⁶ Priority was given to the reconstruction of many demolished cities, with rare cases of leaving ruins untouched, for instance in Oradour-sur-Glane in France. The impact of the modernist's vision of architecture as a "pure creation of the mind"⁷ in efforts towards an international style, divorced from context and focused on function, was often blamed for the lack of response to issues of memorializing. Although this is apparently no longer the case, the difficult question of the representation of destruction remains. Several scholars argue that instead of addressing loss, which connotes destruction and disappearance, designers today choose to explore notions of absence, which suggests 'non-presence' and the anxious possibility of reappearance.⁸

Memorial spaces can be perceived as a summoning framework for memories related to traumatic experiences, also known as 'difficult memory', through which people can begin to process and channel their emotions. In fact, recent research indicates that designers of memorial spaces can create effective memorials for traumatic memory by understanding how memorial architecture facilitates the mourning process.⁹ In this sense, memorials function as containers for loss, encouraging active participation through their spatial realities, and offer a material framework for the process of "working out trauma."¹⁰ Furthermore, parties involved in the creation of a memorial normally focus on making their message tangible enough to be interpreted by future generations. Depending on their social and cultural context, contemporary designers do this by using a variety of volumetric and kinaesthetic elements to create strong holding environments in which active works of memory may take place. By more closely observing the architecture of several memorial spaces that facilitate coping with difficult memories,¹¹ we can better understand what this process entails and how these spaces work in practice.

CONFRONTING THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REPRESENTATION

Some of the first attempts to commemorate locations where mechanized destruction of life occurred during the Holocaust clearly echoed the Adornian question about the tension between ethics and aesthetics inherent in acts of artistic representation.¹² In a 1957 international competition for the memorialization of Auschwitz, such issues certainly came to the forefront in the unanimous jury approval of a proposal by a Polish team led by architect Oskar Hansen.¹³ The proposed memorial was designed along the principles of 'Open Form'¹⁴ and consisted of a kilometre-long black tarmac road intended to run diagonally across the grounds of the former camp, omitting the infamous Birkenau gate. This omission emphasized the principles of Hansen's open-structure approach of proposing to leave the whole site of the camp intact, with its gate never to be used again, and the road as the only means by which visitors could experience the space and at the same time confront the inevitable oblivion of the place. The architect argued that the diagonal road would display the mechanism of the camp, but was also imagined to be, as Hansen put it, "the crossing over which creates the climate for reception and participation, which visualizes the subtext of spatial interactions. The road is the site for spontaneous gestures."¹⁵ Despite its popular reception and its emphasis on the individual participation in space, the project was abandoned for several reasons, of which the most pronounced was the disagreement of Auschwitz survivors, who found the proposal too abstract and "not in keeping with the literalness of their experiences."¹⁶

Such radical designs for Holocaust memorials continued to appear in later years, for instance Horst Hoheisel's idea to blow up the Brandenburg Gate (1995) in order to memorialize destruction with destruction, or Daniel Libeskind's competition entry to redesign Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp (1993) in which he proposed to build residential and commercial buildings while destroying all Nazi buildings and flooding the site with water. After 1985, artists and architects strove for new forms of memorialization and the public was confronted with memorial projects which aimed to destabilize

itself, are elements of mourning in the psychical working out process. This was explained as an internal process of constant invocation of painful memories until the strength of the attachment and the attachment itself are neutralized.

11. Several recent architectural journals devoted their issues to understanding difficult memories, related to traumatic experiences, contested views of a common past, amnesia and memory loss, in relation to memorial projects dedicated to commemorating them. See for example "Interventions and Adaptive Reuse, Difficult Memories: Reconciling Meaning", *IntAR Journal* 4, April 2013.

12. Theodor Adorno's statement "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric", one of the most-cited reflections on the Holocaust, tackles the meaning of a representation that reproduces the cultural values of a society which made the Holocaust possible. In later years, Adorno revised this statement, arguing for the necessity of representation for the acknowledgment of suffering. In Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 252.

13. The team members were Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Edmund Kupiecki, Julian Pałka, and Lechosław Rosiński.

14. The concept of 'Open Form', as described by Hansen at a meeting of the International Congress of Modern Architects (CIAM) at Otterlo in 1959, was a philosophical idea of shaping social space that would be open for a free intervention of the audience and of time. Hansen always emphasized the human element above the technological aspects of architecture.

15. Katarzyna Murwaska-Muthesius, "Oskar Hansen and the Auschwitz "Countermemorial 1958-59," *Art Margins* (20 May, 2002), <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/featured-articles/311-oskar-hansen-and-the-auschwitz-qcountermemorialq-1958-59>. Accessed November 12, 2014.

16. James Young, *The Texture of Memory – Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 136.

17. The place where the column once stood is now an empty platform. The column is completely buried in the ground, but it is possible to view it from a window at street level. Similarly, the counter-memorial in Kassel constitutes the reconstructed Aschrott fountain installed where it used to stand but turned upside-down and partially buried; only the base of the fountain with the water flowing into the earth is visible.

18. Hoheisel developed the memorial with architect Andreas

the very notion of memory by introducing absence of form, or rather the invisible form. This so-called counter-memory generation, by predominantly German artists, resulted in numerous projects inspired by the participatory acts of visitors. Among the well-known realized works are the *Monument against Fascism* (1986) in Hamburg by Jochen Gerz, which invited people to write on the column's surface while it gradually sunk into the ground, and Hoheisel's inverted *Aschrott Fountain* (1987) in Kassel.¹⁷ Often, these projects have strong sensory qualities, such as Hoheisel's untitled "Warm Memorial" (1995) for Buchenwald, a stainless-steel plate maintained at human body temperature and placed where the wooden obelisk erected by the inmates upon liberation once stood.¹⁸

The popular motif of inversion and destabilization of the ground can also be recognized in another, more recent project, the national *Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin (2005). The project was approved by the German *Bundestag* in 1999, five years after the first competition, whose winning design of an enormous gravestone was dismissed due to its controversial symbolism and sheer scale.¹⁹ The second competition was organized in 1997: a result of many fraught colloquia that doubted the legitimacy of the future memorial as the main national monument. As such, it was feared, it would take precedence over numerous other sites of memory across Germany, and would produce a "great burial slab for the twentieth century, a hermetically-sealed vault for the ghosts of Germany's past."²⁰ A collaborative project between Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman entitled *Waving Field of Pillars* (Fig. 1), designed to encourage a participatory approach by visitors, was selected as a finalist. The proposal, comprising a thousand pillars and at first glance recalling a vast cemetery, was chosen for several reasons. It was believed that its multiple forms would encourage individual involvement with the memorial, without giving an absolute solution, which would establish memorialization not as a fixed fact but as an ongoing process. Additionally, the memorial's form and scale resisted reproduction through photography and would thereby further encourage participation. The memorial also imposed a sense of either *Unheimlichkeit*, or a sense of danger in



Fig. 1

Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin (Credits: Author)

demanding from visitors that they find their own way in the field of pillars, which were to stand on sloping ground and in that way destabilize the visitors' position in space.²¹ After the revision of the design, which included a significant reduction of the number of pillars, an adjustment of their height and spacing, and the addition of a row of trees to act as a buffer between the city and the memorial, the proposal was welcomed as much more suitable.²² As for anticipated acts of vandalism, it was believed that there were simple anti-graffiti solutions and that possible desecration through climbing on the memorial's pillars with their text-less surfaces was considered irrelevant, since the pillars were "neither intended nor consecrated as tombstones."²³

The pillars are the outcome of an overlapping of two invented topographies on rectangular grids, placed above each other and undulating differently, thus defining the tilt of the pillars. The incongruent relationship of the two planes cannot be traced in practice, but only experienced through their destabilizing effect. Although Eisenman's design process used abstract elements

Knitz. The names of fifty-one national groups victimized in Buchenwald are inscribed on the plate. See James Young, *At Memory's Edge, After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 105.

19. The winning design by Berlin architect Christine Jakob-Marks consisted of a massive sloped surface, occupying the whole site, with eighteen boulders from Masada in Israel. The names of 4.5 million murdered Jews were to be inscribed on the memorial. The connection to Masada was problematic as it was a historical site of Jewish mass suicide during the revolt against the Romans. The proposal was, among other things, criticized for being "too German". Committee-member James Young argued that the competition brief was too ambiguous to begin with. Participants from the first competition were invited to the following one, including a few additional competitors including Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Jochen Gerz, Rebecca Horn, and Dani Karavan. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 190.

20. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 194.

21. Ibid. 206.

22. Since the committee wanted more place for commemorative events but was simultaneously concerned about the memorial

turning into an uncontrollable labyrinthine space, the original design had to be adjusted. At this point Serra left the project, leaving it in the hands of Eisenman, who further revised the design in order to meet the demands. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 211.

23. Ibid. 211.

24. The notion of 'index' was described by Rosalind Krauss as a sign that is caused by its referent, without necessarily resembling it; a shadow of a body, for instance. Godfrey, *Abstraction*, 244.

25. Rosenfeld, *Building after Auschwitz*, 174. Eisenman's proposal for the Vienna competition consisted of a plaza surrounded by wrinkle-like, high walls, a form derived from a series of maps of Vienna's ghettos from 1421 and 1678 overlapped by the map of the German Reich after the Nazi Anschluss of 1938. His other proposal for the Jewish Museum of San Francisco (1996) was also developed around the notion of a powerful and disturbing spatial experience in which he tried to evoke Auschwitz as "a feeling of loneliness and being lost." Ibid. 176.

26. Rosenfeld, *Building after Auschwitz*, 176.

27. Interviews with the survivors were conducted by the architect as part of the research preceding the project. See Godfrey, 248

in a rational approach to produce unpredictable results, as reflected in the arrangement of the pillars, the architect resisted describing the memorial as abstract. Instead, he referred to the design as "indexical".²⁴ Eisenman, who in 1995 competed for the Holocaust memorial in Vienna, remained faithful to his idea that instead of producing meaning, a memorial should question the conditions of horror by creating a "powerful and evocative spatial experience that will precipitate discussion about the past [so as] to ensure that [it] will never [be] repeat[ed]."²⁵ Well aware of the Adornian doubt, Eisenman used the uneven ground on which the pillars were installed as an element of displacement for two reasons: in opposition to the traditional notion of architecture as site-specific and ground-based, and in connection to the Nazi ideology of "blut und boden" or the sanctity of German soil. Therefore, decomposing the very base of the architectural form would counteract its inherent ability to give meaning.²⁶ Augmenting this idea with a generous use of concrete as material for the pillars, the architect hoped to evoke the feelings of loneliness and disorientation described by the survivors.²⁷

A final addition to the revised proposal, on the insistence of the Minister of Culture at that time, was an underground museum space called *Ort* which was meant to contribute a pedagogical aspect to the overall concept, and which was to be integrated with the architectural language of the memorial above. This was done by adjusting the disposition of the museum, consisting of four different rooms memorializing the Holocaust in different ways, so that the exhibition contained within would follow the layout of the field of pillars above.²⁸ In this context the pillars can be read as empty memorial plaques on unidentified graves; an upside-down world in which the pillars of the memorial are in fact the confirmation of this inversion (Fig. 2).

