Book Reviews

Hans Belting's recent collection of essays on effigies, masks, mummies, ancestor portraits, cult statues, tattoos, anatomical models, photography, film, video art, and digital art is also a manifesto, a set of "drafts for a science [*Wissenschaft*] of the image," as the subtitle has it. The revisionist rhetoric is sharp throughout the book. Belting is dismissive of "the current discourse" (p. 30), "art history" (p. 26), "today's theories" (p. 87), and "today's debates" (p. 90). The book is Belting's response to the question he himself posed in 1983, namely: What happens when the history of art comes to an end?[1] By that he meant: Whither art once it no longer believes in the narratives that have sustained it since the Renaissance? He also meant: What will the academic discipline of art history do now that the final pages of art's once-suspenseful plot have been written? The answers are condensed into this book's title. The idea of art, according to Belting, must give way to the concept of *Bild* (best translated, for the time being, as "image"), and history writing must give way to an anthropological approach.

What does Belting mean by "anthropology"? In the English-speaking world, anthropology is an exceptionally self-sufficient, one might even say self-absorbed, academic discipline that deals with symbolic behavior, classification systems, and power sharing within the framework of social life—an aggregation of structures and practices described as "culture." Early anthropologists conducted research almost exclusively among "incompletely" civilized peoples, and later ones have spent a great deal of energy extricating their field from the conceptual trouble such a project invited. That discipline's monopoly on the word *anthropology*, which simply means "study of man," is widely accepted. It has become difficult in the English-speaking world to use the term *anthropology* without rousing the household gods of the academic discipline that bears it as a name. Art history's openings onto anthropology are limited mostly to the so-called non-Western fields.

In Europe, the words *Anthropologie, anthropologie, antropologia,* and so on, are still available for general use, in much the same way that *psychology* or *logic* are for English speakers. That is, they are terms that denote organized academic fields and yet at the same time are easily detachable from those contexts. European historians, for example, have developed a "historical anthropology" that finds symbolic and structural patterns in medieval or early modern societies. American historians like Robert Darnton, Natalie Zemon Davis, and Caroline Bynum have contributed to this paradigm. Points of convergence with art history are rare. Exceptions are usually in the medieval field, where the work of anthropologically minded historians like Bynum or Jean-Claude Schmitt can closely resemble work done by guild art historians. The complex scholarly project of Aby Warburg must also be mentioned here. Warburg, a contemporary of the pioneering anthropologists, sought much as Belting does to pry a transhistorical constant out of the grip of the art historians, in his case, the representation of gesture. The often-cited book by David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (1989), must also be mentioned. Freedberg, without especially engaging anthropological theory, surveyed a vast range of mostly nonartistic cultural uses of pictures and statues, flattening the historical landscape in favor of a universal model of almost instinctual "response" to the image.

Art historians might have even more to learn from the German paradigm of "literary anthropology," as invoked in the subtitle of Wolfgang Iser's book *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (1993).[2] By this term Iser means not the empirical study of the bookmaking and bookselling industries or structural analysis of the ritualized behavior of literary subcultures, but something like speculative analysis of the deep psychological and social functions of storytelling and listening, writing and reading in human life. Literary anthropology tries to account for the historical indispensability of textual fictions, not only in their rudimentary or "precivilized" forms but also in their most complex and aestheticized forms. Belting's title opens up the wide prospect of a comparable inquiry into the social and psychological meaning of the pictorial arts.

