

Interrogating interiors

Review of:

Denise Amy Baxter and Meredith Martin (eds), *Architectural space in eighteenth-century Europe: Constructing identities and interiors* Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2010, 267 pp., 51 b. & w. illus., \$119.95 hdbk, ISBN 9780754666509.

Interiors are daunting subjects for research. Rooms are embedded in buildings, which in turn occupy sites with their own complex histories. Especially in the early modern period, interiors often evolved over time through multiple interventions and the contributions of various authors can be hard to define. The precise role of even a prominent patron, architect, painter, or sculptor is sometimes difficult to characterize, and the attribution of furnishings often involves even more painstaking study. The work of numerous artisans, as well as many luxury merchants who served as taste-makers, remains undocumented. And even when names are known, there is often precious little evidence of the design process itself--the interplay of creative invention, commercial exchange, and interpersonal communication that yielded fully decorated spaces. Moreover, interiors are materially complex, three-dimensional ensembles, incorporating diverse media and object types that traditionally have been studied separately within the disciplinary zones of art history, architectural history and, more recently, the history of decorative art, design, and material culture. Analyzing an interior means knowing about floor plans and paintings, iconography and furniture, architectural theory and artisanal practice--each of these a specialty in itself.

And then there is the social dimension. Interiors frame diverse experiences, and the arrangement and use of early modern spaces in particular (both domestic and more public) could vary according to changing activities and a host of other variables including gender, social ranks and roles, marital status, season, time of day, and a nuanced spectrum of relationships ranging from hierarchical formality to egalitarian intimacy. Differently positioned individuals brought different expectations, knowledge, and behavioral strategies to their collective animation of the interior: the same space could be engaged and understood in radically different ways, for example, by hosts and guests at a residence, performers and audience in a theater, proprietors and customers in a café or boutique. These spatial encounters must be understood in relation to the larger discursive matrix and repertoire of practices that defined aesthetic, social, economic, and political concerns. In other words, an interior is overwhelmingly complex in fabrication, function, and meaning. It is arguably the quintessential interdisciplinary subject.

The relatively young field of eighteenth-century studies has embraced the interior, and especially the domestic interior, as a fruitful arena of study. This

interest, in tandem with related research on decorative art and material culture that is not necessarily anchored in specific architectural spaces, unites an international community of scholars across the humanities.¹ The 'interior turn' emphasizes the social agency of design and challenges interpretative hierarchies that long privileged makers over users, paintings over furniture, luxury objects over quotidian goods. It also registers a growing recognition that modern ideas about domesticity, interiority, consumption, and the public and private spheres are rooted in eighteenth-century culture and often expressed through its visual and spatial practices.²

Architectural space in eighteenth-century Europe: Constructing identities and interiors is a major contribution to this flourishing project. It gathers a set of carefully researched case studies that represent a wide range of topics and perspectives. The international, interdisciplinary group of authors includes junior and senior scholars, professors and curators, and specialists in history, art history, and literature. Their work spans the 'long' eighteenth century and takes readers not only to Paris and London (the field's most popular destinations), but also to Rome, Venice, Northumberland, and the Holy Roman Empire. Most essays deal with residences but there is some attention to more public spaces such as theaters, gaming halls, and museums. The range of settings, with their equally diverse populations of inhabitants and audiences, is remarkable: lavish princely palaces; the homes of French courtesans and English Catholics; a bluestocking's dressing room and an art collector's gallery. Primary sources from both archive and library provide crucial support for almost all of the arguments, visual evidence is important for many, and methodological strategies range from art history's classic concerns with form, style, patronage, and authorship to the commitments of social history and feminist theory.

Co-editor Denise Amy Baxter's introduction begins with an important premise: 'the interior is understood here as contested terrain ... dynamic, unstable, and contingent' (1). Drawing on the work of cultural theorists Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, she establishes the idea that architectural spaces actively shape

¹ To cite only a few of the most recent and wide-ranging publications: Alden Cavanaugh and Michael Yonan, eds, *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain*, Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vermont, Ashgate, 2010; John Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004; Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg, eds, *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us About the European and American Past*, New York, Routledge, 2007; Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995; Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009; Amanda Vickery and John Styles, eds, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006.