INHABITING ABSENCE

Ever since the collective ritual of mourning moved into the private sphere and the notion of 'invisible death' was established as a consequence of modern cultural values, death became taboo; something that is constantly present



Fig. 2

Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Museum
(Credits: Lepkowski Studios, Berlin)

but never truly discussed, a paradox represented in Tony Smith's minimalist work *Die* (1962). The piece consists of a dark steel cube whose dimensions derive from a symbolic relation between death and the traditional measurement for burial in the United States: six feet. The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington D.C. (1982, Fig. 3), commonly considered to be a milestone in memorial architecture, is often referred to as a tomb due to its dark granite surface with thousands of engraved names of the dead or missing and the numerous objects visitors leave at its foot. Whether this comparison does it justice is difficult to say, since the memorial does reference death, excluding any deductive input or instruction. Instead, it invites introspection by merging one's reflection with the names on the highly-polished surface of the walls. Visitors appropriate the space of the memorial by observing this intricate coexistence of reflections and names, often tracing names with a piece of paper or caressing the surface and thereby touching the names.²⁹ The sensory features of the memorial provide the necessary environment for the process

28. The four rooms of the museum are as follows: the first room has floor panels showing the last letters and testimonies of victims, organized in the same grid as the pillars above; the second room displays prewar photographs of families accompanied with a description of their fate; the third room introduces an acoustic component as names and information about the victims are announced from the speakers, while their names are projected onto the walls; finally, the fourth room offers information about the former concentration camps and other sites.

29. Charles L. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Summer 1986), 709.



Fig. 3
Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C.
(Credits: Willemien B. de Vries)

30. Watkins, Cole, and Weidemann, "The War Memorial", 364.

31. Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Etudes de la nature* (1784), quoted in Erika Naginski, *Sculpture and Enlightenment* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009), 103. The quotation continues, "It presents us first with an end to life's meaningless anxieties and the image of eternal rest; and it gives rise to the confused sense of happy immortality, whose likelihood depends on the virtue of the one whose memory we contemplate."

32. Richard A. Etlin, *The Symbolic Space: French Enlightenment Architecture and Its Legacy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), XIX.

33. Ibid. 173.

of mourning to take place through presentation, confrontation, and recognition of loss.³⁰ In this way the memorial reflects the notion of a tomb as "a monument placed at the limit of two worlds."³¹ It evokes the absence of life while at the same time creating the intangible realm of loss.

This highly symbolic space can be addressed as a 'deep structure', a notion historian Richard Etlin used to categorize architectural spaces for commemoration of the dead, describing them as spaces with "particularly intense experiences in which sentience, the feeling of vital life, takes on a particularly intense colouring."³² For Etlin, these are paradoxical places of absence for they are "neither of this world nor of the next."³³ Dedicated to certain abstract concepts, spaces of absence were designed to be empty so that people could communicate with higher ideals, a practice that was popular during the Enlightenment. For instance, Etlin's last category, entitled the 'Architecture of Shadows', is the

embodiment of a 'space of absence'. This particular type originates from Etienne-Louis Boullée's eagerness to represent the uncanny feeling derived from the silhouettes and shadows of nature, the melancholia dominating the natural end of life that he sought to translate "in a precise manner into architecture."³⁴ In doing so, Boullée aspired towards creating a feeling of the sublime by using Edmund Burke's theory about the architectural elements necessary for creating it. One of Burke's principles included the 'artificial infinite', a method based on the succession and uniformity of elements constituting a composition as requisite for imagining their progress beyond the actual limits of the overall composition. Uniformity of the participating parts was necessary: they continued the progression of the succession and in that way created an effect of infinity, which was again a source of a feeling of the sublime. This principle can be recognized in the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, in the list of the names that appears almost endless, and also in Eisenman's memorial in which the repetition of pillars creates a field that seems to expand beyond the limits of the location.

While Berlin's *Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe* omits any personal designation and is often referred to as a popular playground,³⁵ the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington defines a space which is highly personal in character and whose ambiguity is perceived as persuasion.³⁶ By naming the dead and embracing the living through inviting visitor participation, the memorial creates a powerful space of absence that resonates an often-quoted thought by Adolf Loos about the tomb and monument being the only part of architecture that belongs to art.³⁷ For Maya Lin, the designer of the memorial, the initial goal was to materialize the unrepresentable pain of loss. As Lin explained:

I thought about what death is, what a loss is... a sharp pain that lessens with time, but can never quite heal over. A scar. The idea occurred to me there on the site. Take a knife and cut open the earth, and with time the grass would heal it. As if you cut open the rock and polished it.³⁸

34. Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Architecture, essai sur l'art* (1796-97), quoted in *ibid.* 197.

35. Franziska Bollerey, "Modesty versus Monumentality: The quieter way of speaking about Holocaust in Europe," *Ezelsoren-Bulletin of the Institute of History of Art, Architecture and Urbanism, IHAU1* (2008), 25-43.

36. Sonja K. Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Communication Quarterly* 34 (Summer 1986), 326-340.

37. Loos explored this potential in his design for a mausoleum for Max Dvorák (1921). The mausoleum was imagined in black Swedish granite, giving the impression of a well-grounded, heavy cube, topped with three levels forming a stepped pyramid, while the interior was to be decorated by Oskar Kokoschka's frescoes. The outside appearance and the simplicity of its form reflected the notion of death as a heavy and introvert subject, confined within the walls of its primitive construct. Only in the interior of the mausoleum would the space become a holding environment for intimate feelings, as Kokoschka's art was invited to "depict the emotion aroused by the

commemoration inside the tomb". The private experience of the artist as portrayed in his art would therefore become "a design for an unconscious archetype in which personal memory is blended with the collective one". In Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos: theory and works* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 170.

38. Maya Lin as quoted in Robert Campbell, "An Emotive Place Apart," *American Institute of Architects Journal* 72 (May 1983), 151.

39. For the jury's evaluation of Jonas Dahlberg's proposal, see "Swedish artist Jonas Dahlberg to design July 22 Memorial sites in Norway," *22 Memorials*, <http://www.minnsteder.no/en/the-swedish-artist-jonas-dahlberg-will-make-the-memorial-sites-after-22-july/>. Accessed 30 May, 2014.



Fig. 4
Plan for the July 22 Memorial, Utøya, Norway
(Credits: Jonas Dahlberg Studio)

Notably, the same approach was taken in the winning entry by the Swedish artist Jonas Dahlberg for Norway's July 22 memorial sites competition (2014) to commemorate the attacks in Oslo and Utøya, a nearby small island on which Anders Behring Breivik massacred 69 victims in 2011. The artist's proposed design depicts a physical incision, a symbolic wound, into the Sørbråten peninsula which faces Utøya (Fig. 4). The literal cut into the landscape, with the names of the victims to be engraved on the vertical stone surface, was welcomed as radical and brave, as "the void that is created evokes the sense of sudden loss combined with the long-term missing and remembrance of those who perished."³⁹ It only seems that the 'healing' component found in the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, manifested in the ability to touch the names intertwined with one's own reflection, is removed in this case, since there will be a gap dividing the wall with names and the viewing gallery. This aspect will be reintroduced however in the Oslo memorial, where the excavated



Fig. 5
Plan for the July 22 Memorial, Oslo, Norway
(Credits: Jonas Dahlberg Studio)

cut from Sørbråten will be relocated. The memorial will take the form of an amphitheatre facing a curved stone wall, with the names of the victims at eye level (Fig. 5).

THE MEMORIAL AS A SPACE OF ABSENCE

After a terroristic attack occurred at several train stations in Madrid in 2004, causing the deaths of 192 people, the public expressed their grief by leaving letters, poems, religious images, and other objects at the sites where the bombings occurred. As this collection was becoming an obstacle, a ‘cyber shrine’ known as *Espacio de Palabras* was installed in the same year at the entrance of the Atocha⁴⁰ and El Pozo stations so that visitors would be able to leave their messages of condolence in an electronic form until a permanent memorial was built. These ‘video walls’ attracted a wide audience and were

40. Madrid Atocha (in Spanish, *Estación de Madrid Atocha*, also named *Madrid Puerta de Atocha*) is the largest railway station in Madrid. It is the primary station serving commuter trains.

therefore recognized as powerful instruments of preserving memory, with their meaning easily shared and instantly understood. Despite their success, an international competition was organized⁴¹ and the task of creating the M11 memorial at a roundabout of the Atocha station was awarded to a team consisting of five young architects – FAM Arquitectetura y Urbanismo SLP.⁴² Under the motto *Light dedicates the moment of the day for each person*, the initial plan was to create a sacred space for the bereaved and in memory of the victims, an oasis in the busy traffic around Atocha station. Despite the competition's request to treat only the space of the roundabout, the designers decided to take a risk and suggested the main memorial space be located underneath the area limit allowed by the competition. In this way the idea of creating a serene and intimate space within noisy surroundings became more realistic. The design process began with multiple variations of models carved from ice blocks to emphasize daylight as a focus of the overall design. In contrast to the poetic ideal of light as an immaterial component in the creation of space, the actual memorial was built from materials resistant to the aggressive surroundings. At the same time this material had to be translucent to allow daylight and the changing angles of sunlight to penetrate the introverted space, accentuating the names of the victims, which were to be inscribed on the walls.⁴³ One of the initial ideas was to create an organic, blob-like structure that would carry the statements of public mourning. However, in the process of designing, and after consulting engineering experts, it was planned that the organic shape would be retained within the cylindrical architectural form so that it would be fully visible only from the interior space of the memorial.

41. The competition, attracting almost 300 proposals, was organized by the Madrid City Council and the Ministry of Public Works and Economy.

42. The office FAM, or *Fascinante Aroma a Manzana* (Fascinating Smell of Apple) was established in 2002. The members of the team were Esaú Acosta, Mauro Gil-Fournier, Raquel Buj, Miguel Jeanicke, and Pedro Colón de Carvajal.

43. In later stages, the names of the victims were replaced by the messages of condolence left on the site as part of the public's spontaneous mourning.