The foregoing only begins to describe the original context and, as it were, illocutionary force of this book in Germany. *Bild-Anthropologie* is presented as a program statement for an interdisciplinary research project that Belting, along with nine colleagues, initiated in the fall of 2000 at the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Karlsruhe.[3] He says in the preface that one of his aims is "to win for native disciplines of the image [*Bildwissenschaften*] like art history and archaeology more of a profile within the discourse on media" (p. 9). Media studies has become a dominant paradigm within the German-speaking academic cosmos to an extent that American art historians can hardly imagine, except perhaps in their nightmares. Every German art historian, it would seem, in every subfield, has been compelled to deal with the concept of media, one way or another, over the last ten years. Perhaps this has something to do with the pressure to justify scholarship in the arts within a state-controlled university system. Perhaps scholars have been convinced that *Medienwissenschaft* is the last hope for the humanities to connect with the weightier issues of technology, communication, and globalization. In the German-speaking world, modernists are not alone in worrying about apparatus theory, digitality, and cybernetics. Medievalists have adapted their material to the new mesh of terminology.[4] Media-consciousness now permeates the programs and publications of major museums.[5] The bibliography at the back of Belting's volume lists dozens of recent titles containing the words *Medium* or *Medien,* few of them known to American art historians.[6]

The new constellation of media studies in Europe, I think, cannot easily be mapped onto the discourse on "medium" and "media" within American art history. Continental art historians, for example, are no longer so troubled by the theoretical problem of medium specificity within modernism, as Americans still are.[7] In this country, meanwhile, scholars in the humanities are more likely to hear in the discourse of media an echo of commercial and governmental techno-optimism. At a recent academic conference on the medium and media in art history, the New Media theorist Lev Manovich was invited to speak alongside a group of well-known art historians, mostly specialists in the modern fields. I had the sense—perhaps I was mistaken—that Manovich was looked on by the art historians as at best an eccentric outsider and at worst a naive and dangerous spokesman for invisible forces of globalization and rationalization. Manovich's references to random access, interactivity, and software and his polite but profoundly disrespectful observations on the discipline of art history and its obsolete models of representation and meaning were as unintelligible as the strange speech of the Trojan priestess Cassandra in the house of Atreus—mere birdlike twitterings to the ears of the doomed.

The "existing discourse" that exasperates both Manovich and Belting, it would seem, is not simply the old empiricist art history, an easy target, but precisely the "new" art history that has internalized critical theory (ideology critique, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis) over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Belting's argument, were he to spell it out, might run something like this: critical theory is certainly all about mediation. But it has become

a mere *rhetoric* of mediation, a set of analytic routines designed to disrupt any possible exchange of meaning. Critical theory, he might say, has become a negative theology that has made an idol of absence itself; it is a self-contained and tautological scholasticism increasingly closed to the perspectives of the physical sciences, to any true interdisciplinarity, to the realities of politics, to experience itself. Accordingly, Belting is unwilling to submit the image to any such radical theory of mediation (p. 31). *Bild-Anthropologie* may in truth be pointing to a new intellectual self-satisfaction and nonporousness of the discipline of art history in the English-speaking world. A sociologist, a cyberneticist, or indeed an anthropologist would have been equally out of place at that recent art historical conference on medium.

Visual culture, for Belting, is generated by combinations of the three elemental terms *image, body,* and *medium,* which serve as the overall rubric of the research project at Karlsruhe *(Bild-Körper-Medium).* In his analyses, the rubric becomes a sort of mystical triangle whose terms seem perpetually to transmute into one another. "Images" for Belting are above all simulacra of the human body; a pictorial representation or formal construct other than the doubled body does not quite constitute an image. He often speaks of images as if they were immaterial entities, something like ideas or souls. He says, for example, that "since an image has no body, it needs a medium in which to embody itself" (p. 17). Images are like "nomads who alter their modes in historical cultures and thus occupy the available media as if they were temporary stopping points" (p. 32); media are like "hosts" (p. 26). The source of this rather exotic notion of a disembodied image wandering in search of its medium must be either television broadcasting or the digital image coursing the Internet—unless it is just Plato after all. Belting goes on to point out that the image cannot be perceived by other bodies until it is embodied, even that the image does not really become an image until it is animated by a beholder (p. 30). Bodies, though, can also produce images internally, in dreams, visions, and memory. Moreover, some bodies are themselves images, for example, in performances, or as "auto-icons," like the bodies of executed criminals or the posed "plastinated" cadavers of Gunther von Hagens's spectacular and dreadfully appealing exhibition *Körperwelten,* still unmountable in the United States (p. 89). Sometimes the body is a medium, for example, with tattoos or body art. By "images," as we have seen, Belting mostly means images of bodies. Other images are both *of* bodies and stand in *for* bodies, such as portraits or effigies. The medium can function as the prosthesis of the body, as Marshall McLuhan showed (p. 26). Genetic engineering, finally, converts images into bodies (p. 109). The point of all this conceptual combinatorics—and, at least for Belting, the point of media studies—is to restore to mediation its material, somatic, "human" dimensions.

