

The Masterpiece & the Brain

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**CAN ART EXIST WITHOUT
EVALUATION OF QUALITY?**

**CAN WE TRUST OUR PERCEPTION
& EDUCATED INTUITION?**

**UNIVERSITY ART&DESIGN
CLUJ-NAPOCA APRIL 27, 2018**



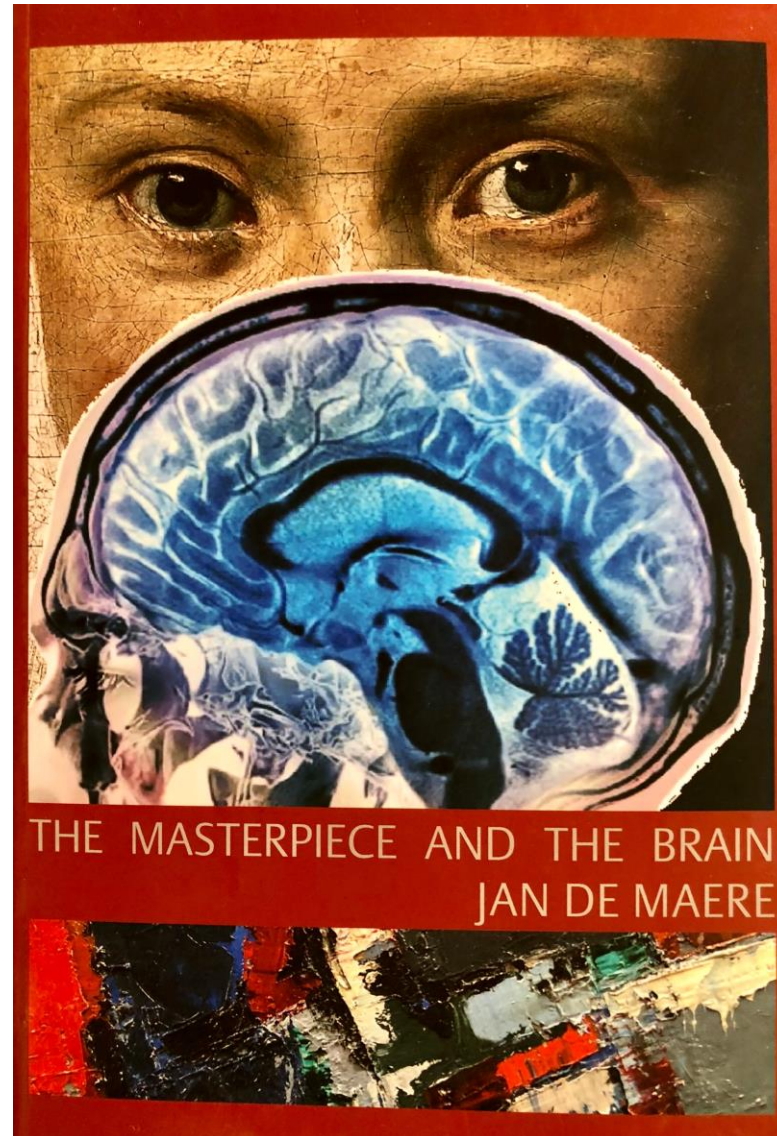


The masterpiece, Myth or Memory

How to combine
“scientificity” and
Contemporary art
theory?

How do logic, bias and
intuition contribute to
our understanding of
what we see?

The physiology of the
brain has some answers





- **Friedrich Nietzsche** in *La Volonte de puissance* T1, p 329:

- “Reality is only interpretation”

- **Pierre Bourdieu** stresses the importance of the “habitus” for art, fashion and style

- **F. de Schleiermacher** in *Hermeneutique*, 1987, p 24:

- “Meaning is produced by the imminent organization of significations, that organize themselves in the language”

. Albert Einstein said (1951): “ *Imagination is more important than knowledge*”.

- Human evolution will have to focus on innovation by boosting disruptive creativity, taking advantage of the fact that they have a heart and a soul.
- Our intelligence is embodied. It results from an interaction of slow genetic and fast epigenetic changes, as well as from our efforts as from our experiences and initiatives.
- Nature made us the architects of our brain.

The Mind & Free Will

- The mind, an embodied brain physiology, emerges from our identity, interpersonal experience and from the structure and laws of the brain. **It's the result of a competition with ourself, our values, culture and our human nature.**
- Free will is only a kind of freedom of decision under specific circumstances, limited by our previous choices. **High-level thoughts exert a control over undesired or inadequate lower-level impulses to reach the least- worse decision in function of the horizon of our desire and expectations.**



- Our lifetime events shape each one's epigenotype, which modifies itself within and across generations by modifications in chromatin proteins and in non-coding ARN. We call this neuroplasticity, a disruptive perturbation in e. a. our endocrinal system.



Identifying a masterpiece is only possible through a **preconception** of the visual history of the genre, in the **perspective** of a given period. The **ideological structure** of the **preconception** orients strongly the impression of the viewer.

- Ernst Hans Gombrich in *Art and Illusion, 1960*:
 - “The unconscious mind influences not only the observation of the beholder, but also the inspiration of the artist.”
 - **“INTENTIONAL FALLACY”**
 - The artist’s intention is ontologically not essential

