

Klagenfurter  
Beiträge zur  
Visuellen Kultur  
Band 2

**Visualität, Kultur  
und Gesellschaft**

Jörg Helbig

Arno Russegger

Rainer Winter

(Hrsg.)



**Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek**

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

Jörg Helbig / Arno Russegger / Rainer Winter (Hrsg.)

*Visualität, Kultur und Gesellschaft*

Klagenfurter Beiträge zur Visuellen Kultur, 2

Köln: Halem, 2014

Die Reihe *Klagenfurter Beiträge zur Visuellen Kultur* wird herausgegeben von Jörg Helbig und Rainer Winter.

Die gedruckte Ausgabe dieses Buches ist 2013  
im Herbert von Halem Verlag erschienen.

Veröffentlicht mit Unterstützung des Forschungsrates  
der Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt

Alle Rechte, insbesondere das Recht der Vervielfältigung und Verbreitung sowie der Übersetzung, vorbehalten.  
Kein Teil des Werkes darf in irgendeiner Form (durch Fotokopie, Mikrofilm oder ein anderes Verfahren) ohne schriftliche Genehmigung des Verlages reproduziert oder unter Verwendung elektronischer Systeme (inkl. Online-Netzwerken) gespeichert, verarbeitet, vervielfältigt oder verbreitet werden.

© 2014 by Herbert von Halem Verlag, Köln

ISSN 2197-0602

**E-Book (PDF)** ISBN 978-3-86962-119-7

**Print:** ISBN 978-3-86962-093-0

Den Herbert von Halem Verlag erreichen Sie auch im Internet unter <http://www.halem-verlag.de>  
E-Mail: [info@halem-verlag.de](mailto:info@halem-verlag.de)

SATZ: Herbert von Halem Verlag

GESTALTUNG: Claudia Ott Grafischer Entwurf, Düsseldorf

Copyright Lexicon ©1992 by The Enschedé Font Foundry.

Lexicon® is a Registered Trademark of The Enschedé Font Foundry.

KLAGENFURTER BEITRÄGE ZUR VISUELLEN KULTUR

Jörg Helbig / Arno Russegger / Rainer Winter (Hrsg.)

# Visualität, Kultur und Gesellschaft

HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG



## Inhalt

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| JÖRG HELBIG / ARNO RUSSEGGER / RAINER WINTER<br>Einleitung                                                                                                                                                                                 | 9   |
| HEINZ TSCHACHLER<br>Visual Culture and America's Money:<br>You can see a lot by just looking                                                                                                                                               | 13  |
| SEBASTIAN NESTLER<br>Kommunikations-Guerilla als Aneignungskunst<br>und politischer Aktivismus aus der Perspektive der<br>Cultural Studies                                                                                                 | 36  |
| THOMAS HERMANN<br>Bildwelt Schule: Visuelle Darstellung von Schule<br>und ihren Akteuren in der Schweizer Presse                                                                                                                           | 53  |
| JULIA BERTSCHIK<br>Inszenierungen der Ware.<br>Reklame und Mode als Kultur- und Literaturphänomene<br>Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts                                                                                                          | 80  |
| PRIMUS-HEINZ KUCHER<br>Die Welt der Worte und die Faszination der Bilder.<br>Text-Bild-Relationen in der (deutschsprachigen) Literatur<br>seit der Laokoon-Diskussion über E. T. A. Hoffmann bis<br>Rolf Dieter Brinkmann und Herta Müller | 102 |

|                                                                                                                                  |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| SIMONE HEILGENDORFF                                                                                                              | 132 |
| Visuelle Komponenten der aktuellen Musikforschung                                                                                |     |
| STEFFEN A. SCHMIDT                                                                                                               | 162 |
| Zwischen Visualisierung und Verkörperung<br>von Musik                                                                            |     |
| RALF ADELMANN                                                                                                                    | 174 |
| Bild- und Medientheorien der Naturwissenschaften:<br>Epistemologische Effektivität von Visualisierungen<br>in der Astronomie     |     |
| MARTIN G. WEISS                                                                                                                  | 191 |
| Bilder des Bösen: Schädel, Hirne, Gene.<br>Modelle präventiver Forensik von Pseudo-Aristoteles<br>bis zum ›Human Genome Project‹ |     |
| Herausgeber                                                                                                                      | 206 |
| Autorinnen und Autoren                                                                                                           | 207 |





## Einleitung

Die Forschungen zur Visuellen Kultur untersuchen, wie mit Bildern Bedeutungen produziert, etabliert, infrage gestellt und verändert werden. Wie und in welchen Kontexten entstehen Bilder? Wie werden sie konsumiert und rezipiert? Welche gesellschaftlichen Funktionen üben sie aus? Das Interesse gilt also den vielfältigen Verknüpfungen von Visualität, Kultur und Gesellschaft. Es sollen die kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen des Visuellen, aber auch der visuelle Charakter von Kultur und Gesellschaft aufgezeigt werden. Unsere Wahrnehmung, unser Sehen, ist kulturell und gesellschaftlich geformt. Deshalb ist es wichtig, nicht nur Bilder, sondern auch deren Rezeption und Betrachtung in unterschiedlichen kulturellen Kontexten zu untersuchen.