The memorial was inaugurated on March 11, 2007 and as imagined by the winning team it was realized in two levels: the quiet, underground space and the prominent cylindrical marker at street level (Fig. 6). The underground space is accessible from the Atocha station, divided from the station hall by the uneven glass facade, creating a hazy membrane between the two environments: the busy realm of the station and the silent meditative room of the memorial (Fig. 7). The entrance to the memorial is a large glass door



Fig. 6
11M Memorial, Atocha Station, Madrid, Spain
(Credits: Author)



Figure 7
11M Memorial, Atocha Station, Madrid, Spain
(Credits: Author)

leading first to a small, darkened vestibule with the victims' names printed alphabetically on an illuminated frosted glass panel, behind which is the main memorial space. Hence, visitors are encouraged to reflect upon the names for a few seconds, while the entrance serves as a transitional space towards the space of absence waiting ahead. Once in the main room, the blurred reality of the Atocha station, still visible through the glass facade on the right, seems more distant. The interior walls are designed as reflective dark blue surfaces in an attempt to make the edges of the space difficult to define. Visitors are invited to move around as they wish, but the central circular opening in the ceiling is the main source of light and therefore acts as a magnet (Fig. 8). The opening reveals ETFE foil⁴⁴ with the inscriptions of many messages of condolence in multiple languages (Fig. 9). Since the foil is transparent, it allows the outside part of the cylindrical tower to be fully visible as the text swirls upward towards the glass beams carrying the roof of the structure. At night, artificial lightening accentuates the cylinder and its changing

44. Ethylene tetrafluoroethylene, ETFE, is a fluorine based plastic, designed to have a high corrosion resistance and strength over a wide temperature range.



Fig. 8
11M Memorial, Atocha Station, Madrid, Spain
(Credits: Author)

quality gives it the appearance of a large candle pot enigmatically protruding from the roundabout. During daytime, depending on the angle of the sun, the organic form of the cylinder's inner membrane is slightly visible, as the sunrays break through the glass brick facade.

Since each detail is designed to augment the notion of a sacred realm, the material performance of the memorial ought to be impeccable. However, due to its rapid deterioration caused by improper maintenance, whole segments of the cylinder's inner foil are damaged to the point that specific parts of the text are illegible, which results in a great distraction from the overall experience. Furthermore, although the initial outburst of public grief is memorialized in the apex of the memorial, new messages of condolence cannot be added to its 'clean' and protected space. The apparent need for such interaction is demonstrated by the objects visitors place at the cylinder's base of the street level part of the memorial. In this way the protruding



Fig. 9

11M Memorial, Atocha Station, Madrid, Spain

(Credits: Author)

eleven metre high cylinder, prominently positioned before the station, can be perceived as an abstract cenotaph. The cylindrical form whose translucent materialization suggests its hidden content is an inviting feature in space; its purpose is somewhat ambiguous, as it can easily be interpreted as an odd part of the station's technical space. It invites more thorough inspection before one discovers its function as a guardian of a place of tragedy and its consequences – the death of individuals.

CONCLUSION

Set aside for intimate contemplation and imaginative investment while echoing Boullée's aesthetic principles for translating melancholia into architecture, the Atocha memorial focuses on words of hope and suggests the infinite for both the dead and the living. In this sense, the memorial shares qualities with the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Both memorials are spaces of absence that signify personal deaths, but at the same time encourage interaction with space and potentially facilitate the mourning process. In this respect, the Norwegian memorial designs seem to incorporate these aspects, balancing between the dramatic and more intimate space for reflection. Conversely, the *Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin, conceived with the goal of destabilizing the visitor and thereby creating a sense of an impending danger, omits any personal references. In this way the memorial risks a questionable transformation of the memorial space into an ideal adrenaline boost for the ignorant. Echoing radical proposals for commemoration of Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen, the absence demonstrated by the waving field of pillars is literal and understandable only to the more persistent, willing to hunt for the actual purpose of the memorial. Unlike the designers of the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* and the 11M memorial who were aware of the importance of the personal appropriation of memorial spaces by visitors and its transitional qualities in facilitating the process of mourning, Berlin's memorial is a coded intellectual statement, an exercise in memory work on a gigantic scale which further exposes the memorial to controversies and acts of vandalism. In that way, indeed, it focuses more on

the 'knife' then on the 'wound'. Whether these memorials manage to provide strong holding environments for memory and preserve remembrance for the future generations is difficult to say. Nevertheless, the exploration of the spaces of absence they promote appears to be more powerful when designating individual absence rather than abstract presence.

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DYING INAYAT KHAN NATURE, SPIRITUALITY, AND MORTALITY IN THE *JAHANGIRNAMA*

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ABSTRACT - Representations of death and dying are rare in Mughal miniature painting. Two images titled Dying Inayat Khan stand apart and hold unique positions in the Mughal miniature tradition. A 1618 preparatory drawing and finished painting depict the Mughal emperor Jahangir's close court official, Inayat Khan, as a dying man. His likeness was recorded after he was summoned to the imperial court. Although these images have been discussed in many studies of Mughal painting, scholars have failed to fully explain how they fit within the tradition of Mughal miniature painting and why Jahangir would order the creation of the images. This paper contends that the images of the spectacular demise of Inayat Khan resonated with Jahangir's scientifically- and spiritually-informed perceptions of his own (im)mortality and political potency. Like many of the nature studies and scientific inquiries commissioned or conducted by the emperor at court, Inayat Khan's death was commemorated as a unique preternatural event fraught with personal and political implications for Jahangir and his reign.

INTRODUCTION

In 1605, Prince Salim took the throne as the fourth emperor of the Mughal Empire, anointing himself Nur-ur-din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi – *Nur-ur-din* meaning “light of the faith” and *Jahangir* meaning “world-seizer.” Jahangir’s reign was one of general political stability and remarkable advancement in the arts, particularly painting. Supporting the painting schools established by his predecessor and father Akbar, Jahangir commissioned many of

the finest Mughal miniature paintings yet created. Although intended mainly for inclusion in *muraqqas* or illuminated books, a small number of miniatures were executed specifically for Jahangir's memoirs, the *Jahangirnama*.¹ Unlike Akbar, who commissioned a court-appointed historian to memorialize activities at court and abroad, Jahangir wrote his own memoirs, which meticulously recorded royal births, deaths, decrees, court assemblages, gift exchanges, diplomatic visits, imperial hunting expeditions, and other momentous events.² Curiously, in addition to recording court affairs, Jahangir took great care to describe, with scientific precision, the flora and fauna that he observed at court, and commissioned artists to portray these subjects. Diverging considerably from the *Jahangirnama*'s conventional images of imperial audiences, spiritual pilgrimages, royal family members, and court officials, these meticulously detailed nature studies spark modern scholars' characterizations of Jahangir as a scientific observer and naturalist.³

This article examines two remarkably naturalistic images of a rare pictorial subject – death – in the *Jahangirnama*. Both titled *Dying Inayat Khan* (1618), the preparatory drawing and finished watercolour painting (Figs. 1 and 2)

1. The *Jahangirnama* has been translated into English multiple times. This paper relies on the most recent translation, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans. W. M. Thackston (Washington D. C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1999). For a history of the *Jahangirnama* see *The Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, ix-xi and n.1.

2. The first Mughal emperor, Babur, also wrote his own memoirs. See *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans. W. M. Thackston (New York: Random House, 2002).

3. For this characterization, see M. A. Alvi and Abdur Rahman, *Jahangir the Naturalist* (National Institute of



Fig. 1
Dying Inayat Khan
1618
Ink and light wash on paper
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Fig. 2
Balchand
Dying Inayat Khan
1618

Watercolour and gilt on paper
Bodleian Library, Oxford



Sciences of India, 1968); Sanjeev Prasad Srivastave, "Jahangir as Naturalist Art Lover," in *Jahangir: a Connoisseur of Mughal Art* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2000); Som Prakash Verma, *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1999); Ebba Koch, "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (2009), 336-338; and Wilfrid Blunt, "The Mughal Painters of Natural History," *The Burlington Magazine* 90 (February 1, 1948), 49-50.

4. Ellen Smart, "The Death of Inayat Khan by the Mughal Artist Balchand," *Artibus Asiae* 58 (January 1, 1999), 10, 275. Smart provides a comprehensive list of publications in which *Dying Inayat Khan* appears.

depict an adult male, Inayat Khan, who was a close court official of emperor Jahangir. Inayat Khan's body, emaciated by years of alcohol and opium use, rests on a *charpoy*. Large bolsters support his torso and ample pillows steady his head and hands. The loose *jama* that Inayat Khan wears falls open to reveal the courtier's sickly pallor, skeletal ribcage, and extraordinarily weakened condition. Although these rare images of death are routinely included in studies of Mughal painting, scholars fail to account for their place within the tradition of Mughal miniature painting, or for the motivations underlying their commission.⁴ This paper examines *Dying Inayat Khan*'s resonances with Jahangir's personal and political interests through three lenses. The first considers the images in light of Jahangir's scientific inquiries into nature and natural life-and-death processes, which are evident in Jahangir's commissions of depictions of flora and fauna. The second investigates ways in which *Dying Inayat Khan* abides by and challenges conventions and functions of traditional Mughal court portraiture. Finally, the third critical lens reveals how *Dying Inayat Khan* evokes spiritual concerns that resonate with an allegorical mode of Mughal portraiture and with Jahangir's spiritually-guided perceptions of his own mortality and political potency. Ultimately, the reality and represen-

tations of Inayat Khan's death foretell formidable personal and political troubles for Jahangir and his reign.

DEATH IN THE *JAHANGIRNAMA*

In the *Jahangirnama* there are numerous textual accounts and descriptions of death. Mughal emperors customarily recorded the deaths of relatives, nobles, court officials, and other associates who figured importantly in royal family lineages and court social groups, or who facilitated imperial relations with various power structures in South Asia and the Middle East. The majority of accounts in the *Jahangirnama* are second-hand, ranging from brief descriptions to extensive narratives. The length of each account seems to reflect the status of the deceased and his or her relationship with Jahangir. Lesser nobles or courtiers might receive only brief mention, while relatives or close court officials typically earned extensive commemoration, often under separate headings within Jahangir's text.⁵ For example, on the occasion of the death of Qutbuddin Khan Koka, who acted as a foster brother to Jahangir, Jahangir conveyed his personal grief and compared the loss to that of his own father.⁶ Although the majority of passages concerning death in the *Jahangirnama* perfunctorily record the loss of an individual, some accounts evidently reflect Jahangir's interest in unique circumstances and strange ailments that resulted in death. Such records draw on first- as well as second-hand reports. In late 1612, for example, Jahangir learned that the courtier Shaja'at Khan died after stubbing his toe. In his memoirs, the emperor remarked that he was "astonished" at the news, as Shaja'at Khan was one of the strongest and most able men in his service.⁷

When Inayat Khan lay dying as a result of opium and alcohol addiction, Jahangir likewise conveyed astonishment in his memoirs and composed a lengthy entry on the strangeness of the manner of his passing, which he witnessed first-hand. Unique to the account of Inayat Khan's demise is its detailed description of the physical appearance of the dying man's body and documentation of Jahangir's demand for a portrait, to record the courtier's remarkable death for posterity. Written in Ajmer in 1618, it reads:

5. Examples of brief death records include those of Asaf Khan and Mirza Ghazi Tarkhan in *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 136-141.