Bild-Körper-Medium is a flexible and open-ended research program. The chapters of this book open onto a whole new galaxy of research topics. An example is Belting's entirely original genealogy of the 15th-century Netherlandish panel portrait, already developed in earlier publications. Belting describes portraits by Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden as intensified versions of coats of arms painted on shieldlike wooden panels, which were themselves in turn something like social placeholders for the body of the nobleman. The comparison discloses a whole dimension of the historical meaning and power of these paintings that modernity had lost sight of. To think of the Netherlandish panel portrait as a substitute body is to displace all our thinking about Renaissance painting, given that the independent portrait was one of the crucial templates for the modern concept of the autonomous artwork. The new historical research that such a paradigm shift could generate will only complement recent American work, in a wide range of fields, around the concepts of the gaze, attention, spectacle, and embodied vision.

Belting often defines his project in negational and even redemptive terms. With *Bild-Anthropologie,* he says more than once, he seeks simply to restore the image to man. To do this he has to exclude from the image-body-medium triad the concept of *art.* Belting repeatedly accuses art and the "art experts" (p. 33) of alienating the image from the body. He even disapproves, with what I can only describe as a kind of mock-Philistinism, of abstraction itself.[8] Belting blames the work of art, a cultural construction of 16th-century Europe, for having neutralized the once-powerful image. Art history, another child of the Renaissance, then projected its art idea onto the images of all cultures and all peoples, favoring the artlike and marginalizing the rest (p. 17). For Belting, art is an effect generated by institutions and ideology developed in the early modern period, but obsolete already by the 19th century and subjected to lethal critique in the 20th. His own innovative and influential art historical scholarship has focused on the image before[9] and after[10] the "era of art." He has written especially imaginatively on the 15th and early 16th centuries, the moment of maximum torque in the shift from image to art.[11] As Belting explained in the preface to *The Invisible Masterpiece,* the "era of art" itself, the proper cultural home of art in the 16th through 18th centuries in Europe, is "dispensable" to his project.[12] It is as if in this period the institutions of art so perfectly produced their effect that they require no further analysis. In early modern Europe, supposedly, art was just itself.

The main aim of Belting's project, then, is the reactivation of an original drama of the image, liberated from its paralyzing aesthetic conventions, the *bienséances* inherited from the early modern period. It is an openly ahistorical and even essentialist project: "the question of images bursts through the boundaries that divide epochs and cultures from one another.... Images do take on temporal forms in historical media and technologies, but they are nonetheless generated by supra-temporal themes like *death, body,* and *time*" (p. 23).

The boldest idea of the book, developed over several chapters, is that the true vanishing point of every picture is the death image, the *Todesbild.* The tomb effigy, the memorial portrait, and the death mask approach a condition of perfect substitutability for the irrevocably absent object, the once-living body. The dead person exchanges his body for an image; that image holds a place for him among the living (p. 29 and chap. 6). Belting describes this exchange, enacted in ancient cults of the dead, as the archetype of the image-body-medium triangle (p. 29). The photograph, the performance, and the statue, in turn, point directly toward that ideal exchangeability. Essentially, every image wants to be a home for a lost soul. "Without the connection to death," Belting explicitly says, "those images that merely simulate the world of life quickly fall into a pointless circularity and the proverbial accusation of deceptiveness...." (p. 190). Death guarantees the image. Without that strong link to the irreversibly absent yet sharply desired object, the image would be a mere work of art.