² Recent studies of interiors and interiority over time include Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant, eds, *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior Since the Renaissance*, London and New York, V&A, 2006; Susie McKellar and Penny Sparke, eds, *Interior Design and Identity*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2004.

identities. Rather than simply reflecting *a priori* social values or expressing stable conceptions of selfhood, the interiors of this book are virtuoso instruments of self-fashioning. They frame and enable the performative construction of a wide range of personas, subjectivities, and relationships that could shift with changing circumstances but, at the same time, were bound inextricably to specific historical and cultural contexts. Baxter goes beyond the mere summaries sometimes found in editorial introductions, offering a thoughtful, comparative overview of the authors' most salient concerns.

The following essays, arranged in three groups, richly support Baxter's opening claims. The first section, 'Crossing Boundaries, Making Space,' opens with co-editor Meredith Martin's account of how domestic interiors were represented in architectural theory. Focusing on French and English publications, Martin explores some of the illustration strategies and aesthetic prescriptions that made these texts compelling for a broad audience. Paradoxically, they reveal both a conviction that design could communicate social position and a fear that its cues could be misread or appropriated in ways that disrupted naturalized hierarchies.

The next three contributions translate theory into practice with tightly focused studies of patronage in very different cultural contexts. First, Max Tillmann reconstructs the palace of exiled Bavarian Elector Max Emanuel at Saint-Cloud, near Paris, redecorated by Germain Boffrand in 1713-15. Through a detailed description of the façade, plan, and furnishings, as well as comparisons with prevailing trends in design and etiquette, Tillmann suggests that the building combined 'opposing cultural influences--Bavarian and French, town and countryside, capital and court' in order to serve a 'double function as a place of *prestige* and *plaisir*' (53) for a prince with an uncertain political future.

The themes of dual purpose and political self-fashioning continue in Csongor Kis's analysis of the Archiepiscopal palace at Würzburg. Constructed in 1720-53 under the supervision of Johann Balthasar Neumann and embellished with frescoes by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, it was designed to serve the needs of both successive prince-bishops of the Schönborn and Greiffenklau families and, periodically, the court of the Holy Roman Emperor. The prince-bishops presided over a small territory in a decentralized empire sapped by war, but their palace proclaimed prestige. Kis considers the interplay of numerous variables: the plan and pictorial iconography, the functions of different spaces, patterns of access and movement, and the often-overlooked factor of how much time visitors would spend in certain rooms. Together, these elements defined rank, shaped the reception of political messages, and, in a delicate balance of meanings, positioned the prince-bishops as both magnificent patrons and loyal imperial subjects.

In the following essay by Katherine R.P. Clark, the patrons are far less well known than those of Saint-Cloud and Würzburg but their intentions are explained in even more specific terms. In the mid-eighteenth century, a modest room at Callaly Castle, Northumberland, longtime seat of the Clavering family, was transformed into an expansive saloon embellished with elaborate plasterwork.

Clark identifies two decorative campaigns under different architects in the 1740s and 1750s, and links the timing and design of the first one to an audacious religious and political agenda. In a Protestant country ruled by a Hanoverian king, the Claverings were Catholic Jacobites who cherished the prospect of a Stuart restoration. Clark argues that the saloon's iconography was a coded declaration of their beliefs, and that it was intended for use during an unrealized plan of 1743-44 for the son of the exiled James II to return to England via Northumberland and claim the throne (an effort that preceded the more famous rebellion of 1745 led by James II's grandson Charles). Here, once again, design is deliberately equivocal: the saloon's imagery had to be simultaneously legible to sympathizers and 'vague enough to provide the host with plausible deniability of treasonous intentions' (93).

The link between decoration and social transgression also informs the next section of the book, 'The Interior as Masquerade.' Kathryn Norberg considers how the residences of Parisian 'actress/courtesans' served as theatrical settings for the self-fashioning of women who grew famous and wealthy from what some considered the equally dubious practices of stage performance and prostitution. Designed by the architects Claude Nicolas Ledoux, François-Joseph Bélanger, and Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart in the 1770s and 1780s, and located in newly fashionable western Paris, these luxurious houses were designed for entertaining and seen by a wide audience. Norberg suggests that particular spaces and decorative idioms constructed different facets of the actress/courtesan's persona: eroticized creativity in the dining room or salon, erudition in the library or gallery, sensibility in the garden. As controversial celebrities and heads of their own households, these women challenged gender norms and resisted an emerging Enlightenment interest in privacy and conjugal domesticity.