Möglichst vielseitige kommunikative Kompetenzen im visuellen Bereich des kulturellen Gefüges unserer immer globalisierter organisierten Welt gehören heute zum Kern dessen, was im Zusammenhang mit aktuellen diskursiven Leitbegriffen wie ›Literacy‹, ›Media Literacy‹ bzw. generell ›New Literacies‹ diskutiert wird. Dabei geht es, kurz gesagt, darum, das herkömmliche Konzept des Alphabetismus, wie er das aufklärerisch-technizistische Selbstverständnis der abendländischen Zivilisation geprägt hat, um produktive und rezeptive Fertigkeiten im Umgang mit modernen (vor allem elektronischen) Text- und Bildmedien zu ergänzen. Klar ist, dass Visuelle Kultur vor diesem theoretischen Hintergrund nur als ein inter- bzw. transdisziplinäres System gedacht und analysiert werden kann.

Diesem Anspruch folgt auch der vorliegende Sammelband, in dem Beiträge zu mehreren Ringvorlesungen zum Thema ›Visuelle Kultur‹ un-

ter den Gesichtspunkten von ›Visualität, Kultur und Gesellschaft‹ zusammengestellt worden sind, die in den letzten Jahren an der Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt stattgefunden haben. Zur Sprache kommen dabei Kultur-, Film-, Literatur- und Musikwissenschaftlerinnen und -wissenschaftler ebenso wie Vertreterinnen und Vertreter der Philosophie und Pädagogik.

Den Auftakt macht HEINZ TSCHACHLER mit einer Untersuchung zur visuellen Aufmachung amerikanischer Banknoten, die sich nicht nur auf ökonomische Rahmenbedingungen bezieht, sondern bereits viel über politische Kommunikationsprozesse zwischen staatlicher Obrigkeit und Staatsvolk, über nationales Geschichts- und Selbstverständnis verrät. Das ist kein schlechtes Beispiel dafür, dass die Begriffe, mit denen die Cultural Studies arbeiten, einer permanenten diskursiven Neubildung bedürfen. Davon geht SEBASTIAN NESTLER in seinen Überlegungen aus, die sich heutigen Möglichkeiten von Kritik und Widerstand im Kontext der Postmoderne widmen. In einem Zeitalter, das maßgeblich durch das Visuelle geprägt ist, ortet der Autor – unter Berufung auf Michel Foucault – im allgegenwärtigen Bildraum, der uns umgibt, die Wirksamkeit durchaus politischer Machtbestrebungen, gegen die man sich nur mit ebenfalls kulturell wirksamen Taktiken zur Wehr setzen könne. Anhand des Konzepts der Kommunikations-Guerilla entwirft Nestler schließlich Perspektiven »praktischen semiotischen Widerstands« als »Störungen der ›normalen‹ Alltagskommunikation«, um »die Reproduktion kultureller Hegemonie zu unterbrechen«, und geht auf Beispiele wie die deutsche Aktivistengruppe *Front Deutscher Äpfel* oder Werbekampagnen unter dem Signum des sogenannten *adbusting* ein.

Auf eine komplexe Bilderwelt anderer Art rekurriert der Beitrag von THOMAS HERMANN, indem er visuelle Darstellungsformen von Schule und ihren Akteuren in der schweizerischen Presse analysiert. Bemerkenswert, wie eng sich auch in diesem Kontext fotografische und Denkbilder als Zeugnisse konstruierter Wirklichkeit, in der sich die verschiedensten Machtinteressen überschneiden, führen lassen. Den Fokus auf Kulturphänomene zu Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts verschiebt JULIA BERTSCHIK, für die Reklame und Mode als typische Bezugsgrößen gesellschaftlicher Diskurse figurieren, in denen grundsätzliche ästhetische Positionen neu verhandelt wurden, deren Auswirkungen sowohl ökonomische Veränderungen betrafen als etwa auch die Praxis zeitgenössischer Theateraufführungen. Einen noch größeren, mehrere Jahrhunderte umfassenden kulturgeschichtlichen Bogen literarischer Text-

Bild-Relationen spannt PRIMUS-HEINZ KUCHER, der Techniken der Visualisierung bei Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftstellern wie E. T. A. Hoffmann, Dieter Brinkmann und Raoul Hausmann oder Herta Müller erörtert und mit einer Fülle von illustrierendem Material versieht.