This perspective opens onto a completely new map of the cultural uses of pictures and statues. Belting offers precisely not a *plot,* a narrative about images, but rather an ahistorical schema. The exchange-with-the-dead model avoids any mention of a transcendental referent and sets aside the whole problem of subjectivity. It brings religious and secular uses of the image to a common denominator. Yet it is anything but a "cold" structuralist or systematic model of the cultural meaning of picturing. On the contrary, Belting's model is strictly anthropocentric, one might almost say existentialist. Death becomes the all-encompassing horizon that organizes the experience of time and generates all the efforts to overcome time. This horizon produces the effect that images have "power." The idealist, bourgeois ideology of the aesthetic, finally, emerges as nothing more than a conspiracy to deny the anthropic limitations of the image.

The exchange model contains both a theory of the origins of picture making and a description on a deep-structural level of historical figuration practices. It also implies a program for contemporary culture. So-called postmodernist art, especially photography and video, has for years played a significant role in Belting's thinking on the image. He welcomes the return of the mimetic image, the simulacrum, to a cultural scene paralyzed by abstraction, conceptualism, minimalism, and institution critique, which he evidently considers to be late and decadent postures of the aesthetic ideology. In this book and others Belting seems to be suggesting that images created by such artists as Cindy Sherman, Bill Viola, Gary Hill, Jeff Wall, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Thomas Struth are in some sense no longer "art." Work by these artists, in this view, connects back to a premodern world where the image had not yet been fed into the self-propelling, dialectical machinery of aestheticism, critique, and more aestheticism.

The image after art, like the image before art, is asked neither to reflect the beholder's subjectivity back onto itself, nor to comment on the conditions of its own possibility, nor to contribute to the progress of spirit in history.

A curious inconsistency in this book points to a deeper fault line in Belting's argument about images. All the examples of nonart discussed and reproduced in the book—the masks, effigies, fetishes, anatomical models, and so forth—are drawn either from pre-20th-century European or from "non-Western" cultures. The modern period, by contrast, is represented almost exclusively by works of art. The only exceptions to this rule are a baseball card and a few purely illustrational reproductions of newspaper clippings or book covers. Moreover, the modern artworks reproduced in Belting's book are all works by well-known contemporary artists. If, as he says, the era of art is over, why not open up to the full chaotic, demotic range of contemporary visual culture? Instead, contemporary culture is represented in this book by a select list of highly refined, gallery-based, blue-chip artists. Bill Viola, to name just one, can hardly be perceived as a radical threat to the idea of art. On the contrary, Viola's accessible, pathos-saturated video installations are embraced with increasing enthusiasm by a mainstream museum-going public eager to reconcile contemporary art with an older model of aesthetic value.

There is a good reason why Belting might turn to such artists as Viola or Sugimoto to make his points. Their works are very much *about* the problems that concern him. Such works frame the nostalgia for a more powerful image. They are sophisticated diagrams of an imagined postart condition. Conceptual art was able to diagram that condition already in the 1960s, admittedly, but conceptual art was often ugly and alienating. Belting prefers the contemporary artists just named because their work manages to sublate the conflict between critique and beauty. These artists overcome conceptualism in the same way that the image overcomes aestheticism, or that "anthropology" overcomes "theory."

Is it not possible that both this critical, diagramming operation and these fond dreams of a pre- or a postaesthetic directness are in fact constitutive features of the artwork? that the artwork never does anything else but muse about what it would be like to be an image (or a mere thing, as another art historian who once tried to think "anthropologically," George Kubler, had it[13])? If so, then the concerns of Belting's postmodernist artists signal that the art idea is now more deeply institutionalized than ever, and that the image itself is nothing other than a dialectical myth of art.