In a similar vein, Stacey Sloboda makes an even more pointed argument about how decoration could negotiate a problematic identity. In 1748-52, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu redecorated the dressing room of her London townhouse with chinoiserie, the European appropriation of Asian materials and motifs that (like the rococo style that often merged with it) was both wildly fashionable and negatively associated with artifice, aesthetic incoherence, commerce, and female frivolity. Mrs Montagu's own letters contain traces of this derogation, and her dressing room might seem an unlikely setting for her unconventional 'bluestocking' literary gatherings, which joined men and women in virtuous, rational sociability that rejected the vagaries of fashion. In an important departure from the approaches of the preceding authors, Sloboda shows that the relationship between visual cues and social aims can signify through inversion rather than transparency: decoration can defuse a contested identity by appearing to represent its other. In Sloboda's account, chinoiserie was a masquerade that enabled Mrs Montagu to express her taste and authority without appearing subversive: 'her self-effacing use of chinoiserie was a visual testimony of a conventional feminine identity that served to mask her radical intellectual and social ambitions' (130).

The section on masquerade closes with a more literal treatment of the topic. Marc J. Neveu examines the practice of actual masking in Venice, where it was required for entry to gaming halls and theaters during the six-month carnival season but increasingly absent from stage performances. Rather than analysing how identities were constructed by the design of or discourse on spatial environments, Neveu focuses on sartorial regulations and debates about the composition and staging of *commedia dell'arte*. While the subject and approach fit rather uneasily into the volume as a whole, the attention to public space anticipates the final section.

Indeed, one of the strengths of the collection is the way it challenges the simplistic, anachronistic opposition often implied by the terms 'public' and 'private.' These concepts were relational and very fluid in the eighteenth century, and all the essays on domestic settings illuminate (to varying degrees) the performative social functions of even the most seemingly exclusive rooms. If the private was always in some sense collective, the book's last section, 'The Politics of Display,' conversely explores the cultural exclusivity of more overtly public spaces. Anne Nellis Richter examines the discourse surrounding galleries of contemporary British art in the London residences of collectors Walter Ramsden Fawkes and John Leicester around 1819. Not unlike Mrs Montagu's chinoiserie room, these sites negotiated tensions between serious intellectual purpose and the stigmas of commerce and excess. In the book's most astute example of the analysis of texts and images as rhetorical constructions, rather than neutral documentation, Richter shows that the galleries were imagined as masculine sites of virtuous, patriotic taste-making where personal privilege served the collective good. During a period of economic instability after the Napoleonic Wars, the public display of privately owned paintings in domestic settings both stimulated the art market and proclaimed the strength of empire to an international audience.

Jeffrey Collins continues the theme of art exhibition as a mode of social and national identity formation with a comparative study of display strategies at two papal museums of classical antiquities in Rome, the Capitoline (begun in the 1730s) and the Vatican's Pio-Clementino (begun in the 1770s). Collins re-imagines the appearance and aesthetic, conceptual, and political concerns that shaped two different curatorial projects. The Capitoline was a holistically conceived retrofit overseen by an erudite amateur, while the Pio-Clementino was a substantial, evolving renovation initiated by a professional scholar, Giambattista Visconti, who contributed significantly to the establishment of art history as a discipline. The two sites represent a shift in the understanding of the museum as a physical and affective space: the densely arranged interior of the Capitoline was conceived as an instructive repository, with objects grouped by size or type, while the Pio-Clementino staged more dramatic installations that both evoked classical settings and invited emotional, absorptive viewing experiences. These spaces contained many striking intimations of the modern museum, from the prohibition of food and

drink at the Capitoline to the statue-lined halls and enshrined masterpieces of the Pio-Clementino.