6. Ibid. 79-80.

7. Ibid. 138.

On this date news came of the death of Inayat Khan. He was one of my closest servants and subjects. In addition to eating opium he also drank wine when he had the chance. Little by little he became obsessed with wine, and since he had a weak frame, he drank more than his body could tolerate and was afflicted with diarrhea. While so weakened he was overcome two or three times by something like epileptic fits. By my order Kakim Rukna treated him, but no matter what he did it was to no avail. In addition, Inayat Khan developed a ravenous appetite, and although the doctor insisted that he not eat more than once a day, he couldn't restrain himself and raged like a madman. Finally he developed cachexia and dropsy and grew terribly thin and weak. Several days prior to this he requested that he be taken ahead to Agra. I ordered him brought to me to be given leave to depart. He was put in a palanquin and brought. He looked incredibly weak and thin. "Skin stretched over bone." Even his bones had begun to disintegrate. Whereas painters employ great exaggeration when they depict skinny people, nothing remotely resembling him had ever been seen. Good God! How can a human being remain alive in this shape? [...] It was so strange I ordered the artist to draw his likeness.⁸

The textual and visual portrayals of Inayat Khan's death, both remarkably concerned with the physical manifestations of the dying process, illuminate how the emaciated body of an addict became a subject of the emperor's interest and inquiry in its own right.

THE HEALTH OF THE EMPEROR

8. Ibid. 279-281.

9. Ibid. 184-85, 212, 224, 286; Lisa Balabanlilar, "The Emperor Jahangir and the Pursuit of Pleasure," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19 (2009), 181-182.

In the *Jahangirnama*, Jahangir's unmistakable fascination with Inayat Khan's dying body likely arose in part from the emperor's own experience with opium and alcohol addiction. Jahangir had a great love of wine and opium, and his memoirs include numerous accounts of large drinking parties where wine and opium were openly consumed.⁹ That Jahangir was dependent on these substances is evidenced by the emperor's appointment of a courtier

whose sole responsibility was the care of royal intoxicants. When that courtier died, Jahangir replaced him with two new courtiers, one for wine and one for opium, who perhaps afforded Jahangir better access to and larger supplies of both substances.¹⁰ Jahangir was well aware of the repercussions of addiction, as his younger brothers Shah-Murad and Danyal had died from overindulging in alcohol before his ascension to the throne.¹¹ Moreover, the *Jahangirnama* records numerous episodes of the negative effects that addiction appears to have had on the emperor himself, including fevers and shortness of breath. For example, in July 1614 in Ajmer, Jahangir had tried to hide a fever and headaches from his courtiers, doctors, and harem, fearing that the revelation of his poor health might be detrimental to his country and subjects. Even with the help of doctors, Jahangir's fever did not abate until, one night, the emperor went to the shrine of Sufi Saint Mu'in al-Din Chishti and prayed to God for "the mantle of health."¹² Having suffered and recovered from his own overindulgences, Jahangir may have found something of a reflection of himself in the dying body of Inayat Khan.

MUGHAL NATURE STUDIES

Resonating with Jahangir on a deeply personal level, Inayat Khan's illness naturally occasioned considerable contemplation in the emperor's memoirs. However, the near-scientific precision of the *Jahangirnama*'s textual and visual record of the courtier's demise reflects a broader imperial interest in the processes of nature, which is also witnessed in the records of unusual flora and fauna that Jahangir commissioned throughout his reign. In *The Indian Portrait, 1560-1860*, Rosemary Crill and Kapil Jariwala maintain that the emperor's fascination with the physical deterioration of Inayat Khan's body paralleled his interest in unusual animals and plants that were presented to him at court. Inayat Khan became "just such a curiosity, comparable in the Emperor's mind to the zebra, the chameleon or the encounter with the giant spider that he ordered his artist to record for him."¹³ When gifts of exotic animals were presented to Jahangir by foreign ambassadors, he frequently commissioned court artists to paint them from life "so that the aston-

10. The ingestion of intoxicants was firmly imbedded in the culture and courtly proceedings at the Mughal courts. Balabanlilar, "The Emperor Jahangir and the Pursuit of Pleasure," 173-186; Lisa Balabanlilar, "Lords of the Auspicious Conjunction: Turco-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent," *Journal of World History* 18 (March 2007), 33-35.

11. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 37-39.

12. Ibid. 161.

13. Rosemary Crill and Kapil Jariwala, *The Indian Portrait, 1560-1860* (Ahmedabad, India: Mapin Publishing, 2010), 82.

14. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 133.

ishment one has at hearing of them would increase by seeing them.”¹⁴ Plants and animals depicted by Jahangir’s artists were typically not indigenous to the Indian subcontinent and were described as unique by the emperor. According to Som Prakash Verma, the emperor regarded the nature studies as a “source of amazement and pleasure, and accepted the importance of the documentation of rarities for later generations.”¹⁵

Jahangir was renowned not only for his efforts to document the living world but also for his support of knowledge-seeking in the fields of botany and biology. Paintings of flora and fauna produced during his reign provided scientific information with seeming objectivity. For example *Iris Plant with Bird and Dragonfly* (c. 1620) by Mansur illustrates the life cycle of the iris.¹⁶ The plant’s three opening flowers and two closed buds demonstrate how it appears at different stages of its flowering. Flat and folded leaves of various lengths add visual interest to Mansur’s composition, making it both aesthetically pleasing and revelatory of nature’s processes of growth and decay. The inclusion of a dragonfly, pursued by a predatory bird, reinforces themes of life and death, nourishment and deterioration, in the composition.

The *Jahangirnama* also features lengthy textual descriptions of scientific observations and experiments conducted by Jahangir to advance knowledge of animal biology. In his memoirs, the emperor not only commented on the mating and nesting habits of Sarus cranes and on the rate of decay of a sheep’s carcass, but also remarked on strange and curious natural anomalies that defied contemporary scientific understanding, including instances of predatory animals cohabitating with their natural prey.¹⁷ In one such account, Prince Dawarbaksh presented Jahangir with a lion that was evidently in love with a goat. Having never seen or heard of such behaviour before, the emperor ordered that the goat be taken away from the lion and that another goat and oxen be housed with the lion, in order to see what might transpire. The lion killed the new goat and oxen instantly. When the original goat was reunited with the lion, Jahangir observed that the lion rolled on its back and took the goat on its chest and licked its muzzle.¹⁸

15. Som Prakash Verma, *Painting the Mughal Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 89.

16. Ibid. 149.

17. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 266-267, 269-270, 274, 277-279.

18. Ibid. 435.

Importantly, such observations attest to an imperial fascination with preternatural processes, which could be interpreted as signs from God “that related to the health of the body politic and consequentially to the health and power of the sovereign.”¹⁹

The images of the dying body of Inayat Khan echo Jahangir’s pictorial strategies for recording unusual plants, animals, and events in the *Jahangirnama*. In particular, *Dying Inayat Khan* and the nature studies share an unmistakable focus on the physical manifestations of life-and-death processes. The preparatory drawing reveals how the artist initially positioned the body of the courtier in order to display as much of his emaciated body as possible. The *charpoy* is set at a slight angle and the torso of Inayat Khan is turned towards the viewer. The artist has purposefully opened the *jama* to fully display Inayat Khan’s skeletal frame. In the finished painting, the artist Balchand employs the same pictorial strategies in subdued colours that are characteristic of nature studies.²⁰ The painting generally lacks the opulence and intricacies of pattern-work characteristic of Mughal miniatures. However, the *charpoy*’s placement in a room amidst some luxury furnishings contrasts with the drawing’s singular focus on the figure. The positioning of Inayat Khan in a well-appointed interior space, with a woven rug and coloured glass vessels set in niches in the background, elicits a sense of the courtier’s high social status and recalls conventions and functions of traditional Mughal court portraiture, which served to preserve privileged social identities of royals, nobles, and courtiers for posterity.

TRADITIONAL MUGHAL COURT PORTRAITURE

Comparative analysis of *Dying Inayat Khan* and exemplars of traditional Mughal court portraiture further illuminates conceptualizations of health and mortality at the imperial court. Akbar, Jahangir’s father, was the first Mughal emperor to commission portraits of his court officials for the immortalization and “memorialization of the dynasty and its servants.”²¹ In the *Akbarnama*, Akbar’s court historian Abu’l Fazl explains that the portraits

19. A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 202.

20. See Mansur, *Chameleon*, brush and ink with green body colour on discoloured paper, The Royal Collection, Royal Library, Windsor Castle, and *A Zebra*, 1621, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, Victoria and Albert Collection. Both of these fauna studies have muted colour palettes and simple backgrounds that are broadly suggestive of the animals’ habitat.

21. Som Prakash Verma, “Elements of Historicity in the Portraits of the Mughal School,” *Indian Historical Review* 9 (1982), 63; Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia* (New York: I. B. Tauris; Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 64.

were made so that “those who have passed away receive new life and those who are still alive have immortality promised to them.”²² Though only individual folia and no complete albums of the court portraits of Akbar’s reign have survived, lifelike accuracy was evidently the standard for court portraiture.²³ Akbar’s memoirs relate that the emperor sat for his own portraits, and thereby suggest that accuracy was also a concern in portraits of the emperor himself.²⁴

Although Jahangir did not write about the function of court portraiture or the significance of naturalistic portrayals, the portraits commissioned by Jahangir demonstrate that he shared his father’s interests in lifelike accuracy and dynastic memorialization. Jahangir not only continued the tradition of commissioning portraits of court officials but also memorialized Safavid and Uzbek nobles, saints, scribes, artists, and musicians in portraits. As these portraits often served as models for subsequent paintings of court affairs, capturing the sitter’s likeness was essential.²⁵ Acquaintances of the sitter would authenticate the portrait’s accuracy if Jahangir did not know the sitter personally. Accurate likenesses assured that nobles and court officials, alive and dead, could be forever virtually ‘present’ in visual records of significant events. Unsurprisingly, when Inayatullah was awarded the court title of Inayat Khan in 1610, a traditional official court portrait was produced that appears to memorialize and immortalize his promotion (Fig. 3).²⁶ In the image, Inayat Khan’s portrait occupies the upper right and is accompanied by the portraits of three other servants of the Mughal court. A Raja’s portrait occupies the upper left, while portraits of two courtiers, labelled Abdul’l Khaliq and Jamal Khan, occupy the lower left and lower right respectively.²⁷ Recording the identity and high rank of the court officials, these naturalistic portrayals unquestionably adhere to the conventions of Mughal court portraiture established by Akbar and continued by Jahangir. Against a dark background, Inayat Khan’s brightly coloured, intricately patterned court attire includes a green and yellow-striped turban, a white *jama* decorated with orange and green flowers, orange patterned pants (*pyjamas*), and black and blue slippers with gold embellishments (Fig. 4). He wears two gold rings, a double pearl earring, and a gold-tipped green-scabbarded

22. Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire*, 64.

23. Verma, “Elements of Historicity in the Portraits of the Mughal School”, 63.

24. Ibid. 64; *A’in-i Akbari*, vol 1, trans. H. Blochmann, (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1965), 115.

25. Verma, “Elements of Historicity in the Portraits of the Mughal School,” 65.

26. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 104.

