NEW RESEARCH ON ART AND ITS HISTORY

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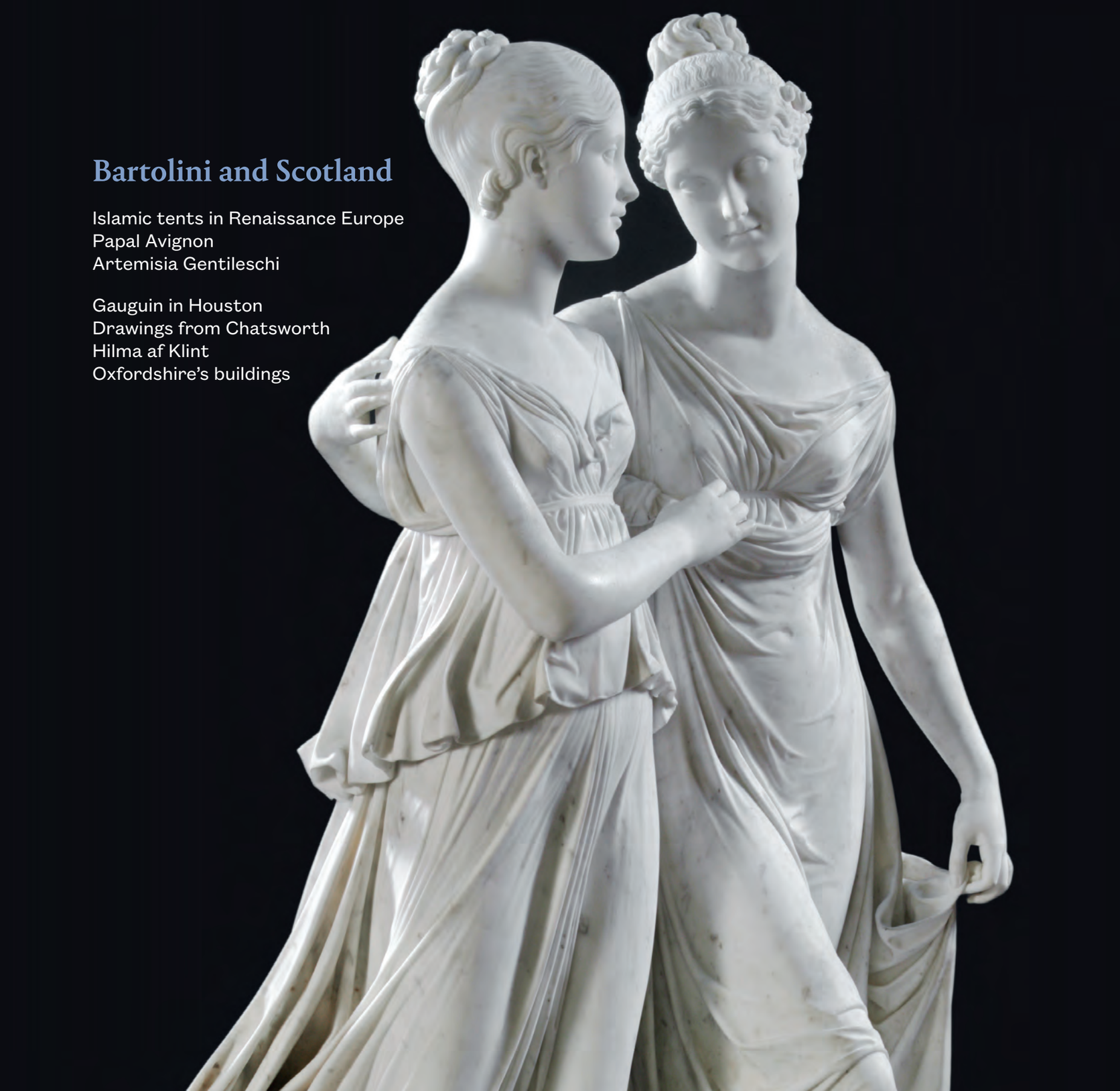

Bartolini and Scotland

Islamic tents in Renaissance Europe
Papal Avignon
Artemisia Gentileschi

Gauguin in Houston
Drawings from Chatsworth
Hilma af Klint
Oxfordshire's buildings

chapter 2, for example, which analyses the architect and Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius (1883–1969). In partnership with Maxwell Fry in Britain from 1934 to 1937, Gropius planned apartment blocks in Birmingham, Manchester and Windsor, which were never realised. Schuldenfrei considers the designs to be the result of discussions about standardisation and mass production that had 'reached England by the 1930s' (p.64). Fixed on importation and emigration, such an assessment neglects progressive projects pursued independently in Britain, including prefabricated housing experiments spurred by extreme demand after the First World War. Britain's factory built houses were widely disseminated in Germany and Austria in the 1920s, informing Gropius's research into standardisation.