Finally, in the most methodologically self-reflexive essay in the volume, and therefore a fitting coda, Daniel Brewer confronts the uncomfortable but salutary fact that any interpretation is a historically and culturally specific construction: 'in a sense all historical knowledge is impossible, in that the present can never know the otherness of the past as lived experience' (216). Brewer questions the apparent objectivity of documentation, description, and museological reconstruction--still widely taken for granted--and tests the limits of what can be known about historical spaces and identities. His case study is an elegant salon designed in the 1730s for the Paris residence of a tax collector (*fermier-général*) and now a period room at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Brewer juxtaposes the room's original urban and social milieu on a street near the Place Vendôme, a site of contested self-fashioning by upwardly mobile families who possessed great wealth but lacked noble birth, with the 'imaginary experience of intimacy' (228) offered by a museum installation that claims to preserve a lost way of life. He argues that, far from offering seamless, romantic communion with the past (à la Pio-Clementino), the period room actually makes the 'collision' (231) of historical difference visible, revealing both the otherness of eighteenth-century subjectivities and the fact that narratives about the past are very much about the present.

All of the essays are carefully researched, focused, interesting contributions to the cultural history of architecture and interiors. Perhaps the most striking insight to emerge from the book as a whole is that interiors could negotiate the complexities of contested identities. The treasonous decor at Callaly Castle was a bid by marginalized Catholics for status and fortune under a 'Pretender' whose accession was far from certain. The tax collectors of the Place Vendôme threatened the social order with their wealth and appropriation of noble codes. The residences of notorious actress/courtesans, an erudite bluestocking, and private art collectors attempted to disavow the specter of morally dubious, privatized consumption--and, in the women's cases, also sought to legitimate transgressive gender roles. Interestingly, even the most privileged patrons struggled with unstable positions. For the exiled Elector of Bavaria and the prince-bishops of Würzburg, the design and use of space constructed images of authority that were unmatched by real political power. Similarly, the Pio-Clementino museum promoted the confident cultural and political agenda of an embattled papacy. These examples trouble any easy correlation between artistic expression and socio-political reality. Spatial and decorative strategies are rhetorical and aspirational; their dazzling arguments often mask situations that are far less coherent and secure.

Building on this point, and going beyond the scope of the volume itself, it might be productive to consider some problems that haunt the study of patronage in general and the study of eighteenth-century interiors in particular. The first is a question of agency. As Baxter notes in her introduction, the concept of self-fashioning, first developed in literary theory, has had a major impact on the history

of art and architecture.³ It has been especially influential in revisionist scholarship on eighteenth-century patrons and consumers. The idea of social actors who were not simply shaped by culture and ideology, but who actively manipulated its codes for their own ends, has helped to illuminate both the expressive capacity of decorative art and the agency of non-normative individuals such as powerful women, newly wealthy financiers, and disaffected nobles.⁴ In other words, arguments about self-fashioning have granted historical and disciplinary value to artifacts, environments, and subject positions that have been marginalized not only by eighteenth-century standards, but also by historiographic biases.

The tendency to regard design as an expression of selfhood is further strengthened by two eighteenth-century concepts discussed by Martin in her essay on architectural theory: the idea of decorum (known in French theory as *convenance*), which stipulated that a residence should be appropriate to, and clearly convey, the occupant's social identity; and the idea that visual and spatial cues could be manipulated to elicit specific responses. Investment in these principles was evident in both the design practices of traditional elites and the adoption of aristocratic conceits by bourgeois and newly ennobled consumers. It also generated considerable anxiety about the breakdown of a transparent, stable relationship between status and self-presentation.⁵ Such semiotic ambiguity might seem to undermine decorum by exposing design as fiction, but ultimately it bolstered the idea that--rightly or wrongly--interiors represented their occupants as they wished to be seen.

But here is the catch for historians. By claiming active roles for interiors and their orchestrators, it is tempting to conflate agency with intentionality and imply that formal choices synthesized to produce deliberately conceived--if perhaps unstable or controversial--personas. Eighteenth-century patrons and consumers undoubtedly understood that identities could be crafted through acts of design, commission, purchase, and display. But this does not necessarily mean that every act was strategic, that every signifier signified as planned, or that every sign registered with its intended audience. To what degree could even the most deliberate self-fashioner control this process? What if--as critics of the time feared--viewers were unable to recognize the message, or interpreted it in competing ways? Is it possible that even quite deliberate material declarations could be misconstrued, or even generate associations that undermined their ostensible aims? Is there a

³ The canonical text is Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, originally published in 1980.