What sort of image does Belting claim to have extricated from the art idea? Above all, it is not an image that raises problems of interpretation for its recipient. His conceptual triad of image-body-medium collapses figural or pictorial representation back into a basic analogical or mimetic relationship. Belting is right to point out, following Georges Didi-Huberman, that the humanist historiography

of art from Giorgio Vasari to Erwin Panofsky favored complex models of representation, often grounded in rhetorical criticism, over the blatant designating force of the indexical trace. Vasari made no place for the death mask, the wax effigy, or the reliquary in his *Lives of the Artists.* Belting is most engrossing when he turns his searchlight to these marginal zones of art history, dark corners first explored by Julius von Schlosser and Aby Warburg at the beginning of the 20th century and only now being revisited by the discipline, or when he ruminates on the masks and painted skulls of Jericho, a trove of enigmas nine millennia distant from us. The implication of Belting's thinking is that the effigy, the icon, and the mask are inscribed in every figuration, even in so-called works of art.

Belting's image, though, is not simply an indexical trace. It is also an *apparition* that sets up an asymmetrical relationship between a real thing and a less real experience of that thing. The usefulness of the term *image* is that it can point in either direction, from matter to idea or the other way around. The image of the body, for example, is presumably less real than the physical body. Plotinus, however, described the body itself as an *eidolon*—a simulacrum or phantom—of the soul: for him, the physical body was less real than the soul, and the soul in turn less real than divine Being.[14] Likewise, for Belting the remembered image of the dead person is less real than the absent body. Yet the photographic image of that same person could also be described as *more* real than the memory. Belting's image is therefore a dynamic concept that always moves to compensate for its own lack. In its incompleteness it preserves the traditional dualism of matter and spirit, in the form of the movement from real to nonreal and back again. The incompleteness of apparition propels a permanent movement from apex to apex of the image-body-medium triangle.

In stressing the analogical and apparitional aspects of the image rather than its powers to seduce and to mislead, Belting in effect is deproblematizing representation. His image is always an image *of* something—as if the preposition "of" did not open onto a labyrinth of uncertainties and alternatives. Belting's image is never repressed, condensed, projected, or spectacularized. It simply makes its object appear, with no margin for doubt, as instantly recognizable as the sinners and poets whose shades Dante met in the underworld and in Purgatory (p. 189).

I used to think that *Bild* as Belting used it in his historical writings was best translated as "picture." That word captured the artifactual nature of the painted panel and the statue. The picture, with its roots in the Latin *pingere,* "to paint," was in the first place something *made.* It suggested the radical subordination of referential ambitions to the exigencies of material and technique, to the historical sedimentation of convention, and to the internal logics of format and tropology. "Picture" in this sense was the counterpart of "text"; it named an aggregation of forms perceived as

an articulated system and as an invitation to interpretation. The word "picture" suggested that the question about reference to the real could never precede the question of figuration.

It turns out that Belting's *Bild* is in fact best translated as "likeness," as it was in the title of the English version of his book *Bild und Kult.* His *Bild,* like the Greek terms *eidolon* (simulacrum) and *eikon* (copy), puts its stress on similitude or resemblance. The word reconfigures all of picture making as a set of plays on the psychology of the perception of resemblance. Resemblance is neither a rhetorical nor a logical category but an operation of the mind designed to secure recognition. Recognition is motivated by fear or longing. We are quickest to recognize the faces and bodies of our families and our predators; they are the densest points in our visual field. No matter how far the picture may stray from resemblance—into abstraction, or into tropology—the mind always wants to pull it back into a state of likeness. This schema overturns the dominant theoretical tendencies of the last decades, which have preferred either to disintegrate iconicity into just another semiotic, convention-bound signing operation or to expose it as the dangerous naturalizing strategy of repressive, spectacularizing forces, whether psychic or societal.