The book excels when analysing objects, revealing the impact of emigration on individual lives and careers. The photographer Lucia Moholy (1894–1989) left behind hundreds of glass plate negatives when she moved from Germany to England in 1935. Containing iconic photographs of the Bauhaus, the collection was used – without Moholy's knowledge – in subsequent years by Gropius, who had brought it over to the United States after his appointment as professor of architecture at Harvard in 1937. Moholy was forced to pursue legal channels to retrieve the negatives while based in Britain, with Gropius finally conceding defeat in 1957. Her sense of betrayal is vividly captured by Schuldenfrei, as is the financial uncertainty and sheer exhaustion that came with repeated relocation. In the sixth chapter, the material effect of exile on Josef Albers is revealed. Albers was able to pack his prized glass paintings before leaving for the United States in 1933. Although many of them survived the passage, at least ten were reduced to shards after arrival due to the rough handling of the customs inspectors. Thereafter, he chose to work in different mediums.

Schuldenfrei's exploration of the development of careers and ideas is careful but her consideration of related issues of politics and prejudice is limited. In part, this is a result of the focus on those who were able to navigate emigration successfully. Among those who were less fortunate is the Jewish artist Otti Berger, a Bauhaus graduate and teacher. Lacking opportunities after moving to London, Berger returned to the continent but was detained and murdered at Auschwitz in 1944.[2] Such stories are not discussed and the ambiguous attitudes of some of the protagonists towards Nazi ideology could have been investigated further. The central role played by critic and translator Philip Morton Shand in the emigration of Gropius to Britain, for example, is considered. However, Shand's support for the non-Jewish architect could be set against his antagonism towards Jewish émigrés, frankly expressed in anti-Semitic letters to Gropius and John Betjeman.[3] Similarly, although the role of American journalist Philip Johnson in encouraging the emigration of Anni Albers is noted, the author neglects that Johnson reconciled this support with his well-known anti-Semitic and fascist political activity in the period. Additionally, a chapter on the urbanism of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) and Ludwig Hilberseimer (1885–1967) skips over the pair's output in Nazi Germany. Both remained in Germany until 1938, and as Winfried Nerdinger has observed, the Nazi years were not unproductive nor unprofitable ones for Mies and Hilberseimer.[4]

Nevertheless, as a study that interrogates the evolution of design through emigration, it is invaluable. A plethora of media feature, represented by Bayer's posters, Gropius's architecture, Breuer's furniture, Moholy's photographs, Anni Albers's weaving and Josef Albers's glass paintings. These are exquisitely illustrated throughout, providing visual evidence of the impact of exile whether in the damage to Albers's glass paintings or the addition of Gropius's credit stamp to the photographic prints he purloined from Lucia Moholy.

6. ***Isokon long chair*****, by Marcel Breuer. 1936. Bent plywood and laminated birch veneers, 77.5 by 130 by 61.5 cm. (Harvard Art Museums).**

1 See E. Darling: *Re-Forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction*, Abingdon 2007; and A. Powers: *The Bauhaus Goes West*, London 2019.
2 See W. Halén: 'The Bauhaus weaver and textile designer Otti Berger (1898–1944/45): her Scandinavian connections and the tragic end of her career', *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society* 43 (2019), pp.114–49.
3 R.R. Isaacs: *Walter Gropius: Der Mensch und sein Werk Band 2*, Berlin 1984, I, p.674.
4 See W. Nerdinger: 'Bauhaus architecture in the Third Reich', in K. James-Chakraborty, ed.: *Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War*, Minneapolis 2006, pp.143–44. On Mies, in particular, see D. Neumann: *Mies van der Rohe: An Architect in His Time*, New Haven and London 2024, pp.206–40.

Nazi-Era Provenance of Museum Collections: A Research Guide

By Jacques Schuhmacher. 175 pp. incl. 20 col. + 17 b. & w. ills. (UCL Press, London, and Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2024), £45. ISBN 978-1-80008-691-3.

by **ANGELINA GIOVANI-AGHA**

Jacques Schuhmacher's essential publication on Nazi-era provenance and museum collections combines meticulous historical scholarship with a deep understanding of the necessary investigative tools and a useful deployment of case studies to highlight various methodological approaches. The author examines the complex and unresolved legacy represented by works of art that have entered (and are still entering) museum collections after having been sold under duress or stolen from Jewish families and other persecuted individuals during the Third Reich. He asks how much progress has been made in terms of tracing this history and enabling restitution. The book includes an introduction and three thematic chapters: the first, 'Persecution and dispossession, 1933–45', covers the Second World War; the second, 'Nazi-era provenance

research today', addresses the period after the war; and the third proposes 'research strategies and resources' by 'uncovering the stories behind museum objects'.[1]