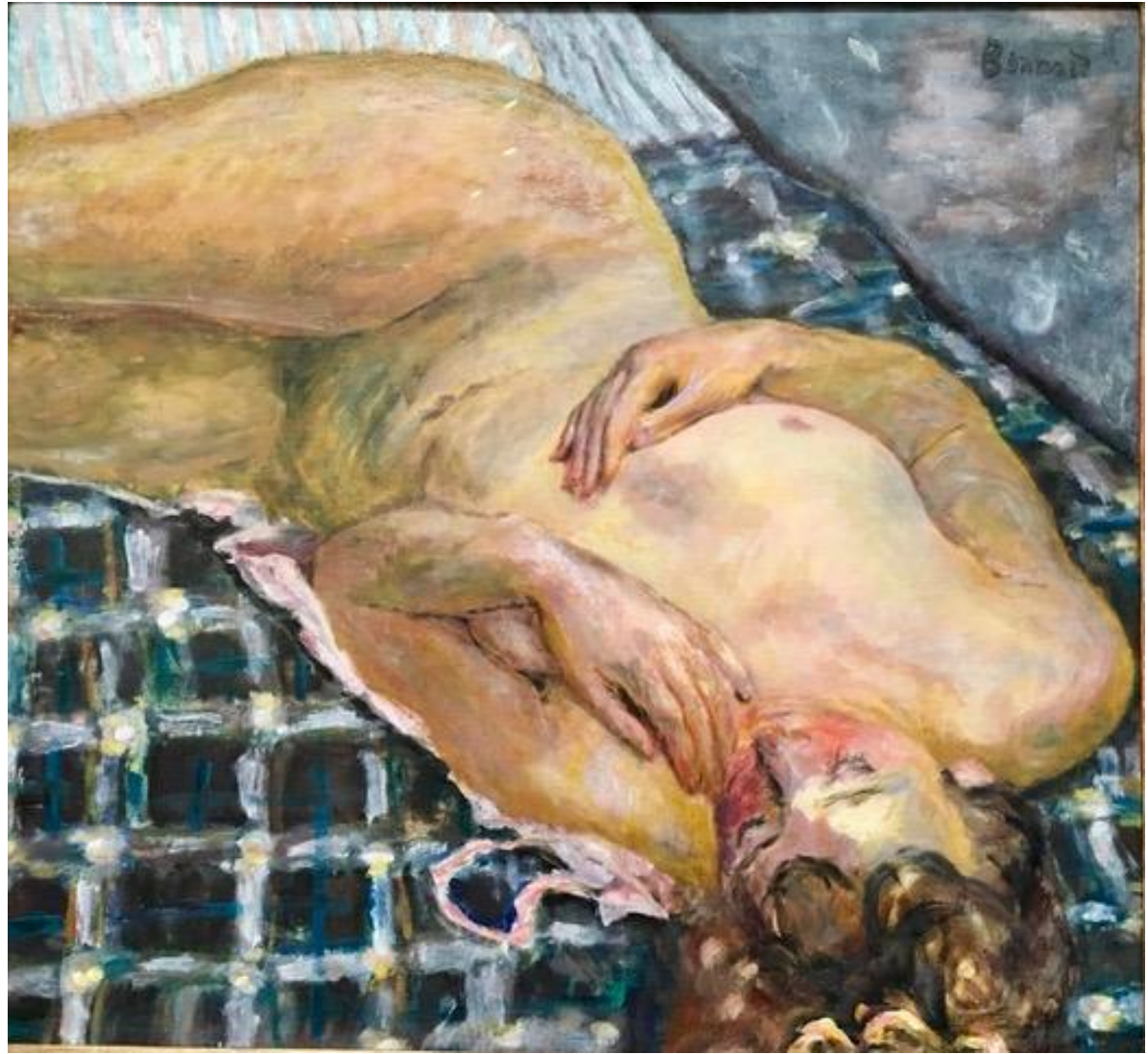


The Aura of a reputation of this MASTERPIECE by Pierre Bonnard

It is the expectation of:

- *intemporal perfection in its domain
- *Unique “Hors Pair”
- *Summun of raffinement
- *utmost desired

In Neuroscience: an cognitive perceptive artfull emotional fulfillment without any additioinal desire, based on a cognitive cultural bias, hoping to be shared by others





Claude Monet , *Water pond at Giverny*, c/photo Belga

The real scene, similar to a painted one, gives a different
f-MRI brain activity image



Claude Monet, *Grandes Decorations-Nymphéas*, oil on canvas 1914-26



Chauvet, Pont d'Arc Cave drawings (Ardèche, FR), 35.000 BP (88 radiocarbon dating)



The art object or the viewer?

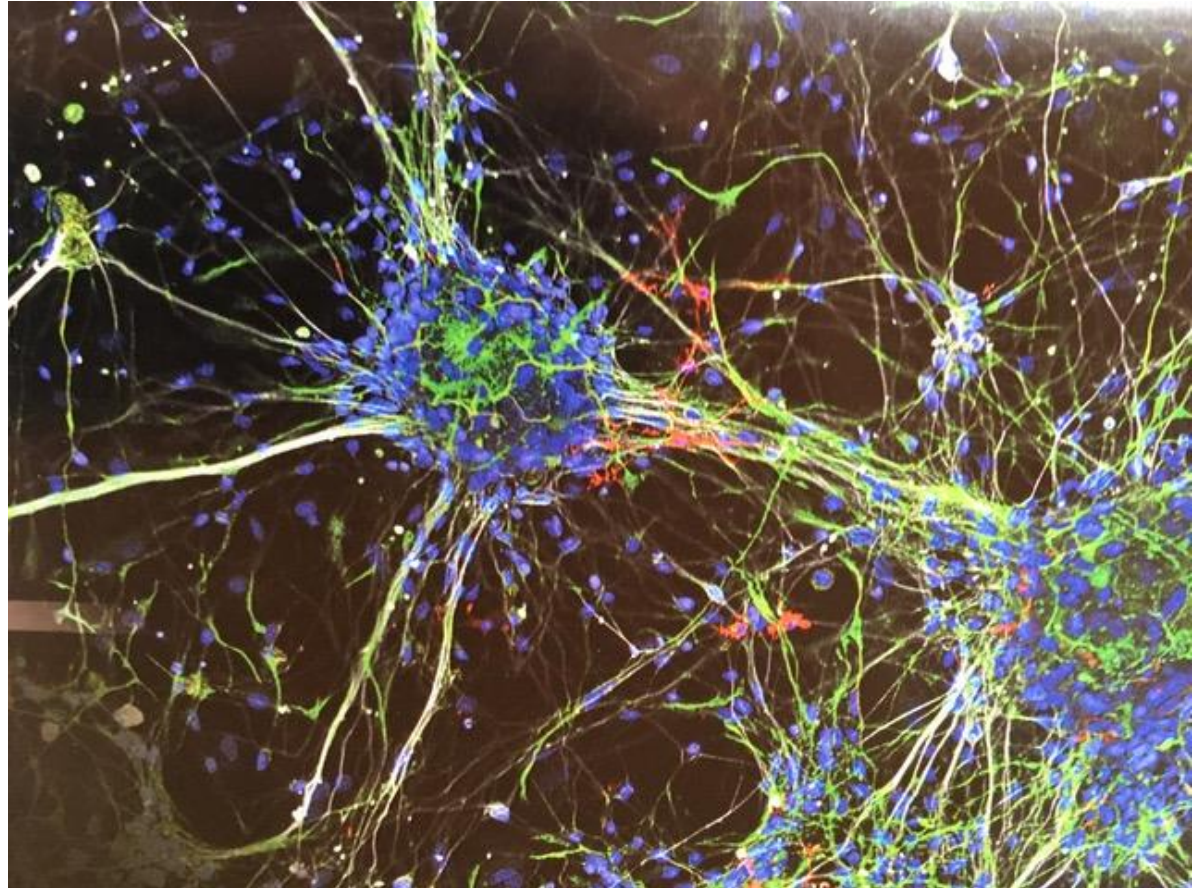
Are there works of art,
of which their intrinsic
qualities trigger their
functionality?

OR

Does an object need the
ingenuity of the viewer?