⁴ See, respectively, Katie Scott, 'Framing Ambition: The Interior Politics of Mme de Pompadour', in *Between Luxury and the Everyday: The Decorative Arts in Eighteenth-Century France*, special issue of *Art History* 28:2, April 2005, 248-90; Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de' Medici to Marie-Antoinette*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2011; Rochelle Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme: Architecture and Social Mobility in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Scott, *The Rococo Interior*.

⁵ John Shovlin, 'The Cultural Politics of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies* 23:4, Fall 2000, 577-606.

spatial and decorative unconscious whose latent meanings are hidden from historical actors but recoverable by historians? Scholars of painting have begun to explore the ways in which even highly programmatic images could backfire, producing unintended and even diametrically counter-intentional meanings.⁶ It would be exciting to see more attention to such possibilities in the study of interiors as well.

Furthermore, the reception of design was not just about how people understood what they saw. More literally but just as importantly, it was a matter of *what* they could see, for how long, and under what circumstances. As Kis observes in his essay on the palace at Würzburg, the demands of etiquette and the length of time one spent in a room could mean that the decoration was noticed only briefly. Taken further, the question of visibility puts considerable pressure on the analysis of how interiors generated meaning. Vision in eighteenth-century interiors was compromised by multiple factors.⁷ Despite the large windows, mirrors, and light-coloured paneling that made rooms brighter than those of previous periods, spaces could still be quite dim. In the evenings, and even overcast days, the flickering flames of candles and fireplaces turned decorative features into ghostly presences and dancing glints. Some elements, such as chandeliers and paintings hung above doorways, could never be seen closely enough to appreciate their visual nuances, and even proximate objects might be glimpsed only in passing. Some people might move through a space only once, while others might return many times and therefore register its features more fully.

Moreover, the codes of elite social conduct proscribed staring, which was undesirable for several reasons. It was thought to distort posture and facial expression and divert attention from the all-important goal of pleasing others. It also was associated with unsavory commercial expertise, provincial ignorance, and parvenu acquisitiveness. Interiors may have been highly motivated ensembles, but in many cases their effects and messages were more subject to fleeting glances than to sustained scrutiny. Indeed, part of what made the galleries and museums discussed by Richter and Collins so remarkable, was the fact that they enabled (light permitting) a mode of contemplation that was discouraged in other settings. The practice of close looking that took root in Enlightenment exhibition spaces quickly became, and still is, central to the methods of art history. But it can tempt scholars into an unexamined equation of visibility and value that is anachronistic for a world without electric light, photographically illustrated museum catalogues, or high-resolution digital images. The idea of interiors as spaces of limited vision raises

⁶ For example, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France*, London, Yale University Press, 2002; Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006, especially 187-214; Mary D. Sheriff, 'The Portrait of the Queen', in Dena Goodman, ed, *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, New York and London, Routledge, 2003, 45-71.

⁷ The following points are developed further in Mimi Hellman, 'Enchanted Night: Decoration, Sociability, and Visuality after Dark', in Charissa Bremer-David, ed, *Paris: Life & Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011, 91-113.

troubling questions about the virtuoso workmanship, telling clues of authorship, and sophisticated iconography that scholars analyze at length. It further complicates the issue of agency: even if a scheme was planned, how could it construct identity if it was only vaguely or sporadically seen? Reconstructions of what interiors contained and how they were understood need to grapple with the highly unstable nature of visual experience.

Questioning the primacy of vision leads to other issues of perception that also would reward further study. As Martin notes in her essay, some eighteenth-century writings address the ways in which spaces could delight all the senses. Surviving objects also suggest a multisensory esthetic: lush upholstery, chiming clocks, vases for potpourri, paintings of appetizing still lifes. A considerable body of recent scholarship heralds what some have called a 'sensory turn' in the humanities and social sciences, and this work has provocative implications for the largely ocularcentric literature on interiors.⁸ Indeed, since many studies of sensoriality address a single modality individually, there is still much to be learned about the interplay of concurrent, mutually informing experiences within particular settings. What were the roles of hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting in the performance of identities? How were they qualified, like vision, by material circumstances, corporeal ideals, and social values? What about the sense of proprioception, the body's awareness of its position, balance, and movement in space? How can fragmentary, highly positioned historical evidence be used to re-imagine ephemeral, embodied experiences? How much speculation is acceptable, and how can the interpreter know when modern sensory and social values compromise the analysis?