In the first chapter Schuhmacher presents a coherent and powerful narrative of the Nazi Party's rise to power and its systematic brutality, which created opportunities for exploitation, allowing both individuals and institutions to profit from the suffering of the victims. He aims to establish a 'clear understanding of Nazi ideology and how it was put into practice'. 'Without this', he says, 'the sources can remain deceptive or deeply confusing' (p.5). In chapter 2 he examines numerous efforts and initiatives that have been taken to address the issue of Nazi-looted art in museum collections and evaluates the contribution they have made to the field. He begins with the work of the curators and art historians who came to be known as the Monuments Men and Women, who focused on repatriating stolen works both during and after the war. His survey runs on to the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets in 1998, which prompted institutions to review their collections, and to the establishment of various spoliation committees to handle claims. Schuhmacher notes that although the prediction made by Stuart Eizenstat, the organiser of the conference, that 'the art world will never be the same again', has become 'increasingly true', there remains much work to be done (p.77).

Throughout Schuhmacher highlights the ethical and historical responsibility of museums to assess the provenance of their collections. He argues that museums are under obligation to address the crimes of the past and correct its consequences where possible. Twenty-first-century museum practices should, he points out, be held to a different moral and ethical standard than the practices of the past, and there is a need scrutinise and correct information and object histories in order to bring to light the names of victims and perpetrators. As he explains in the introduction, 'the goal of this research is always to discover the name of an individual, whom we can then investigate further. In doing so, we recover a crucial sense of their agency and bear witness to them as far more than victims of a brutal and repressive regime' (p.6).

In the third chapter, in particular, Schuhmacher demonstrates the importance of identifying individuals by offering case studies that illustrate the successes and other outcomes of provenance research. These studies are one of the great strengths of the book. The author asks what can we learn from the dispossession stories of people such as Henry and Emma Budge, a German-Jewish couple living in Hamburg, whose collection was forcibly sold at auction in 1937. Their initials, 'H.M.B.', were discovered on three pieces of Meissen porcelain in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, after a request for the return of one piece had been made by the Emma Budge Collection in 2010.[2] The story of Carl Heumann was uncovered by Julia Eßl, a provenance researcher at the Albertina, Vienna, after Eßl noticed the collector's mark 'CH' on the reverse of a drawing by Rudolf Friedrich Wasmann (Fig.7) in the collection. In 1945, having lost his wife and his possessions, Heumann 'was tragically killed by the same Allied bombs designed to put an end to the Nazi regime that had tormented him and so many others for almost a decade' (p.93). Schumacher stresses the importance of telling such stories in a museum context and demonstrates the way in which human

7. *Young woman at the distaff*, by Rudolf Friedrich Wasmann. c.1829. Pencil on paper, 22.5 by 15.2 cm. (Albertina Museum, Vienna).

tragedies can be turned into working models for restoring justice and, if possible, the return of looted objects to the families of the victims. These examples are not just instructive for other institutions looking to carry out similar work, but in detailing the sources used and how to access them they provide a road map.

It is clear from the author's account, and those of other colleagues who have dedicated their professional lives to provenance research, that this not a job for the faint-hearted. It is often difficult, labour-intensive and emotionally fraught. It requires not just the patience to comb through archives but also an understanding of the historical, social and economic contexts in order to identify illegal, forced or problematic accounts of transactions and events. At its core, provenance research must be, as this study emphasises, rigorous and transparent. Museums have previously been reluctant to confront these issues, fearing both the loss of prized pieces from their collections and the scrutiny that comes with such admissions. Schuhmacher argues that this is an opportunity for museums not only to rectify historical wrongs, but also have a chance to enhance their standing as educational institutions.

This book is a critical contribution to the fields of art history, museum studies and Holocaust studies. Schuhmacher's sobering reflection on the legacy of Nazi looting and the practical guidance he offers on how to address the complex issues it raises make his study a vital handbook for museum professionals, independent researchers and those committed to the ethical stewardship of cultural heritage.

1 The book is available free of charge as an e-book at uclpress.co.uk/book/nazi-era-provenance-of-museum-collections, accessed 20th December 2024.
2 See also, 'Provenance and restitution: the Emma Budge Collection', available at www.vam.ac.uk/articles/provenance-and-restitution-the-emma-budge-collection, accessed 20th December 2024.