27. The Raja’s name, written in Jahangir’s handwriting, is illegible. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Daulat Balchand, “Murad: Four Portraits: Leaf from the Shah Jahan Album (55.121.10.29)”. In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000 – <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/55.121.10.29> (November 2013). Accessed November 11, 2014.

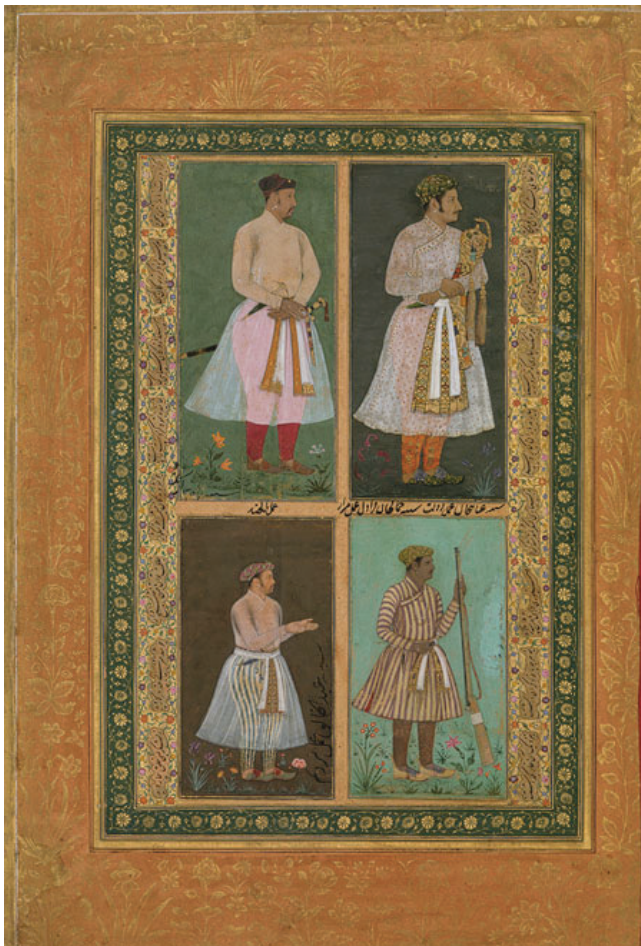


Fig. 3
Balchand, Daulat, Murad
Four Portraits: Leaf from the Shah Jahan Album
1610-1615
Ink, opaque watercolour and gold on paper
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Purchase, Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian Foundation
Gift, 1955



Fig. 4
Detail of Inayat Khan Portrait
Balchand, Daulat, Murad
Four Portraits: Leaf from the Shah Jahan Album
1610-1615
Ink, opaque watercolour and gold on paper
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Purchase, Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian
Foundation Gift, 1955

dagger at his waist. Importantly, Inayat Khan holds an opulent state sword, a symbol of imperial authority and power, close to his chest.

The painting of *Dying Inayat Khan* (1618) differs considerably from the official court portrait of 1610. The passage of eight years and the effects of opium and alcohol use drastically changed the courtier's physical appearance. In the *Jahangirnama*, Jahangir followed the account of his initial shock at the sight of Inayat Khan's dying body with a reflection on God, mortality, and concerns of the soul, writing:

I found him so changed that I said, "At this time you mustn't draw a single breath without remembrance of God, and don't despair of His graciousness. If death grants you quarter, it should be regarded as a reprieve and means for atonement. If your term of life is up, every breath taken with remembrance of Him is a golden opportunity. Do not occupy your mind or worry about those you leave behind, for with us the slightest claim through service is much."²⁸

These last recorded words from Jahangir to his courtier are not concerned with his physical appearance or bodily ailments but are rather focused on the courtier's spiritual preparation for death. It may be argued that the shift from corporeal to spiritual concerns in the text is echoed in the transformation of the preparatory drawing into the finished painting of *Dying Inayat Khan*. While the preparatory drawing depicts only the courtier's skeletal frame on a *charpoy* with the meticulous detail of a nature study, the painting partly resonates with the status-conscious genre of portraiture by positioning the courtier in a decorated interior space.²⁹ The *charpoy* is centred in a room in which a costly carpet is spread on the floor and coloured glass vessels inhabit small wall niches. The visual opulence of the furnishings – a reference to the worldliness of Inayat Khan's corporeal life – is tempered by a dark, narrow, rectangular shape suggestive of a doorway in the background, which elicits a sense of a space beyond the visible world. Although the skeletal figure remains central in the finished painting, the

28. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 281.

29. There is evidence that preparatory sketches may also include a background. See J.P. Losty and Malini Roy, *Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire* (London: British Library, 2012), 137-139.

articulation of space around the body prompts consideration of spiritual as well as corporeal concerns. These textual and pictorial shifts from corporeality to spirituality in the records of Inayat Khan's death may relate to contemporary geographical and spiritual shifts of the imperial court and its self-representation.

SUFISM AND ALLEGORICAL PORTRAIT PAINTINGS

In 1615, three years prior to the creation of *Dying Inayat Khan*, Jahangir moved his court to Ajmer to continue the imperial patronage of Chishti Sufism established by his father Akbar. As discussed above, it was at the shrine of Sufi Saint Mu'in al-Din Chishti in Ajmer that Jahangir, racked with fever, had prayed to God for "the mantle of health" and was, in fact, restored to health in twenty-two days' time.³⁰ With the momentous geographical and spiritual shift of the imperial court, the mode of production of imperial portraiture changed as well. The portraits created in the year of the court's relocation and for five years after (1615-1620) highlight Jahangir's engagement with Sufism and emphasize qualities of divine Muslim kingship.

Jahangir's understanding of his position in both worldly and spiritual orders is revealed in allegorical portrait paintings. The eight known allegorical portraits of Jahangir (1615-1620) are contemporaneous with the transfer of the court to Ajmer and with *Dying Inayat Khan*. In Jahangir's allegorical portraits, Jahangir presents himself as a "millennial being": a prophesied saviour, spiritual guide, and material lord whose rule may last as long as one thousand years. A concept rooted in traditions and beliefs of sacred kingship and Sufi sainthood, a "millennial being" is one who bears a direct relationship with God that is often prophesied and affirmed by visions of local *shaykhs* and sages.³¹ Jahangir's birth had been prophesied by the Chishti *shaykh* Salim, after whom Jahangir was named. Because sages foretold that the "one named Nur-ur-din (light of religion) would succeed to power" at the end of Akbar's reign, Jahangir adopted the name "Nur-ur-din" when he took the imperial throne in order to fulfil the prophecy of a divine emperor.³²

30. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 161.

31. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 1. A *shaykh* is "A man of the greatest learning and spirituality, who guided his disciples along the mystical path and dispensed help and advice to all who came to his *khanqah*." P.M. Currie, *The shrine and cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4.

32. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 22.

Rather than documenting actual events, allegorical portraits depict the prophetic visions of spiritual elites. In traditions of sacred kingship and Sufi sainthood, only those who have a close proximity to God, such as sages, *shaykhs*, and divine emperors, receive dreams and visions. According to Azfar Moin, Jahangir's self-representations as a divine emperor and "millennial being" in allegorical portraits not only recorded the emperor's visions but were also thought to possess "talismanic qualities."³³ In Mughal art, depictions of events that had not (yet) taken place, such as those seen in dreams, were created and understood as forecasters of the future.³⁴ By representing his visions in allegorical portraiture, the emperor Jahangir might will them into existence.³⁵

33. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 187.

34. Ibid. 188.

35. Ibid. 185-189. Moin examines the sacred role of painting in Mughal kingship from the Chest of Witness and the image of the Prophet to the images created by the Iranian "false prophet" Mani. Two instances in the *Jahangirnama* show the use of images and text to divine the future. Akbar refuses to behead his enemy Hemu because he had already drawn a picture of Hemu with disjointed limbs. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 185, and *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 41. There is also a notation in the *Jahangirnama* about Jahangir using text to divine the future. *Jahangirnama*, trans. Thackston, 132.

36. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 208.

37. Ibid. 208.

An allegorical portrait that portrays Jahangir as a "millennial being" capable of prophetic visions is *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings* (1615-1618, Fig. 5). In the composition, the emperor's vision is related as follows. Distinguished by an immense halo, Jahangir is seated upon an hourglass, handing a book to a Sufi *shaykh*. To the right of the *shaykh* is an Ottoman Sultan (possibly Ahmet I) and King James I of England. Although in reality Jahangir never met the two rulers, the striking naturalism and accuracy of their likenesses supports the illusion that the Sultan and King are 'present' at Jahangir's court. In the decorative framework above the painting, the poetry reads, "The King of the outer and inner domains is by the grace of God, Nur al-Din Jahangir ibn Akbar Padi-shah. Although outwardly kings stand before him, inwardly he always turns his gaze towards dervishes."³⁶ Hovering above Jahangir, one of two *putti* holds a broken arrow and bow, while the other covers its face, seemingly in deference to Jahangir. At the base of Jahangir's hourglass throne two angels write, "Allah Akbar! Oh King, may your age endure a thousand years."³⁷

The painting is an allegorical representation of Jahangir ringing in the new millennium of Islam as a "millennial being", which is signified by the time-piece of the hourglass and in the angels' inscription. At the turn of the Islamic millennium, a new leader was supposed to bring peace to the world. Jahangir



Fig. 5
Bichitr, *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings*, 1615-1618, opaque watercolor, gold and ink on paper, 180 x 253cm (Freer Sackler Gallery: The Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art)

is here presented as that divine saviour, whose life and reign could extend for a thousand years if his gaze was always turned towards God. Kings of the world stand at his feet, and arrows, broken in the hands of the *putto*, are no longer needed. During the celebration of the new millennium, the emperor traditionally blesses the coming thousand years by patronizing holy men.³⁸ In *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings*, this holy patronage is signified by Jahangir's gift of a book to the Sufi *shaykh*, who is the focus of the emperor's gaze. The sand in the hourglass has begun to fall, signalling that the millennium – and Jahangir's era as a saint of the age – has begun.³⁹

Evidently concerned with time, (im)mortality, and the possibility of everlasting rule, *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings* appears to also presage the future of Jahangir's reign, particularly with regard to his continued and future patronage of Chisti Sufism. The painting may precede and foretell his

38. Ibid. 208.

39. Ibid. 193.

visit to Ajmer in 1615, which he described as a pilgrimage taken as a student of the *shaykh*. Befitting the talismanic expectations of allegorical portraiture that, much like Jahangir's records of preternatural events, could portend "the health of the body politic and [...] the health and power of the sovereign," the holy patronage depicted in the painting was actuated by Jahangir's visit to Ajmer.⁴⁰ Importantly, the production of allegorical portraits, nature studies, and *Dying Inayat Khan* was not merely contemporaneous but was rather constitutive of the layered visual culture, founded on omens, dreams, and visions, which reflected and informed Jahangir's perceptions of his health, mortality and political potency.