Neuroscience:

There is only an
experience of the love of
art. As all love it is a
product of our
neurotransmitters, but
not only that



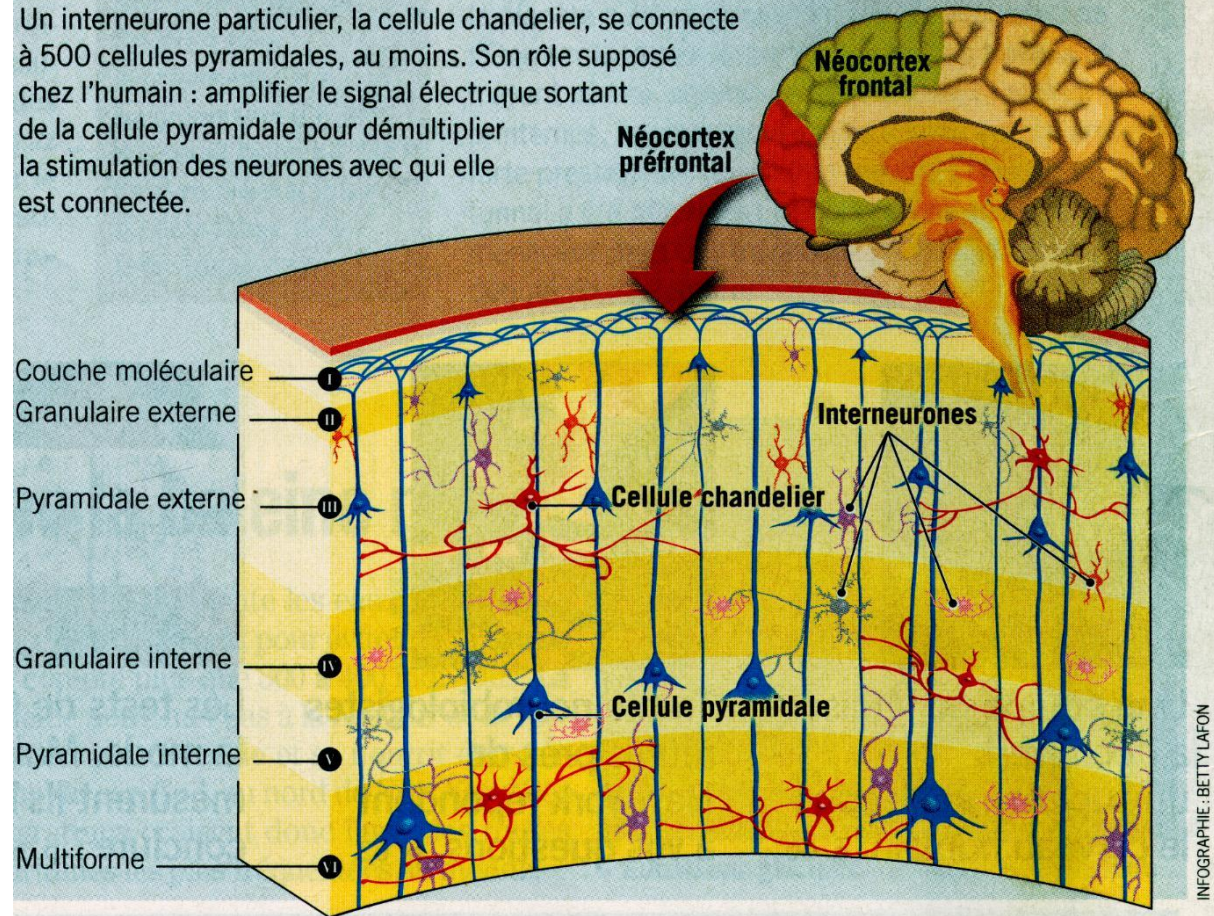
Six layers of neo-cortex connected by Axones

A chandelier neuron connects to at least 500 pyramidal cells and regulates modifications in intensity of neural communication

Des cellules turbo pour une transmission éclair

Les cellules pyramidales forment la trame principale du néocortex, constitué de six couches. Elles envoient leurs axones très longs vers les autres zones du cerveau. Les interneurons, aux axones courts, assurent la transmission de l'information au niveau local.

Un interneurone particulier, la cellule chandelier, se connecte à 500 cellules pyramidales, au moins. Son rôle supposé chez l'humain : amplifier le signal électrique sortant de la cellule pyramidale pour démultiplier la stimulation des neurones avec qui elle est connectée.

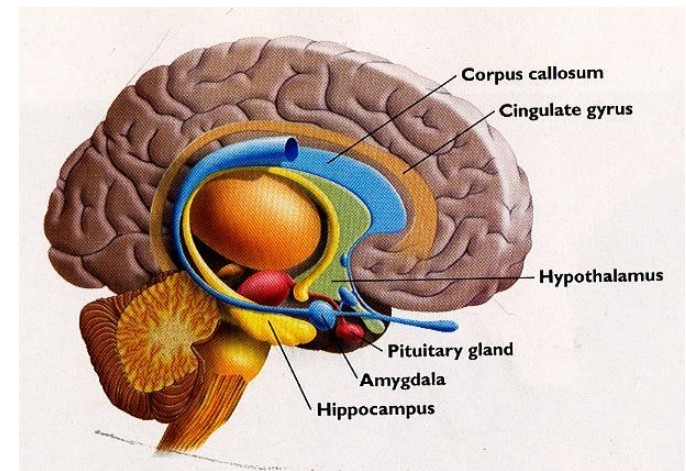
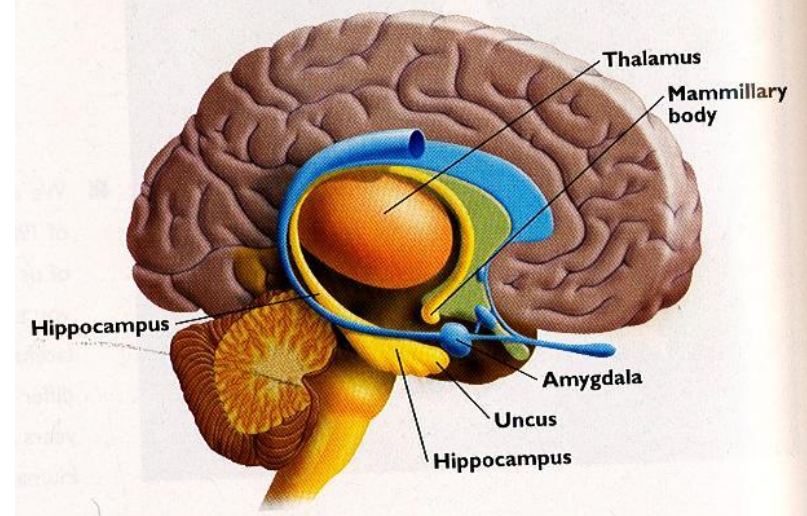
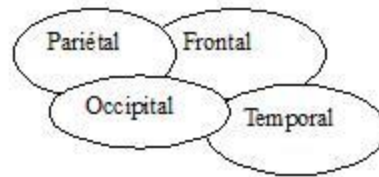




Artfull Emotion
needs cultural
discourse & personal
experience, tending to
be shared

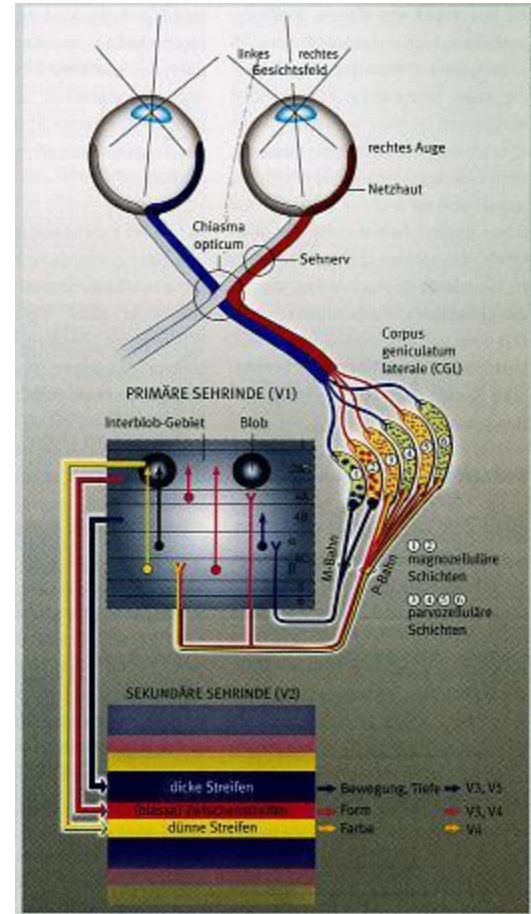
Emotion needs
memory & the
narrative about the
self to become
sentiment