Belting has rejected those recent critiques of the icon in favor of what one might call an "orthodox" conception of *eikon* and *eidolon,* that is, an icon exonerated from the Protestant (or generally iconoclastic) imputation of its appearance quality, that is, its capacity to delude. This historical critique still echoes in the modern English words *icon* and *idol,* but less so in the German *Bild.* And, as Belting made clear in the closing chapter of *Bild und Kult,* the iconoclastic critique was complicit with the early modern ideology of art. Protestant image theology tried to force the icon out of public religion and into the private sphere, where it was retheorized as "art." For Belting all theories of art retain a secondary, provisional, and spurious flavor. His concept of *Bild,* close to the words *eikon* and *eidolon,* is also Greek in the sense that it never connects with the Latin term *figura,* "shape" or "figure," surrounded by its cognates "figment" and "fiction." Whereas *eikon* and *eidolon* put the stress on the viewer's ability to recognize the referent behind the image, *figura* puts the stress on the shaped artifact itself and the viewer's efforts to interpret it. The entire modern conception of art, whether textual or pictorial, derives, I would argue, from the Latin Christian model of figuration as a *transfiguration* whose truth value is found precisely in its dislocation from the real—art as a kind of allegorical revelation, in other words. Whereas for Belting art remains, in true Platonic fashion, contaminated by its willingness to traffic in figuration and virtuality.

Belting's model of the image as existential exchange is intelligible only as a desired destination, some sort of escape from the coils of representation and illusion. He perceives correctly but deplores the essential negativity of art. He sees that art amounts to nothing more

than the repression of desire through desire's figural restaging, nothing other than a swerve from the real, a "masking of the blow" (in Whitney Davis's phrase[15]), a deferral of plenitude, a disruption of mimesis, a fall into error. Belting expects from his preart or postart image nothing less than a reversal of all that, a negation of the negation. Such a gesture of reversal can carry considerable weight and pathos, but I would argue that it can never succeed. The priority of the image's representational, figural identity is absolute. Representation is, as it were, the reality principle of the image.

To place anything prior to representation, as Belting does, is to fall into something like a logocentrism. That is perhaps the best way to characterize Belting's image theory: his "image" functions the way *logos* ("word" or "voice") used to function in models of linguistic signification. His picture theory is too "iconocentric." Belting's "image" is supposed to guarantee the material picture in the same way that the spoken word was once supposed to have guaranteed the merely spatial linguistic signifier, the written word. In fact, the spoken word is always already writerly, that is, alienated from its signified. So, too, is the image always already pictorial. The image never comes to its material "host" innocently; it is not even clear that the image exists before it is submitted to the transfiguring mechanisms of figuration. Even the painted skull of Jericho, primordial cult object, derived its meaning from its place in a series, its relation to other skulls, its multiple feints toward the cosmetic art, the ceramic art, the art of gesture itself. "Culture" sets in right away, and "anthropology," at least as Belting conceives it, will never be able to keep up with the pace of culture's transfigurations.

It is easy to see that the mimetic image is inscribed in art. Every painting, every sculpture, every photograph wants to be a second body. And it is easy to see that the apparitional, instantaneous image is also inscribed in the work of art. Modern works of art, according to Theodor Adorno, are "ashamed" of their apparitional quality but are unable to shed it. "If the deities of antiquity," Adorno wrote, "were said to appear fleetingly at their cult sites . . . this act of appearing became the law of the permanence of artworks, but at the price of the living incarnation of what appears."[16] It is harder to see that the work of art is already inscribed in every image, even in the supposedly pre-aesthetic artifact like the effigy and the mask. Emile Durkheim recognized this fact when he observed that "art is not merely an external ornament with which the [religious] cult has adorned itself in order to dissimulate certain of its features which may be too austere and too rude; but rather, in itself, the cult is something aesthetic."[17] The image is thus best understood not as the origin but as the destination of art. Figural representation strives toward the condition of the image, namely, pure presence, apparition, instantaneity, and beauty. "Image" names both the state that art desires (the beautiful semblance) and the state that (Protestant or iconophobic) theology deplores (a specious plenitude). Those are the two options. Belting rejects the theological view and instead chooses the first option. And yet he himself never puts it this way. The only blind spot of this inspiring book is that it does not acknowledge that the place it is coming from is the place of art.