Contemporaneous production of the allegorical portraits, nature studies, and *Dying Inayat Khan* prompts an inquiry into overlapping motivations for their production. Though self-styled as a potentially immortal "millennial being", Jahangir came face-to-face with his own mortality when he experienced the deaths of his brothers and, particularly, when he observed the shocking deterioration of Inayat Khan and preserved the event in a visual record. Like the nature studies, experiments, and strange occurrences discussed in the *Jahangirnama*, Inayat Khan's death was not only a unique and curious natural event worthy of commemoration but also a harbinger of the demise of the emperor and the body politic.⁴¹ *Dying Inayat Khan* has in common with allegorical portraits a foundation in prophetic visions. Rather than forecasting peaceful millennial rule, however, it warns of the emperor's and the empire's demise.

40. Ibid. 202.

41. Ibid. 202.

42. Corinne Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r. 1605-1627) in His Memoirs," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50 (2007): 452-489.

43. Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 220-221.

CONCLUSION

Scholars have proposed that Jahangir's own addiction was one cause of his ineffectual rule during the last years of his reign.⁴² Often cited as evidence is the increased administrative role played by Jahangir's wife, Nur Jahan.⁴³ For Jahangir, it was the spectacle of Inayat Khan's emaciated body, just prior to death, that likely spoke volumes about the health of his own body and of the body politic. Like the paintings of unusual flora and fauna and the records

of strange occurrences at Jahangir's court, Inayat Khan's death was both a curiosity and warning.

In the nature studies and portraiture discussed in this paper, scientific intrigue, religious devotion, and imperial politics are subtly combined. This is particularly the case with *Dying Inayat Khan*, now demonstrated to be representative, rather than anomalous, in the corpus of artworks commissioned by Jahangir for the *Jahangirnama*. The text and image of *Dying Inayat Khan* are, on the one hand, nature studies that facilitated understanding of nature's processes of death and decay. Corporeal concerns give way to spiritual ones, however, in both the text and the finished painting in the *Jahangirnama*. The shift broadly parallels the emperor's own transformation from mere mortal to millennial being in allegorical portraiture commissioned during his Ajmer period. *Dying Inayat Khan* therefore stands as evidence that the potency of Jahangir's visions of millennial dominion do not run unchecked. Visual and textual representations of portentous, preternatural events such as the death of Inayat Khan can be potent – and deeply personal – warnings of an emperor's impending demise.

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“INSTEAD OF DEATH THERE WAS LIGHT”

A SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF TOLSTOY’S *DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH* AND ZHUKOVSKY’S *ROOM IN THE BRASOVO ESTATE*

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ABSTRACT – *The central theme of Leo Tolstoy’s novella The Death of Ivan Ilyich (1886) is the protagonist’s concern with death and his journey in examining what a meaningful life is. In the narrative, Ilyich’s fear of death is disguised by a successful career and the gilded interior of a beautiful home, until a fatal illness forces him to come to terms with his mortality and to address meaning in his life. This article examines how the textual representations of interior spaces in the novella reflect the tension in the narrative and either conceal or reveal death, and how the disclosure of death in Ilyich’s interaction with the interior spaces leads to transformations in his perspective on his life and imminent death. To complement and deepen the interpretation of Tolstoy’s textual representations of space, this article furthermore explores the broadly contemporary pictorial representation of interior spaces in the genre of painted domestic interior scenes through an example by Stanislav Zhukovsky, A Room in the Brasovo Estate (1916).*

INTRODUCTION

The central anxiety of Leo Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886) concerns the problematic imminence of death and the issues that it raises in examining meaningful life. Ilyich’s fear of death is initially distanced and disguised by

the gilded interior of his beautiful home, which Tolstoy describes as “stunning”,¹ and by his successful career as a public prosecutor. However, a fatal illness forces Ivan Ilyich to come to terms with his mortality directly and, in part, through his interactions with the interior spaces of his home. Earlier scholarship on Tolstoy’s novella has delved into the various ways that it addresses the issue of dying, from the formal and symbolist dimensions of the narrative, to the psychology behind dying and illness,² and extending to the protagonist’s philosophical and ethical dilemmas.³ Scholars have also elucidated Tolstoy’s autobiographical inspiration for *A Confession*.⁴ Studies that tie the narrative of death and salvation to falsehood in linguistic or structural aspects of the novella, including metaphors and other figures of speech, provide the departure point for this article’s contribution to the analysis of Tolstoy’s text.⁵ This analysis uncovers how the changing descriptions of interior spaces in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* serve as a narrative device. Like language-based symbols and metaphors, this device employed by Tolstoy deepens the reader’s view of how death is revealed to and concealed from Ilyich, so constituting a significant aspect of his final transition towards death.

Comparing the interior spaces in Tolstoy’s novella to Stanislav Zhukovsky’s *A Room in the Brasovo Estate* (1916), a broadly contemporary painting of a well-appointed domestic interior, proves illuminating if only to further explore the meaning of interior space, and by contrast, exterior spaces, as a narrative device. Zhukovsky’s representation of a lavish interior space similarly addresses modern anxieties about bourgeois life through spatial tropes, creating a pictorial narrative that can be read like the narrative of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Although no direct link is known between the painting and the novella, published twenty years earlier, a reading of the painting in light of the novella uncovers comparable tensions between exterior and interior and, as will be argued, between bourgeois superficiality and natural authenticity, as well as notions of truth as embedded in a radiant natural light as opposed to a superficial glimmer.⁶

1. Ronald Blythe, “Introduction,” to Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Lynn Solotaroff (New York: Bantam Classic, 2004), 57.

2. See Marshall W. Jr. and Mark Bracher, “Literature, Psychoanalysis, and the Re-Formation of the Self: A New Direction for Reader-Response Theory,” *PMLA* (1985), 342-354; James J. Napier, “The Stages of Dying and ‘The Death of Ivan Ilyich,’” *College Literature* (1983), 147-157; and Kathleen Parthé, “Tolstoy and the Geometry of Fear,” *Modern Language Studies* (1985), 80-95, among others.

3. See F. M. Kamm, “Rescuing Ivan Ilyich: How We Live and How We Die,” *Ethics* (2003), 202-233; George J. Gutsche, “Moral Fiction: *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*,” in *Tolstoy’s The Death of Ivan Ilyich: A Critical Companion*, ed. Gary R. Jahn (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 58, among others.

4. Jeffrey Gordon discusses the novel in relation to Akira Kurosawa’s 1952 film *Ikiru*, which borrows from Goethe’s *Faust* as well as Tolstoy’s narrative in his “Kurosawa’s Existential Masterpiece: A Meditation on the Meaning of Life,” *Human Studies* (1997), 137-151. James Olney discusses the autobiographical connections in the novel and *A Confession* in his article “Experience, Metaphor, and Meaning: ‘The Death of Ivan Ilyich,’” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1972), 101-114.

David Danaher, quoting Gary Jahn,⁷ insists that “we must read ‘[...] the apparently straightforward narrative [of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*] metaphorically.’”⁸ Focusing on Tolstoy’s use of light and dark imagery, Danaher reads the layer of metaphors as a “subtext embodying Ivan’s transformation from death to spiritual rebirth.”⁹ In this vein, this article’s analysis of the transformation occurring in Ilyich’s domestic space brings a hitherto unexamined metaphorical layer of the narrative into focus. This essay explores how space is a subtext that tells the story of the protagonist’s spiritual transformation and how interior spaces serve as metaphors for the falsehoods or ‘deceptions’ of material life. The very interior that was meant to keep death at bay does not in fact keep it out of sight, but rather discloses it and contributes to Ilyich’s spiritual and moral struggle.

In *The Architecture of Deconstruction*, Mark Wigley maintains that the depiction of architecture in literature is first a construct for philosophical theory, and is “then subordinated as a metaphor to defer to some higher, non-material truth.”¹⁰ Although Wigley refers to philosophical treatises rather than works of fiction, interior spaces can be used as lenses to read the progression of a fictional narrative and to uncover implicit narratives relating to protagonists’ transformations. This article discusses the various representations of the rejection and acceptance of death in the novella, which elucidates how the dynamic between the material and immaterial in terms of both space and death leads to the disclosure of death to both the reader and Ilyich himself, which in turn shapes how Ilyich considers and reconsiders his home, his life, his sickbed, and his imminent death.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

In Chapter Three of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, the reader is introduced to Ilyich’s interest in interior décor as a mode of social conformity: his home is “like the homes of all people who are not really rich but who want to look rich.” Ivan Ilyich himself “undertook the decorating, selecting the wallpaper and the upholstery, purchasing more furniture, mostly antiques, which he

5. See David Danaher, “A Cognitive Approach to Metaphor in Prose: Truth and Falsehood in Leo Tolstoy’s ‘The Death of Ivan Il’ich,’” *Poetics Today* (2003), 439-469; David Danaher, “Tolstoy’s Use of Light and Dark Imagery in ‘The Death of Ivan Il’ich,’” *The Slavic and East European Journal* (1995), 227-240; and David Shepherd, “Conversion, Reversion and Subversion in Tolstoy’s ‘The Death of Ivan Il’ich,’” *The Slavonic and East European Review* (1993), 401-416, among others.

6. Danaher, “A Cognitive Approach to Metaphor in Prose,” 461.

7. Gary Jahn, *The Death of Ivan Il’ich: An Interpretation* (New York: Twayne Press, 1993), 60.

8. Danaher, “Tolstoy’s Use of Light and Dark Imagery in ‘The Death of Ivan Il’ich,’” 227.

9. Ibid. 227-228.

10. Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida’s Haunt* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 16.

thought particularly *comme il faut*.”¹¹ Full of “dark and gleaming things” which include “damasks, ebony, plants, carpets, and bronzes,”¹² the interior that Tolstoy’s protagonist creates resonates with the lavishly appointed interior in Zhukovsky’s painting, which will be discussed in more detail later in this article. Both novella and painting appear to reflect deep consciousness and aspirations of social status. On domestic spaces in nineteenth-century literature, Saskia Haag writes: “The house, both as a real and a metaphoric figure, can be considered as one of the most intriguing objects for articulating the effects of economic, social, and political changes.”¹³ Ivan Ilyich’s social aspirations ultimately backfire and his outward, material appearance reveals precisely what “ought to have remained hidden”¹⁴ when he is injured by the “knob of the window frame” while hanging draperies.¹⁵ This injury leads to a fatal illness and initiates Ilyich’s internal struggle and anxiety, as he seeks to strip away the deceptions of material life to discover what is truly meaningful.