All bodily emotion is
evaluated in degrees
processed first in the
different sensorial
treatment centers, and
later hierarchically in
the successive layers of
the cortex to become a
stabilized ambiguity
(temporary equilibrium
of integrated cues)
acquiring consciousness



Input & backlash

After extremely limited early treatment all Visual Sensorial information is conveyed to V1 (Brodmann), while continuously communicating with perception through backlash

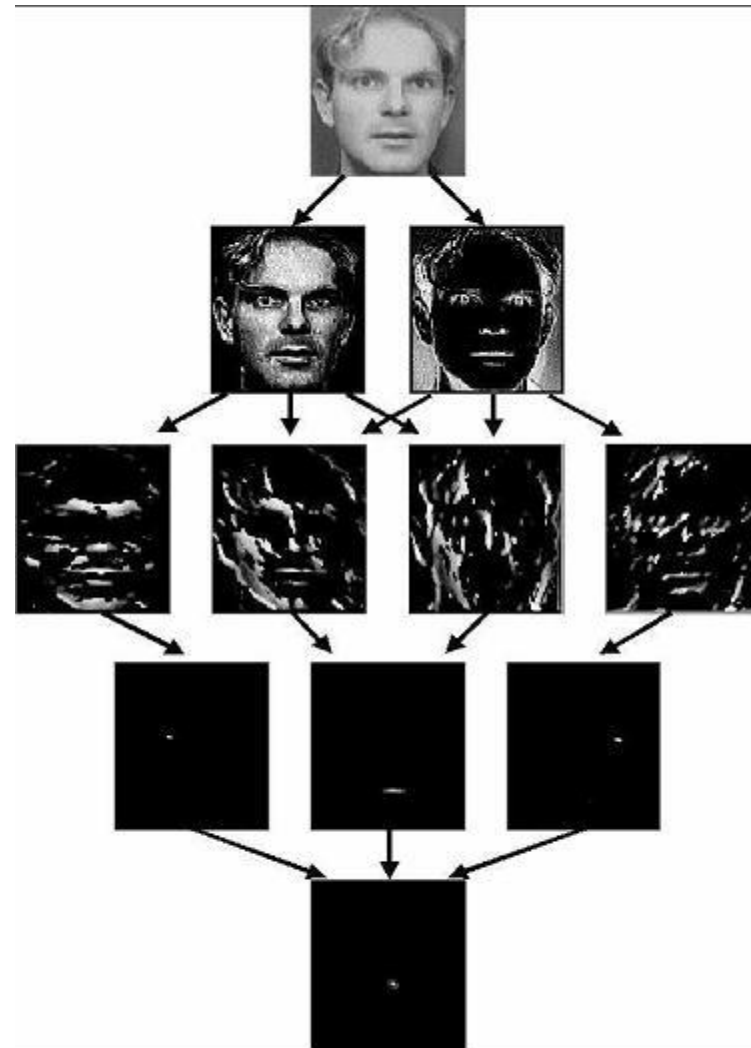




Brodman areas & cortical layers

Our internal image of what we see is a composition of thousands of fragments, harvested by thousands of eye-movements

All different aspects of an image, such as **Face-perception**, are treated in different specialized areas and successively promoted to higher treatment levels