Duchamp's Telegram: From Beaux-Arts to Art-in-General

By Thierry de Duve. 456 pp. incl. numerous col. + b. & w. ills. (Reaktion Books, London, 2024), £30. ISBN 978-1-7891-4698-1.

by **EKIN ERKAN**

Alongside such art historians as Michael Taylor and William Camfield, Thierry De Duve has had a seismic impact on our understanding of the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968). Unlike his previous books *Nominalisme pictural* (*Pictorial Nominalism*; 1984) and *Résonances du readymade* (1989), *Duchamp's Telegram* does not engage in novel archival research and its arguments do not rely on first-hand accounts or correspondence. Rather, as De Duve concedes, its arguments are broadly anchored in reception history, and the book can be understood as a monograph on *Fountain* (1917), 'one that offers a novel interpretation of its historical purport and its consequences for subsequent art practices' (p.12). De Duve delivers on this promise and, as his arguments and references do not presuppose any familiarity with Duchamp, the book will readily engage specialists and non-specialists alike.

De Duve begins by proposing that although Duchamp 'is the creator' of the readymade, which was famously rejected by the New York Society of Independent Artists in 1917, 'he is merely the messenger of *Fountain* as a telegram' (p.12). This 'telegram' communicates the transition from the French nineteenth-century Beaux-Arts system to the 'institution we presently and globally live in', which De Duve terms 'the Art-in-General system' (p.13). The latter, for De Duve, is characterised by the 'anything-goes condition' wherein 'anything can be art and not everything is art', as the artist uniquely enjoys 'the art-naming power' (p.314). Although Duchamp 'sent' this telegram in 1917, De Duve argues that it was only 'received' in the mid-twentieth century, by such conceptual artists as Benjamin Vautier (1935–2024) and Marcel Broodthaers (1924–76). In the first two chapters De Duve reviews the art-historical facts of *Fountain*. In chapters 3 to 8 he seeks to demonstrate that the category of 'non-art' emerged from aesthetic judgments anchored in the mid-twentieth century Salon system, in which judges would refuse works based on their supposed lack of aesthetic value, at times discounting their status as art altogether. The following chapters offer a conspectus of conceptual artists – above all, Broodthaers – who acknowledged receipt of Duchamp's 'telegram' by making works that, directly or indirectly, referred to *Fountain*'s theoretical ambit.

In relation to scholarship on Duchamp, the novelty of De Duve's book lies in its speculative arguments. Some of these are contestable, and no less so for his admission that he leaves 'facts behind' (p.53). One example is the claim that, despite the commonly held assumption, Duchamp did not inaugurate the Art-in-General system. The author suggests instead that the reception of this system was established through the inclusion of Alfred Stieglitz's photograph of *Fountain* in the unsigned editorial 'The Richard Mutt case', which appeared in the second issue of *The Blind Man* (1917). For De Duve, the image underscores the aesthetic qualities of the work, including its 'gleaming white surface, the Arp- or Brancusi-like curves, the potential formal evocation of a Buddha or a Madonna' (p.47).

However, according to De Duve, the aesthetic qualities of the work are secondary to the ethos of retaliation, or *talionisme*, which, he argues, underpinned Duchamp's submission of *Fountain* to the 1917 Society of Independent Artists. Here the author considers the significance of a 1914 note inserted in *À l'Infinitif (la boîte blanche)* (*In the infinitive; the white box*; 1912–20), which reads as 'a kind of illuminationistic Scribism in painting; a plastic for plastic retaliation' (*talionisme*) (p.49). Although 'retaliation' carries some of the meaning, De Duve argues that the literal translation of *talionisme* is more accurate as it 'conveys the sense that revenge has been promoted to the rank of artistic "ism"' (p.49). He reminds the reader of the 1912 Salon des Indépendants affair, in which Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger, Henri Le Fauconnier, Fernand Léger and Alexander Archipenko formed the Cubist room hanging committee and refused entry to Duchamp's *Nude descending a staircase* (*No.2*) (1912; Philadelphia Museum of Art). De Duve posits that Duchamp's exclusion foreshadowed the 'non-art' category, which the artist would soon clarify with *Fountain*, its 1917 submission putatively motivated by a taste for retaliation. In short, for De Duve, *talionisme* is foundational to 'the *Fountain* episode [as] the voluntary and vengeful replay of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* episode' (p.160).

Notably, *Nude Descending* was met with great success when it was shown at the 1913 Armory Show in New York. It could therefore be argued that it was the deferred success of the work – rather than solely its earlier rejection – that was the more immediate impetus for Duchamp's *talionisme* note. However, De Duve does not consider this distinction. Because the only European artists present during the formation of the Society of Independent Artists – who had also been involved with its intellectual predecessor, the Salon des Indépendants, founded in 1884 – were Gleizes and Duchamp, he speculates that 'Duchamp's *talionism* was hatched at one of these meetings' (p.56) in response to Gleizes's