In this way, the relationship between Ilyich’s home and his spiritual journey begins to unfold. Keeping up the “magnificent”, elegant apartment becomes a nagging anxiety, as “he had gone to such pains with the decorating that any damage to it upset him.”¹⁶ What initially seemed a beneficial gift to Ilyich becomes a source of pain, discomfort, and terminal illness.¹⁷ Over time, the relationship between his pain and his home becomes apparent and urgent to Ilyich, as the pleasantness of the interior collapses to reveal that all along, ‘It’, or death, had been hiding within those walls.¹⁸

As Henri Lefebvre writes in *The Production of Space*, “death must be both represented and rejected. Death has a ‘location’, but that location lies below or above appropriated social space; death is relegated to the infinite realm so as to disentrail (or purify) the finiteness in which social practice occurs.”¹⁹ After initially evading death by relegating it to the background and by concerning himself with the visible successes and pleasures of material life, Ilyich attempts to understand how his illness and his dying are linked to his interactions with his domestic space. What he once thought to be real and beau-

11. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 56.

12. Ibid. 57.

13. Saskia Haag, “‘Zusammenstimmung’ Poetics of Private Space in 19th Century’s Literature,” in *Indecent Exposures: Proceedings of the IWM Junior Visiting Fellows’ Conferences*, ed. Vern Walker (Vienna: IWM, 2007), 1.

14. Sigmund Freud, “From The ‘Uncanny,’” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism* (2nd ed.), ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 944.

15. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 57.

16. Ibid. 59.

17. Ibid. 57.

18. Ibid. 58.

19. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1991), 35.

tiful is now false and terrifying. The walls and interior spaces symbolize Ilyich's state of mind as much as they can be seen as abstract concepts of concealment and truth. The wall appears to him a silent, frightening limit, signifying his current situation of life and death, particularly as the latter looms nearer to him. Ilyich bitterly considers how he had “sacrificed his life” for the drawing room, for the attributes and gifts that it would bring, and he tries to occupy himself again with decoration and keeping up appearances. Ilyich had been particularly proud of the old furniture purchased for the house, “which added a decidedly aristocratic tone to the whole place”²⁰ for hosting those of “good social standing.”²¹ After busying himself with rearranging picture frames and albums on a table, he loses sight of this petty activity because even within the pleasant room, “It [death] was staring at him distinctly from behind the plants.”²² Within the very interior space that once represented a pleasant life ‘*comme il faut*’, there is an underlying horror of reality, of the mortality and frailty of human life that he had been evading. Where Ilyich's life had been almost exclusively dedicated to worldly ambition and appearances, the unwelcome notion of death became apparent with the beginning of his illness.

DOMESTIC SPACE AND THE PSYCHE

The manner in which Ilyich's perspective on his home and its interior spaces changes as his condition deteriorates propels the narrative forward and parallels it on a metaphorical level. In “Outside the Interior” Peter Schwenger explores the descriptions of rooms and other interior spaces in works of fiction. He quotes Freud's comparison of “the system of the unconscious to a large entrance hall, in which the mental impulses jostle one another like separate individuals. Adjoining this entrance hall there is a second, narrower room – a kind of drawing room – in which consciousness, too, resides.”²³ The interior, remarks Schwenger, is “no heart of darkness, but an exterior space.”²⁴ He adds that it seems that there are two interiors, that of the protagonist's inner spirit and that of the house, each the exterior of the other. The “house's so-called interior decoration is really exterior decoration, an attempt to

20. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 57.

21. Ibid. 60.

22. Ibid. 82.

23. Peter Schwenger, “Outside the Interior,” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* (2005), 2.

24. Ibid. 2.

express or even define the psychic interior.” The domestic interior space in Tolstoy’s novella, as well as Zhukovsky’s painting, is a framing device for the unknown that lies beyond the drawing room. The painting (Fig. 1) depicts a drawing room in the Brasovo Estate, showing the room filled with fine furniture, paintings, bronze urns, and potted plants, with two doors at the back of the drawing room open to reveal a corridor leading to a brightly sunlit garden. In the painting, the main subject is not necessarily the drawing room in the foreground, but rather that which lies beyond the corridor doors in the background – a space elicited only by the contrast of interior and exterior. This addition of the garden as a second space provides contrast to the interior drawing room, and it can be viewed in comparison to the garden and not just as an interior in and of itself. In this way, that obscured outside space adds a different meaning to the interior, much like how the implicit presence of ‘It’, lurking in the dark and hidden corners of his once beautiful home, terrifies Ilyich: as Freud describes, the entrance hall, which lies between the interior and exterior and jostles those contrasting worlds against one another, is like a threshold that gives each a distinct meaning. The screens and walls

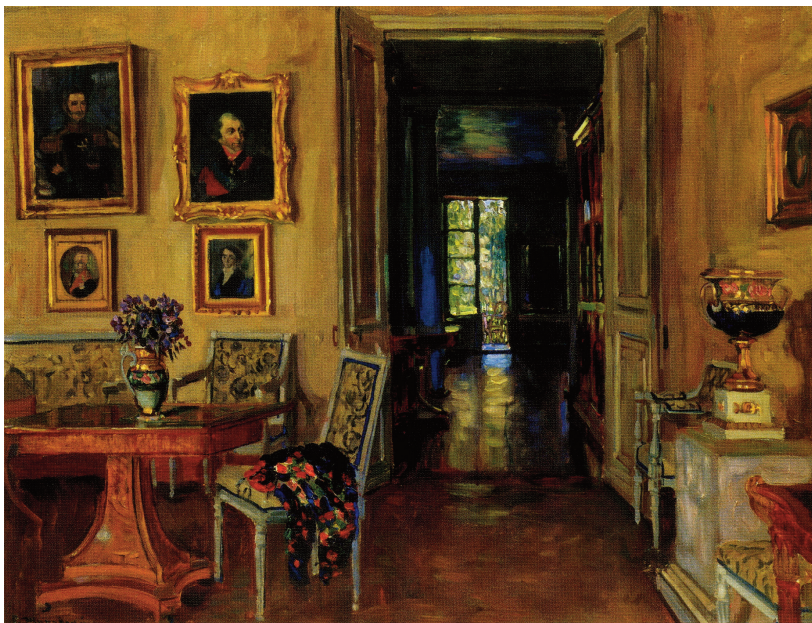


Fig. 1

Stanislav Yu. Zhukovsky.

A Room in the Brasovo Estate, 1916

Oil on canvas, 80 x 107cm.

Courtesy of the State Tretyakov Gallery.

that once gave Ilyich comfort and temporary relief by enforcing the separation of his interior and exterior worlds have collapsed, “or rather became transparent, as though It penetrated everything and nothing could obscure It,”²⁵ bringing death to the foreground.

In the article “Tolstoy and the Geometry of Fear”²⁶ Kathleen Parthé discusses how pending death forces Ilyich to confront and revise his position in domestic space and “retreat from the world into one small room, where he and it are alone in the universe.”²⁷ Soon, Ilyich no longer moves from the sofa, but remains “facing the wall, as his perception of both the interior and that of his psyche begin to transform,” and as “everything that had once obscured, hidden, obliterated the awareness of death no longer had that effect.”²⁸ After crying in bed, he pauses to face the wall and “ponder on the same question: Why and for what purpose, is there all this horror?” He confronts himself with this new perspective of fear, which reveals the great falsehood of his life: “weary of contemplating but unable to tear his eyes away from what was right there before him.”²⁹ Ivan Ilyich almost physically wrestles with ‘It’ while facing the sofa as he “shuddered, shifted back and forth, wanted to resist, but by then knew there was no resisting.”³⁰

Tolstoy himself addresses a similar situation and confrontation in the autobiographical *A Confession*, in which he describes his spiritual and existential crisis. Remarking that one ignores the first symptoms of indisposition and “then these signs reappear more and more often and merge into one uninterrupted period of suffering,”³¹ Tolstoy’s crisis is not unlike Ilyich’s own symptoms of pain, which become more difficult to ignore. Tolstoy continues: “the suffering increases, and before the sick man can look round, what he took for a mere indisposition has already become more important to him than anything else in the world – it is death!”³² Comparisons have been drawn between this text and the fictional novella,³³ and in this specific instance Tolstoy summarizes the transformation that Ilyich undergoes when his deterioration and dying occupy all his thoughts, wondering: “what is it for? What does it lead to?” As Lubkemann Allen suggests, “the nineteenth-century

25. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 81.

26. Parthé, “Tolstoy and the Geometry of Fear,” 80-95.

27. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 84. This confrontation echoes Tolstoy’s own claustrophobic sentiments in *A Confession*.

28. Ibid. 82.

29. Ibid. 105.

30. Ibid. 105.

31. Ibid. 676.

32. Ibid. 676.

33. Olney, “Experience, Metaphor, and Meaning”.

novel was also engaged in this debate concerning the temporal as well as spatial dimensions of visions.”³⁴ She adds that these texts present “complex and constantly revised narrative aesthetics of vision, corresponding with the increasingly rapid shift”³⁵ of the creative gaze itself as it moves between the internal dialogue of the dying protagonist and the narrative occurring around, in spite of, and because of him. The reader therefore sees the narrative of the novella through “overlapping lenses – of a subject both seeing and seen in a revealing light,”³⁶ viewing Ilyich’s story as it appears within his own internal thoughts and feelings, as well as the events that occur to him ‘outside of himself,’ reflecting the same changes that he undergoes internally. The various metaphorical descriptions provided to the reader as such accentuate Ivan Ilyich’s internal struggles as well as illustrate his death and liberation from his pain.

As the narrative progresses, the depiction of interior space begins to demonstrate death’s disclosure. The reader is introduced to the black sack that Ivan Ilyich dreams that he is thrust into, at the bottom of which there is a mysterious light, culminating in the end of the transformation and leading to his conclusion that “death is conversion.”³⁷ According to James Olney, the crux of the novella “lies in the equivalence of death and conversion”³⁸ by which Ilyich redeems himself. Olney elaborates on the quality of conversion in death when describing Ilyich’s “sudden, complete movement towards union [with the eternal and infinite] (and the change in his character, accomplished in one page, is less a steady development than a violent and thoroughgoing transformation) is a gesture of pity... for others.”³⁹ In Ilyich’s transformation, death becomes the last “transfiguring step” in his salvation, “the final conversion and ultimate transformation of the individual.”⁴⁰ As Tolstoy writes of Ilyich’s death, the act of death and dying is replaced with a scene where “instead of death there was light.”⁴¹ The aspect of space and conversion is also alluded to by Gary Jahn; he writes that the “gradual contraction of time and space around Ivan Il’ich leads logically to the story’s time line reaching time-zero and its space line reaching space-zero at the time of his death.”⁴² When we reach the point of death in Chapter Twelve, there is a “reversal”

34. Sharon Lubkemann Allen, “Reflection/Refraction of the Dying Light: Narrative Vision in Nineteenth-Century Russian and French Fiction,” *Comparative Literature*, 54/1 (Winter 2002), 3.

35. *Ibid.* 3.

36. *Ibid.* 3.

37. Olney, “Experience, Metaphor, and Meaning,” 106.

38. *Ibid.* 106.

39. *Ibid.* 111.

40. *Ibid.* 113.

41. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 113.