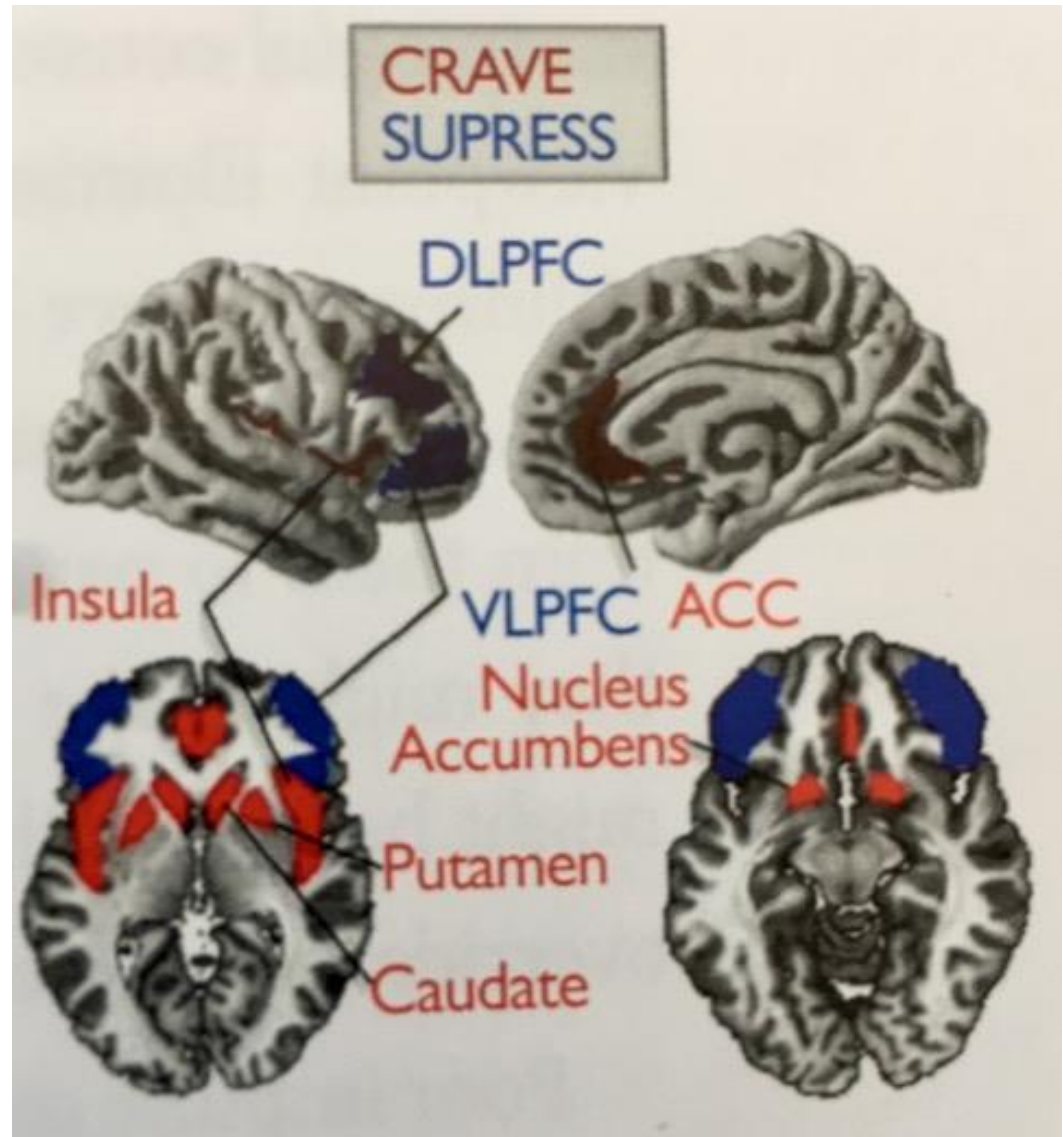


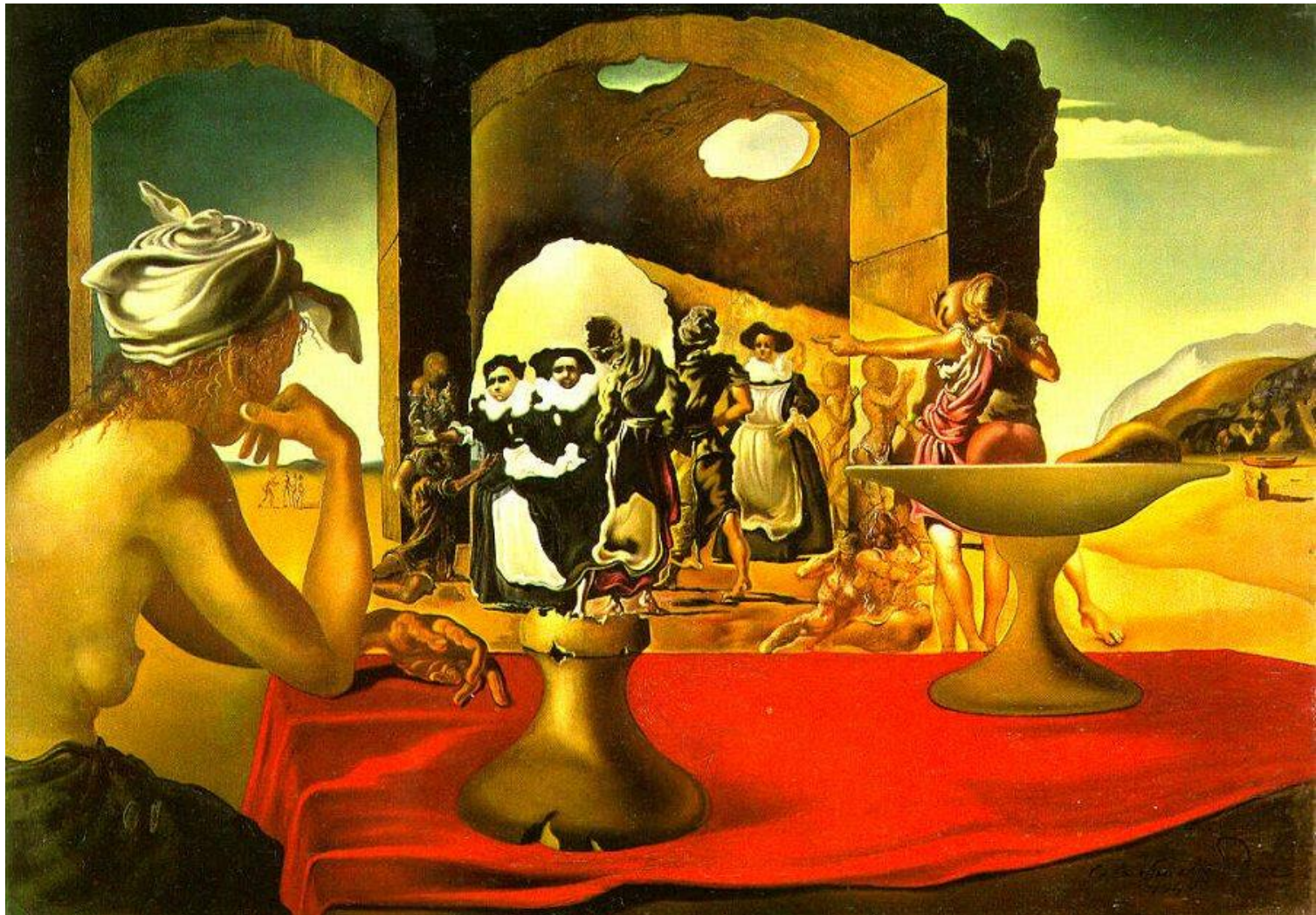
Physiology of craving

The masterpiece is an obstacle, giving only **satisfaction** when the Desire to pass over the horizon of our expectations is fulfilled

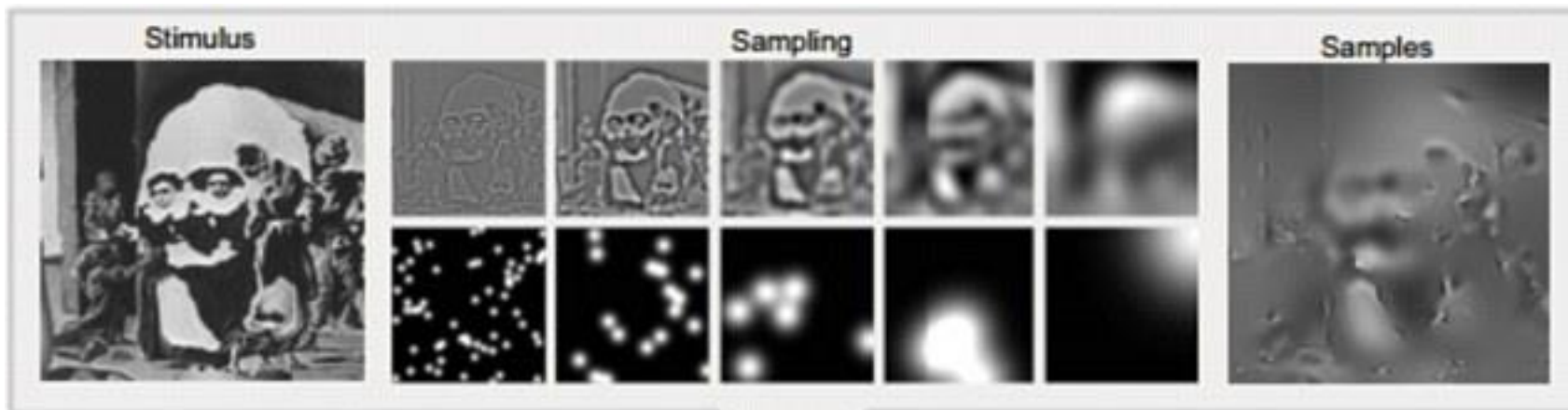
Biased by cognition

All ideology, critic and labelling are only 'EKPHRASIS', telling more on the critic than on the work of art