CHRISTOPHER S. WOOD *is professor in the history of art at Yale University [Department of History of Art, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. 06520-8272].*

Notes

1. Hans Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1983), translated as *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

2. The University of Konstanz sponsored until December 2002 an interdisciplinary research project on literature and anthropology. For an English-language index to the project, see the last revision of the website http://www.uni-konstanz.de/FuF/ueberfak/sfb511/index_eng.html.

3. See http://kunstwissenschaften.hfg-karlsruhe.de/kolleg/index.html.

4. See Michael Viktor Schwarz, *Visuelle Medien im christlichen Kult* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2002).

5. See, for example, Horst Wenzel, Wilfried Seipel, and Gotthart Wunberg, eds., *Audiovisualität vor und nach Gutenberg: Zur Kulturgeschichte der medialen Umbrüche* (Milan: Skira; Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2001).

6. Some writings by Friedrich Kittler, however, have been translated into English: *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); and *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

7. See, for instance, Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000), the latest and, one hopes, last book on the topic of medium specificity.

8. See Hans Belting, "Beyond Iconoclasm: Nam June Paik, the Zen Gaze, and the Escape from Representation," in *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art,* ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 390–91.

9. Hans Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Mann, 1981), translated as *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas, 1990); and *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: Beck, 1990), translated as *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

10. Hans Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte: Eine Revision nach zehn Jahren* (Munich: Beck, 1995), translated as *Art History after Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and *Das unsichtbare Meisterwerk: Die modernen Mythen der Kunst* (Munich: Beck, 1998), translated as *The Invisible Masterpiece* (London: Reaktion, 2001).

11. Hans Belting, *Giovanni Bellini Pietà* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985); Belting and Christiane Kruse, *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes: Das erste Jahrhundert der niederländischen Malerei* (Munich: Hirmer, 1994); and Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch: Garden of Earthly Delights* (Munich: Prestel, 2002).

12. Belting, 2001 (as in n. 10), 8.

13. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

14. See Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 192.

15. Whitney Davis, *Masking the Blow: The Scene of Representation in Late Prehistoric Egyptian Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and idem, *Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), chap. 7.

16. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 80.

17. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1968), 426–27.

DAVID SUMMERS

Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism
London: Phaidon, 2003. 707 pp., 343 b/w ills. $75.00

Far and away the most pressing problem facing the discipline of art history is the prospect of world art history. And yet the first thing that needs to be said about that troublesome expression is that there is no consensus about its meaning or even its value. The common alternatives and near synonyms for world art history are also problematic: multiculturalism carries with it the air of a compromised relativism;[1] visual culture is currently an unstable field, subject to intense debates;[2] and global art has the unfortunate connotation of conceptual imperialism, as if art history is already adequate to all possible occasions.[3] It remains unclear how a world art history might be related to its neighboring disciplines. It has been proposed that art historians take anthropological theories as models, but it has also been urged that art history define itself by its difference from anthropology.[4] It has been said that art history should remain distinct from visual studies, but it has also been predicted that the two fields will end up entwined.[5] It has been suggested that literary theory is the best resource for the expanding discipline, but it has also been claimed that literary theory is a wrong direction for art history.[6]

Despite this conceptual disarray it remains absolutely essential for art history to ask about its limits and its future, and those questions inevitably lead to the problem of world art history. It is a cardinal virtue of *Real Spaces* that Summers dares, as few art historians have, to tackle the problem of world art history in a single book. In 2000, John Onians organized a conference at the Clark Art Institute on the theme of art historical writing that keeps to the local and particular, as opposed to writing that tries, in Onians's phrase, "to put the world in a book."[7] The conference began with speakers whose work "expanded" local subjects into specialized monographs and progressed to the most "compressed" attempts to address the problem of world art in its totality. I was on the final panel, along with Onians, Summers, and David Freedberg; we were said to have tried "to put the world in a book." Only Summers did not deny the charge.[8] The panel would have been more representative and problematic had it included Marilyn Stokstad and other authors of one-volume freshman world art survey texts, because then it would have been apparent