42. Gary Jahn, “Introduction,” in *Tolstoy’s The Death of Ivan Il’ich: A Critical Companion*, ed. Gary R. Jahn (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 26.

by which the wall becomes threshold and is unexpectedly “revealed to be a new beginning, as is shown by Ivan’s sense of relief and well-being, his overcoming of time, and his escape from the confines of the ‘black hole’ into a space that contains no dimensions at all, only light.”⁴³

Although Ilyich’s house once signified that his family “moved in the best circles and their home was frequented by people of importance and by the young,”⁴⁴ it becomes a symbol of constraint. In confronting his life of ‘law and propriety,’ Ivan is liberated from its confines and embraces love, forgiveness, and death. Comparing Tolstoy’s notes in *A Confession* to the novella, George Gutsche writes that, for Tolstoy, “being oneself, finding the God within, understanding within oneself the meaning of life”⁴⁵ is important, and that repentance and forgiveness for one’s sins “is possible through self-understanding; brotherhood is a natural result of serving oneself and the God within.”⁴⁶ When Ilyich finds his hand resting on his son’s head, moments before his death, he wants to rectify his life and do something good to give it meaning. He asks, “But what is the real thing?”⁴⁷ and is moved by compassion for his family. He tells his wife to “Take him [his son] away... sorry for him... and you,” and attempts to utter the word “Forgive.”⁴⁸ Unlike Tolstoy, Ilyich does not pursue significant self-examination, but instead this transformation of goodwill and love towards his family is sudden, leading George Gutsche to describe it as inherent and true, or “firmly rooted in him,”⁴⁹ propelling him forward in his transformation.

43. Ibid. 26.

44. Ibid. 61.

45. Gutsche, “Moral Fiction: *The Death of Ivan Il’ich*,” 58.

46. Ibid. 58.

47. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 112.

48. Ibid. 112.

49. Gutsche, “Moral Fiction: *The Death of Ivan Il’ich*,” 58.

50. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 113.

51. Ibid. 113.

As he resolves his struggle, “that which had been oppressing him and would not leave him suddenly was vanishing all at once – from two sides, ten sides, all sides.”⁵⁰ The very words “two sides, ten sides, all sides” refer back to the interior space that was earlier depicted as the fearful, constraining limits of falsehood. Now “that which had been oppressing him” disintegrates in the process of conversion, and so “instead of death there was light,”⁵¹ ending that transformation from the repressed fear of death. First, death becomes a frightening presence to Ilyich, who refers to death as “It,” then finally death transforms him again to bring Ilyich disclosure and liberation. His last bodily

movements further express a sense of liberation, and as he realizes death is imminent, he “drew in a breath, broke off in the middle of it, stretched himself out, and died”.⁵² Whereas the pain of dying had “forced him,” in Parthé’s words, to retreat into a confined space where he and death were alone, Ilyich is able to physically stretch out and use this opened-up space more generously once “death is over.” As Lubkemann Allen writes, in reference to Ilyich’s transformation and salvation towards *svet*, or genuine light, the protagonist’s “refractive vision has simply opened up the way for their consciousness to appropriate and redirect vision.”⁵³ Salvation extends to the metaphorical breaking apart of the walls from all sides, as Ivan’s bodily and spiritual transformation is echoed in his interaction with his surroundings.

ZHUKOVSKY’S ROOM IN THE BRASOVO ESTATE

The drawing room of Zhukovsky’s painting is painted with attention to details such as the gold paint on the picture frames, and the pattern of the pale brocade upholstery. Light enters from an unseen source on the left, which casts shadows to the right, as seen on the sides of the framed paintings, the chairs, and the bronze trophy. The chair at the table, and the matching arm-chairs and sofa in the New Russian Empire style, like Ilyich’s “little chairs scattered here and there,”⁵⁴ are deftly painted, as is the varnished sheen of the wooden table top. The walls are filled with large painted portraits of men in various costumes. One man appears to be dressed in gentleman’s clothes, another in traditional Russian costume. The two largest portraits, portraying men in military uniform, suggest stability, lineage, and status. The size of the portraits and the attire of the subjects may reflect the history of the family that might occupy the drawing room and the remainder of the house. On the right side of the room, the large enamel-painted bronze urn on the pedestal reminds one of Ilyich’s dream of having “plates and china on the walls, and [...] bronzes.”⁵⁵

Although all of the room’s furnishings are clearly delineated and depicted, the viewer’s focus on the room is interrupted by the large doors that open

52. Ibid. 113.

53. Lubkemann Allen, “Reflection/Refraction of the Dying Light,” 19.

54. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 56.

55. Ibid. 56.

to a corridor. This corridor, which echoes Ilyich's dark hole and Freud's "entrance hall," is blurrier than the rest of the pictured room. The edges of the columns, panelled doors, wainscoting, and table, which are visible in strokes of blues, dark browns, and greys, are relieved by the reflections of lighter mahogany, pale gold, lemon yellow, and bright greens in the distant garden. The drawing room's open doors suggest dynamic movement 'into' the corridor as well as a progression of events, although there is no active character or plot in a literary sense. The flowered shawl draped over the seat of the nearest chair suggests the absence of a person, perhaps a woman, who may have exited the drawing room in the same direction through the open doors, which lead to another balcony door that opens onto a garden. The manner in which the closed interior space has been opened evokes a sense of movement through the dim corridor to something that is far brighter and full of light. Painted in green, earthy, and lavender tones, the garden has grass and trees, even a garden chair. Except for these basic details, the garden is not clearly delineated, and it therefore contrasts with the "decorous drawing-room" with "specific interior décor,"⁵⁶ which exemplifies well-to-do, bourgeois tastes.

The walls, the open doors, and the corridor leading to the garden may be viewed as metaphors for a larger, hidden narrative in the painting. Echoing Freud's appropriation of the disposition of domestic interior space in his discussion of the unconscious, the walls in the painting, with their fine colour and their elaborately framed portraits, are not dissimilar to Tolstoy's descriptions of the walls of Ilyich's home. Similarly, the dim corridor, as a mysterious, nebulous passage out of the drawing room's shimmering faux-reality, leads to something far more real and exterior that is signified by the garden's natural landscape. Despite its distant position at the end of the corridor, the garden is more compelling than the drawing room. There is an unmistakable 'gap' in the painting and a mystery in the garden, which, by its sheer luminosity and brightness, draws one's gaze away from the dimness of the corridor and from the muted colours of the rest of the interior space in the painting. The garden's natural light, which contrasts with the softer window

56. Schwenger, "Outside the Interior," 2.

light in the interior of the drawing room, is not unlike the authentic illumination mentioned by Tolstoy, whereby “instead of death there was light.”⁵⁷ Light signifies salvation and liberation for the dying Ivan Ilyich, just as the bright garden seems to offer a more inviting and promising prospect than the elegant interior of the house. This prospect might not be apparent at first glance, as in Ilyich’s case. Initially, his elegant interior spaces were the source of long-sought happiness and the reward of social advancement, yet ultimately, Ilyich’s efforts to decorate his house propel him into illness and introspection, and finally in his renouncement of his old habits, they propel him into his liberation through death.

In the painting *A Room in the Brasovo Estate* and in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, the interior spaces of households provide strong indications of the character of the people who reside in them. The painting’s forceful spatial recession from the drawing room to the garden relates a narrative that leads the viewer out of a space belonging to one who is “not really rich but who want[s] to look rich.”⁵⁸ Reading the way that the depiction of space functions in the painting reveals themes of falsehood and truth in the work. The exterior glitter, or “superficial glimmer,”⁵⁹ of the drawing room contrasts sharply with the luminosity of the garden, which one suspects is far larger than what is seen through the doors. In her article “Remapping Arcadia: ‘Pastoral Space’ in Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose,” Rachel Platonov explores the integral role of the pastoral, or natural space in nineteenth-century Russian art and literature, describing the pastoral place as being “identified with boundlessness and ease, both physical and behavioural, the freedom of nature being counterpoised to the constriction of society.”⁶⁰ Platonov goes on to suggest that these pastoral, natural spaces of “peace, quiet, and calm” are often depicted as the antithesis, or contrast to human civilisation or bourgeois, living spaces, adding that the very contrast itself, which Zhukovksy’s painting seems to highlight so intensely, “is in fact, the very keys to its [the pastoral space’s] existence.”⁶¹ The garden extends beyond what is depicted, while the drawing room is contained within the frames of its walls and the canvas. The construction of space plays on notions of truth and falsehood by negotiating

57. Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, trans. Solotaroff, 113.

58. Ibid. 57.

59. Danaher, “A Cognitive Approach to Metaphor in Prose,” 461.

60. Rachel S. Platonov, “Remapping Arcadia: ‘Pastoral Space’ in Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose,” *The Modern Language Review* (2007), 1107.

61. Ibid. 1121.

material limits and free spaces. By visually leading the viewer to the garden as destination, the drawing room is not only a space in itself, but also relates to another space, that of the garden and the exterior, which changes the perception of the beauty of the interior. As in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, the concept of life beyond the drawing room compels a conversation about the “superficial glimmer” of interior spaces and their relation to the inner worlds of their inhabitants, whether Ivan Ilyich or the imagined inhabitants of the Brasovo Estate.

CONCLUSION

In Tolstoy’s novella and in Zhukovsky’s painting, interior spaces are depicted in a way that expresses their inhabitants’ transition from pleasant bourgeois reality, or *comme il faut*, to realizations of more abstract notions of truth, freedom, and genuineness associated with more natural, spiritual ways of life. In Tolstoy’s narrative, Ilyich’s struggle to come to terms with his life and gain the ability to love and forgive parallels the movement in Zhukovsky’s painting from the drawing room to the garden as a point of conversion or disclosure of death. The superficiality of the interior of Ivan’s house reflected his desires and hopes for a better life and improved social status and, in his interactions with interior spaces, Ilyich stumbled upon the truths of living and fatal illness.

Both Tolstoy and Zhukovsky use the interior of a room as a metaphor for the larger bourgeois reality, thereby highlighting its repression of older, spiritual truths and its denial of nature and natural laws such as death, which reveals itself, more particularly in the novella, after a series of events that include its appearance where Ivan Ilyich least expected it, behind the screens he constructed to conceal it. As Ilyich approaches death he reaches his “attainment of the true light,” a “tropological motif made up largely of light and dark imagery reaches fulfilment.”⁶² Ilyich is freed from the falsities of his former life, and in his dying he experiences a kind of rebirth, “phoenix-like, in a dramatic merging with the light.”⁶³ In Zhukovsky’s painting, the luminosity of

62. Danaher, “Tolstoy’s Use of Light and Dark Imagery in ‘The Death of Ivan Il’ič,’” 236.

63. Danaher, “A Cognitive Approach to Metaphor in Prose,” 465.

the garden brings a similar, sublime light to the interior of the room, revealing a larger, more mysterious universe that bourgeois life cannot entirely conceal, and while it does not explicitly reveal death and meaningful living as clearly as the novella does, the sheer luminosity of the garden in contrast with the drawing room can suggest a similar conversation about living meaningfully.

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Cover illustration: *The Garden of Death* (Hugo Simberg; 1896).



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