The prospect of speculation introduces one final issue. The conventions of academic research, writing, and illustration, together with the limits (largely due to cost) that publishers often impose on the quantity and quality of reproductions, make it very hard to capture the full complexity of an interior. It can be difficult to compose an easily readable written description of an entire room, let alone a whole building. More liberal use of marking and annotation on plans, elevations, axonometric renderings, and photographs could help to lighten the burden of explanation. But such images still reduce spaces to two dimensions. More creative work is needed to take full advantage of how digital technologies can be used to dynamically visualize spatial relationships, sightlines and circulation routes, furniture arrangements, sensory and thematic patterns, and even telling alternatives to executed designs. A more animate sense of lost spaces and experiences also could be achieved if scholars tapped their inner novelists, embracing the potential of

⁸ A telling sign of the advanced state of sensory studies is a series of anthologies published by Berg: Michael Bull and Les Black, eds, *The Auditory Culture Reader*, 2003; Constance Classen, *The Book of Touch*, 2005; Jim Drobnick, ed, *The Smell Culture Reader*, 2006; Elizabeth Edwards and Kaushik Bhaumik, eds, *Visual Sense: A Cultural Reader*, 2008; David Howes, ed, *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 2005 and *The Sixth Sense Reader*, 2009; Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed, *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, 2005. See also Martin Jay, 'In the Realm of the Senses: An Introduction', *American Historical Review* 116:2, April 2011, 307-15.

imaginative description and storytelling.⁹ More controversially, perhaps, it might be productive to explore ways of involving the whole body more fully in the process of interpretation. Art historians know that spending time in a building or handling an original object can significantly shape an argument. Could this be taken further through efforts to reproduce material effects or even social situations? A major problem, of course, is the risk of anachronistic projection, and scholars might balk at re-enactment's associations with popular television and leisure practices. But, as Brewer's essay emphasizes, history is a construction profoundly shaped by the historian's present. Embodied material experience cannot be understood through language alone, and an error of physical reconstruction or sensory perception is not necessarily more grievous than misreading a text.¹⁰

In closing, the collaboration orchestrated by Baxter and Martin should be read not only for its many interesting insights, but also as a basis for further exploration. The body of work on domestic spaces, especially those occupied by elite consumers engaged with metropolitan culture, currently outstrips research on the homes of provincial consumers, humble city dwellers, and residents of colonial centers, as well as on public sites such as churches, government buildings, and theaters. There is so much more to do. Interrogating interiors means challenging historiographic and curatorial trends that have dismembered spaces, evicted their occupants, and assigned the pieces to different disciplines, specializations, and collections. It means keeping a daunting number of visual, spatial, and social variables in analytical play; drawing on an interdisciplinary range of knowledge; and re-imagining lost objects, ephemeral sensations, and buildings that survive only in pictures. It means wanting to tell stories, knowing that the stories can never be fully told, and being unafraid to speculate nonetheless. This is an exciting project for scholarship and teaching in the humanities and social sciences--and the development of neuroscience is bringing questions of spatial and sensory experience into the laboratory as well.¹¹ In the world of academe, increasingly hard pressed to justify costs, resource allocation, and the social relevance of its pursuits, the relationship between space and self can join scholars and students across the disciplines and strengthen critical awareness of how design constructs meaning in the present. Identities are performed today with just as much material and social complexity as in the eighteenth century, and with their own uneasy mixtures of

⁹ See, for instance, the vivid anecdotes (in part composite) that open the introduction and chapters 1, 2, and 7 of Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*.

¹⁰ For some of the possibilities and problems, see Vanessa Agnew, 'History's Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present', *Rethinking History* 11:3, September 2007, 299-312; Alexander Cook, 'Sailing on The Ship: Re-enactment and the Quest for Popular History', *History Workshop Journal* 57, Spring 2004, 247-55; James Elkins, 'Why Art Historians Should Learn to Paint: The Case for Studio Experience,' unpublished article in progress (1994-), <http://www.jameselkins.com/images/stories/jamese/pdfs/A-h-should-draw.pdf>.

¹¹ John Onians, ed, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007; Barbara Maria Stafford, *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007.

agency and anxiety--as well as unrecognized impulses that only future generations will be able to discern.

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