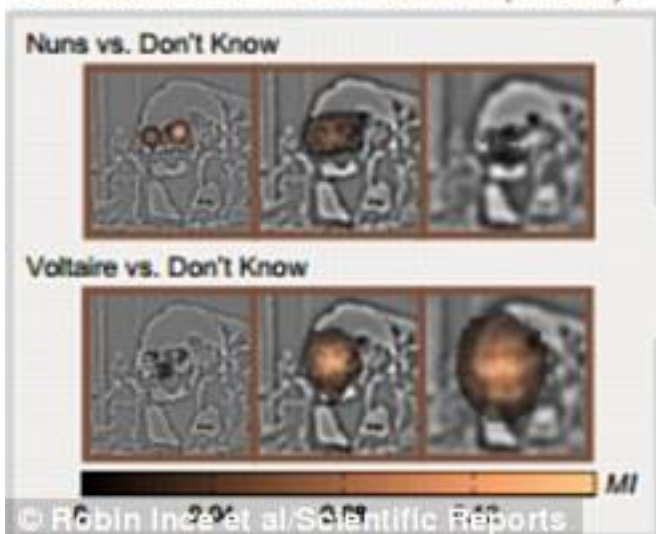




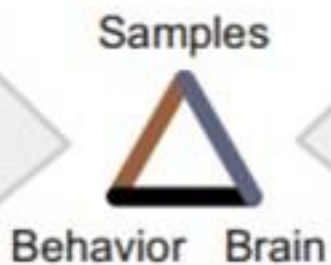
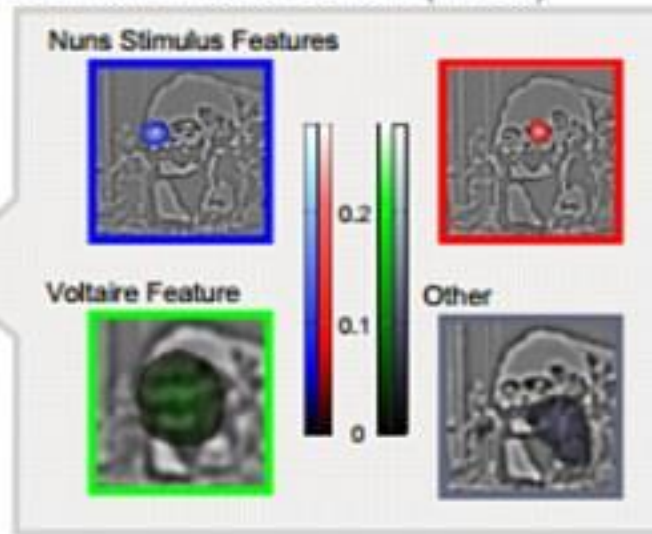
Salvatore Dali, *Slave Market with the disappearing bust of Voltaire*, 1940,
oil on canvas 47 x 66cm, Dali Museum St Petersburg, Florida



Behavioral Information Content (What?)



Brain Information Content (What?)



Venerated Icons

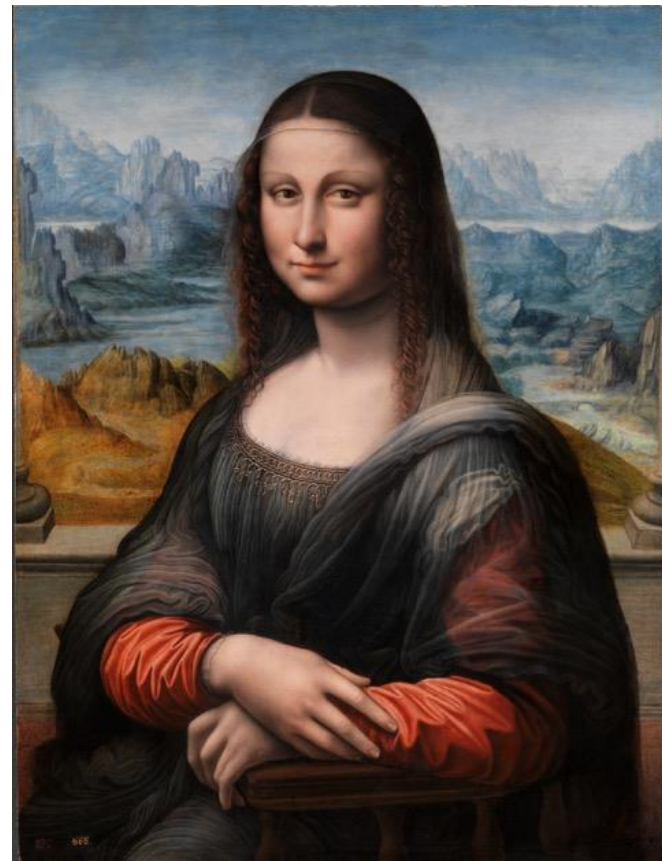




Leonardo da Vinci, Louvre



Marcel Duchamp: 'LHCOQ'



Studio replica (cleaned 2012)

Leonardo, *Mona Lisa Gherardini* (?), 1503-1517, Oil on poplar, 77 x 53 cm, Mus. Du Louvre

A



Leonardo da Vinci, *La Joconde*, Musée du Louvre, Paris

B



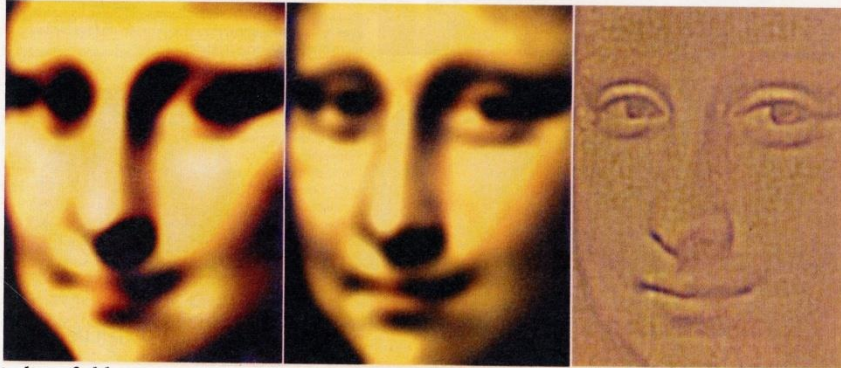
Détail. Focalisant sur les yeux, le sourire est mystérieux, par l'effet de la vision périphérique.

C



Détail. En ne focalisant que sur la bouche qui est vue maintenant avec précision.

D



indices faibles
vue périphérique

indices moyens
vue périphérique proche

indices précis
vue focale



Meisterwerk or Meisterstück?

All **legitimation** is
ambiguous

Authority of reputation

Peer-review

Financial & social
metaphor

Sacralization by its
position in museums

Criteria for
hierarchization?

Politics & propaganda:
use & abuse of authority



Rubens



Uniqueness?

Authenticity.

