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Introduction

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Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-115188>

Book Section

Published Version

Originally published at:

de Riedmatten, Henri; Galley, Nicolas; Corpataux, Jean-François; Nussbaum, Valentin (2015). Introduction. In: de Riedmatten, Henri; Galley, Nicolas; Corpataux, Jean-François; Nussbaum, Valentin. *Senses of Sight. Towards a Multisensorial Approach of the Image. Essays in Honor of Victor I. Stoichita*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 5-6.

SENSES OF SIGHT

TOWARDS A MULTISENSORIAL APPROACH OF THE IMAGE

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF VICTOR I. STOICHITA

«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

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Inside front cover: Pedro Stoichita, Victor, 2012, scratchboard, 23 cm x 19,5 cm,
after a photo by Joaquin Berchez

Inside back cover: Pedro Stoichita, Ana, 2013, scratchboard, 17,5cm x 23 cm,
after a photo by Joaquin Berchez

Graphic design and layout
Rossella Corcione

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Via Cassiodoro, 11 - 00193 Roma
<http://www.lerma.it>

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Senses of Sight. Towards a Multisensorial Approach of
the Image. Essays in Honor of Victor I. Stoichita. - Roma :
«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER, 2015. - 312 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

ISBN 978-88-913-0875-7

ISBN DIGITAL EDITION 978-88-913-0873-3

CDD 701.17

1. Arte

This book has been published with the support of the Boner Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur, the Rectorate of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) and the Chair of Early Modern Art History of the University of Zurich.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
STEPHEN J. CAMPBELL, <i>Cloud-poiesis: Perception, Allegory, Seeing the Other</i>	7
MICHAEL DIERS, <i>At Face Value: Domenico Ghirlandaio's "An Old Man with His Grandson" as a Portrait of the Florentine Merchant Francesco Sassetti</i>	37
FRANK FEHRENBACH, <i>Leonardo's Dark Eye</i>	67
TRISTAN WEDDIGEN, <i>Weaving the Face of Christ: On the Textile Origins of the Christian Image</i>	83
SERGIUSZ MICHALSKI, <i>Death at a Second Glance: A Unique Motif in Pontormo's Certosa del Galluzzo Passion Cycle</i>	111
TOMOO MATSUBARA, <i>Defence Mechanisms of Cities and Paintings: Giorgio di Giovanni and the War of Siena</i>	131
ULRICH PFISTERER, <i>Subject to Mood Swings: Michelangelo, Titian and Adrian Willaert on Creativity</i>	151
KLAUS KRÜGER, <i>"Musica Depicta": The Silent Sound of Painting</i>	167
CORRADO BOLOGNA, <i>Ariosto, Elsheimer, Galilei and the Moon</i>	193
FELIPE PEREDA, <i>Ribera's Peter and Paul: One, maybe Two Notes on Blindness</i>	227
THIERRY LENAIN, <i>The Actor's Gaze: Apropos of Giuseppe Grisoni's "Portrait of Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington"</i>	245
CARLO OSSOLA, <i>Lumi rubricati – Lights, Rubricated for Victor Stoichita</i>	265
LUCIA CORRAIN, <i>Brâncuși: The Memory of Infinity</i>	281

INTRODUCTION

“What is the meaning of this appeal to the sense of smell in the context of the description? An immediate answer contains a thinly veiled compliment to the painter’s skill so great – we are made to understand – that it succeeds in suggesting an olfactory sensation by visual means [...]. A second answer more closely connected to the issues of *ekphrasis* rhetorics, is suggested by the following sentence: ‘But listen carefully; for along with my description of the garden the fragrance of the apples also will come to you.’ Such an incitement looks rather like a program. What is at stake this time, is the talent of the orator; he is put forward as the rare capacity of transmitting, by the means of word and sound, the most ineffable of all sensations, the sensation of fragrance and perfume.

A first playful but necessary question (‘How to smell a painting?’), will necessarily draw an ambivalent answer, depending on one’s point of view: One might ‘feel/smell’ a painting by ‘seeing’ it or by ‘listening’ carefully to its skillfully elaborated description. However, one thing is certain – the smell that may emanate from the one or the other way of proceeding will be neither the smell of turpentine nor the smell of oil!”

This quote extracted from Victor I. Stoichita’s article “How to Taste a Painting” and originally intended to explicit the different modalities of the viewer’s experience of painting may be considered as emblematic of his plural and polysemous methodology. The following anthology of essays in honor of Victor gathered under the title *Senses of Sights: Towards a Multisensorial Approach of the Image* intends to pay tribute to the interdisciplinary, trans-historical and trans-cultural aspects of his researches in art history. This book aims to underline Victor’s diverse educational and professional path that started in Romania and ran through Italy, France, Germany to finally reach Switzerland.

This *Grand Tour* contributed to the rich palette of his numerous interests and writings. Its diversity is purposely reflected in this publication. The varied contributions of his friends and colleagues result from these multiple geographical and methodological origins. They attest to the opened and all-embracing perspective constituting the backbone of Victor's critical pattern. This multifaceted collection of texts written by authors coming from the Far East to the West is here published in English for editorial coherence.

Territoriality and topography are among the notions questioned in the following articles. From Italy to the moon, from Renaissance to the 20th century, from Romania to Spain, borders and frontiers are transgressed. These infringements nurture the idea of otherness manifested through the concept of identity, the topic of the double and the image of the other. Reflection upon the medium is also at stake investigating not only painting but also textile, urbanism, sculpture, gardens, etc. All sensory faculties are requested to participate in what could be called a rhetoric feast of the senses celebrating sight, gaze, voyeurism, visual perception, and their absence.

We would like to gratefully thank the late Dr. Ambros Boner and the Boner Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur, the Rectorate of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), the Chair of Early Modern Art History of the University of Zurich. Our gratitude also goes to the editorial team of L'Erma di Bretschneider, in particular Elena Montani and Rossella Corcione. Our thanks once again to all contributors who made this project possible as well as to Lilian Daum, Marie Gyger and Patricia Bently who assisted us with great support.

From the very start, this publication has enjoyed the unconditional support of Anna Maria. Pedro honored us with two magnificent portraits which constitute the alpha and omega of the book.

For our professor

HENRI DE RIEDMATTEN, NICOLAS GALLEY
JEAN-FRANÇOIS CORPATAUX, VALENTIN NUSSBAUM