A masterpiece does not have a direct precedent

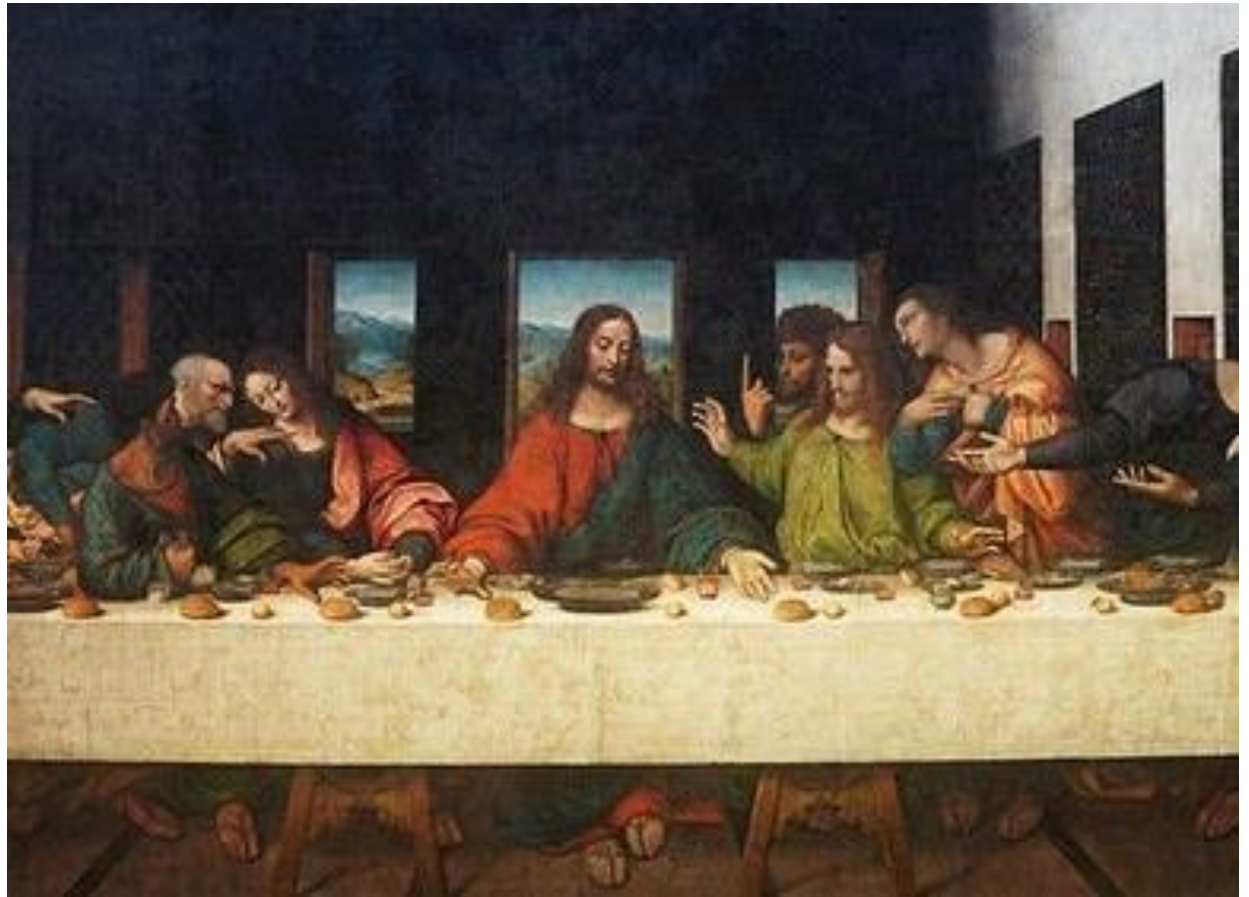
Quality in Art?

Scientific observation or
'The eyes of the Soul'
(Philon of Byzance,
Greece IIIeBC)?

Period Eye:

F. Haskell: rediscoveries
in Art, 1976

Baxandall



Averbode abbey
Leonardo or Solario?

The Quest for Beauty



- * **Antiquity & Ancient Regime:** rules, perfection of craftsmanship & intensity
- * **The Enlightenment:** a speech linked to culture & ratio, but apprehension of sensorial experiences.
- Winckelmann: the birth of the art historical discourse as an intellectual 'Ekphrasis', initiating a 'particular cognitive-aesthetic expectation', which the **masterpiece** has to confirm
- 1728, J. Richardson: *On Paintings*
- E Kant: *Praktische & Reine Vernunft*
- 1772, A. G. Baumgartner: *The self & the soul*
- G.F.W.Hegel, *artistic beauty and its 'Wirkung'*
- 1775, J.G. Sulzer: *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, Leipzig
- 1799, A. Schlegel: *Gemälde*: immediate impression: **intuition, as a blank slate (Wrong: see S. Pincker)+ genetics**



J. M. W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed*, 1844, National Gallery, London: oil on canvas 91 x 112cm

1793: Louvre, birth of the museum as a social obligation towards humanity



- **W. Benjamin:** immediate seduction
- **1817, Stendahl:** *Rome, Naples, Florence*. (22/1/1817, syndrome)
=Initiatic journey ((see Brancusi):
 - 1.Aura: Non-conscious expectation towards Masterpiece
 - 2.Gradual intensity of emotion through contemplation
 - 3.+unconscious implication of the narrative about the self & memory
creates **sentiment**
 - 4.Reduction of consciousness of the outside world/ **Extase**
 - 5.**Fear of separation** of the world of beauty/crisis/personal drama
- **1831, Honoré de Balzac:** '*Le Chef d'Oeuvre Inconnu*'
- =literary description of abstraction as a painterly ideal
- =invention of the **Phantom-Masterpiece**: sublime materialization of the artfull sublime & secret promise of hidden desire

Abstraction, reduction & transcendency

I. Sbârciu



From Aesthetism to Experiment



- **Walter Pater** (1839-94) La Gioconda= venerable icon as **Romantic Ideal**: quest for the **Sublime**
But, stolen and recovered in 1911: Funeral service by Italian Futurists
 - * **1884, Japonism**: Union of Fine Arts & Crafts
 - * **1884, Paul Cézanne**: the painter's studio as a laboratory
- Avant-garde**: against past & history, to build new hope by the affirmation of the self, without facing failure as a **Romantic disaster**.
Stays alive through ongoing aggression of tradition.
- **1913, Readymade, Marcel Duchamp**: attacks the arbitrary hierarchy of the museum selection & the **bias** of the context of perception
 - =a sacrilegious profanation of the venerable relic & the temple
Read: J. Habermas *'Public Space, 1978*
 - ***1915, K. Malevitch**: nevertheless his theory, 'Carré Noir' becomes itself an icon by the cognitive bias



The innate art instinct is an essential tool provided by human evolution. The selection of subjective beauty, an essential part of the art experience, allows the creative beholder to communicate about his visual meaningful emotions.

Its incidental learning and non-verbal communication are essential tools to hope & happiness



Art helps us to understand the laws of the brain, the only limits of creativity



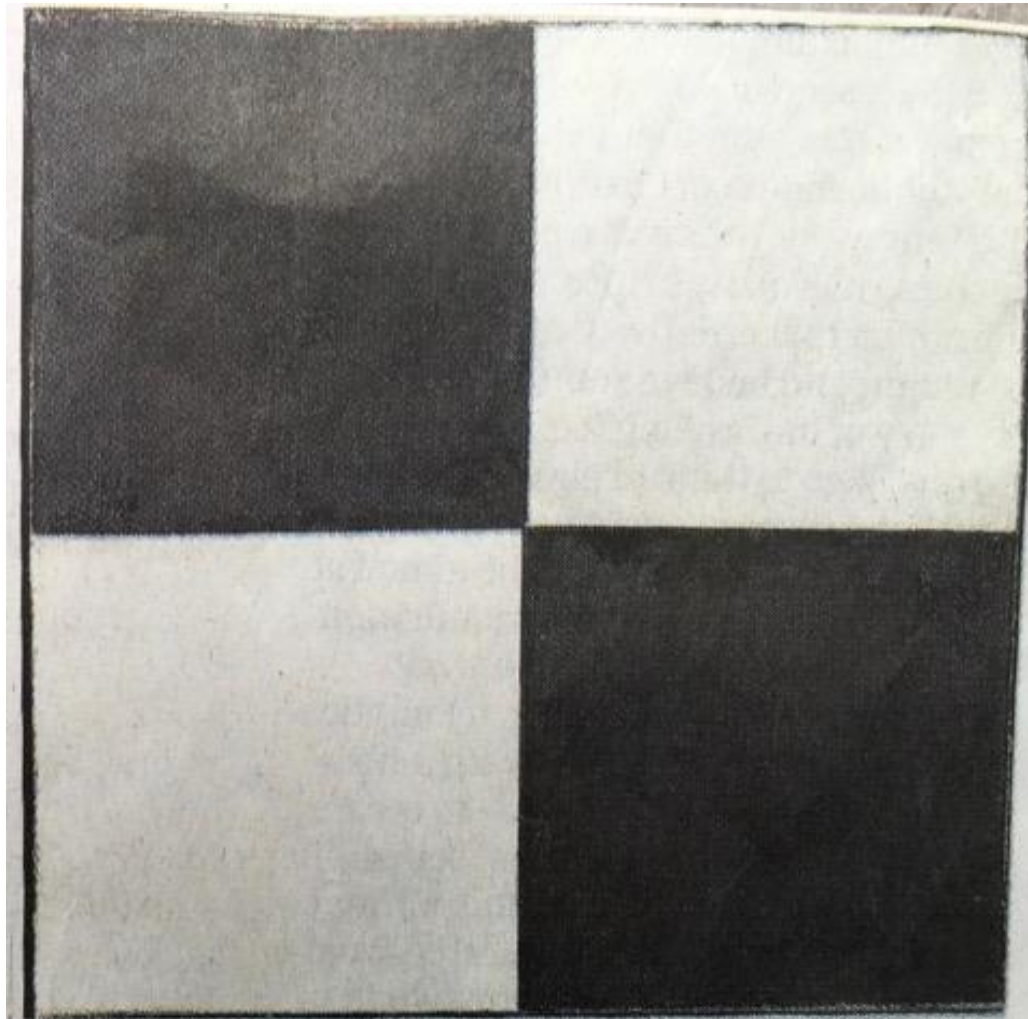
Museum as a social
experience

Zep

Titeuf, Lille



Intervention on works of the past



KAZIMIR MALEVICH, VIA THE RADISHCHEV ART MUSEUM, SARATOV

Kazimir Malevitch (1878-1935) *Four Squares*, 1916

Modernism

Experiments with visual perception & competition for the sublime

1937, Guernica, Paris

Pablo Picasso:

*rebirth of the myth of the masterpiece as an initiating journey

*Hope for greatness & quality in art

*against mediocrity



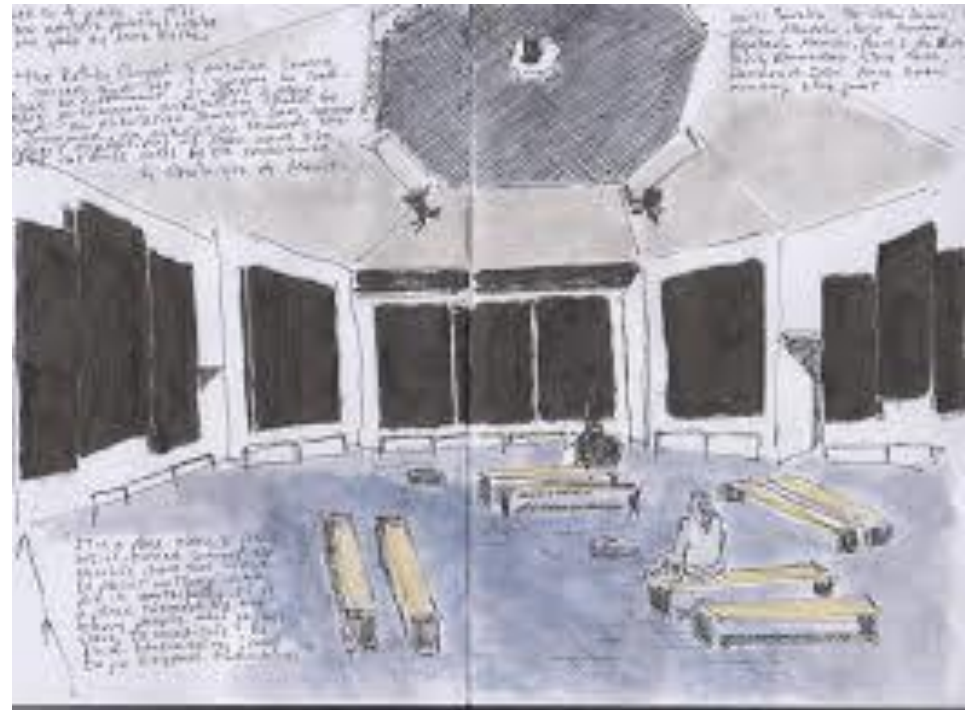
(1939-44) from Paris to New York,
Clement Greenberg: *Avant-garde & Kitsch, perception & judgment*



Jackson Pollock, *Blue Poles*, 1952, Canberra Museum, c. Pollock-Krasner Foundation



Authenticity disputed so-called Jackson Pollock, Untitled 1950
(Sold in November 2007, for \$15,3 million + %) by his art advisers to
the collector,
Presented as: “with provenance Knoedler Gallery, New York^[1]”.



Marc Rothko, the de Menil Chapel, 1971, *The transcendent & the sublime celebrated, at a moment when in Europe, Fluxus & Concept art celebrate the ritual of the creative act as a new Marxist dogma. J. Kosuth: Art after Philosophy, NY 1969*

Quality in art & connoisseurship are now seen by the political correct art as an unfair class distinction



Our indirect
awareness of reality
is un-satisfactory

Death denies a meaning
to life without illusion

Immortality

Procreation

Religion, Philosophy, art
& virtual reality allow us
to project our destiny
beyond the tomb. They
are the vehicle of
whatever hope the
believer projects on it



***Transcendental dimension of all
human values?***

by Mel Ramos (TEFAF 2017)

Media recognition & celebrity cultus

Art as consumption &
commodity

Everybody is

An artist

Fame & Price

Immediate
Satisfaction

What an artist
makes is art



'Orange Marilyn' van Andy Warhol (1964). © imageprobe



Candle light, 1982, oil on canvas

Gerhard Richter



Mother and Child, oil on canvas

Neuroscience confirms scientifically the Romantic thesis of “*the genius of the artist*” and the importance of connoisseurship and the Masterpiece for human culture & values.