SIMONE HEILGENDORFF geht visuellen Komponenten in der Musikforschung nach und präsentiert Beispiele der traditionellen Ikonografie von Instrumenten und konkreten Aufführungssituationen über Konzertfilme und Musiksoftware bis hin zu Klanginstallationen und experimentellem Musiktheater. Dass Musik nicht allein aus akustischen Stimuli besteht, ist auch ein zentraler Gedanke der Ausführungen von STEFFEN A. SCHMIDT, der exemplarisch jene intermedialen Prozesse beleuchtet, die Musik in lebensweltliche Zusammenhänge einbinden und spezifische ästhetische Formen (Partitur, Musikfilm, Dirigieren oder Tanz) zwischen Visualisierung und Verkörperung hervorbringen.

Den Abschluss des vorliegenden Bandes stellen zwei Beiträge dar, in denen pointierte Analysen zu Wissenschaftsdisziplinen zur Sprache kommen, deren Verwendung von Bildern jeweils ganz eigene Praxen bzw. Denktraditionen hervorgebracht hat: Der Medienwissenschaftler RALF ADELMANN legt dar, welche Bild- und Medientheorien es im Bereich der Astronomie gibt, um beispielsweise Fotos auswerten zu können, die von einer Marssonde auf die Erde übermittelt werden und als Datenbilder, nicht als Abbilder funktionieren. Die Frage, ob das Aussehen von Menschen als äußeres Abbild seelischer Dispositionen gewertet werden kann, die Idee der Physiognomik also, ist Thema des Philosophen MARTIN G. WEISS. Spätestens seit den pseudo-aristotelischen *Physiognomica* zieht sich die Vorstellung, vom Körperlichen, Objektiven am Menschen auf dessen mentale Eigenschaften (Fähigkeiten und Anlagen, Gefühle, Temperament und Charakter sowie Krankheiten und Schicksalsverlauf) schließen zu können, durch die Geschichte der Anthropologie. Vor diesem Hintergrund kommentiert Weiß das *Human Genome Project* und dessen Konsequenzen.

Wie bereits in Band 1 der Reihe *Klagenfurter Beiträge zur Visuellen Kultur* ergibt sich aus den nachfolgenden Artikeln ein breites methodisches Spektrum, dessen kleinster gemeinsamer Nenner eine Orientierung an Forschungsfragen der Visuellen Kultur ist. Für Interessierte eröffnet sich auf diese Weise nicht nur ein Überblick über wesentliche Konzepte des Visuellen in den einzelnen Wissenschaften, seitdem in den 1990er-Jahren ein umfassender *pictorial/iconic turn* ausgerufen worden ist, sondern aufgrund der Überschneidungen und Ausdifferenzierung von Terminologien,

Perspektiven und Erkenntnissen eine Fülle von Angeboten, sich selbst mit dem Thema auseinanderzusetzen und den Blick auf die eigene Disziplin zu erweitern.

Die Herausgeber möchten sich bei Matthias Wieser für seine Organisation einer Ringvorlesung bedanken.

HEINZ TSCHACHLER

## Visual Culture and America's Money: You can see a lot by just looking

When we think of how the once Almighty Dollar is doing these days, there is barely a word that is fit enough to capture the magnitude of the crisis. Even Alan Greenspan, the former Federal Reserve chairman and not usually a man for superlatives, felt compelled to admit that the crisis had developed into a »once-in-a-century credit tsunami« (*The Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 2008, online). Indeed, the numbers are truly staggering. When subprime mortgage lenders began declaring bankruptcy in August 2007, the Federal Reserve and other financial authorities believed that the losses would peak around \$100 billion. Instead, the crisis spread with amazing rapidity to other markets, from savings banks (Indy-Mac) to mortgage lenders (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) to investment banks (Lehman Brothers). In October 2008, the entire financial system melted down. Estimates of the total losses that would eventually result then ranged from \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion (CASSIDY 2008: 14).

Such figures are enough to put any one into a gloomy mood, including the cartoonist who portrayed the iconic George Washington with a clinical thermometer in his mouth (see fig. 1).

The cartoon image of human frailty and ailing tells us that money is more than a mere commercial convenience, performing its proper function by facilitating trade and investment. Although often this fact has been below the radar of scholars and the public, it is useful to remind ourselves that pieces of money have always been documents of culture, artifacts that speak to the identity of a group of people, a place, and a time. This fact is particularly important for a *national* currency. The symbolic process by

FIGURE 1  
Ailing George



Source: *Der Standard*, November 11, 2008, p. 26

which a national currency positions individuals as patriotic citizens is not a ›natural‹ one but stems from the intellectual labor of cultural elites. These elites know very well that for any sign to stay popular, it must be constantly recalled. With the increasing distance from George Washington's lifetime, for instance, both the founder's name and his image need to be reintroduced to each new generation of Americans. Already the mere mentioning of (or naming after) Washington intensifies his popularity as the Founding Father of the Republic, but semiotically this is far less effective than a pictorial representation. The visual ›look‹ of monetary tokens therefore is a crucial means of communicating with people, not simply about function or basic ›use‹ but at the same time about identity and meaning. Whereas banks and similar institutions contribute to a community's strength and identity politically and economically, the significance of the imagery on money lies in its symbolic contribution. In plain English, money is inscribed with *meanings* as well as *uses*.

Throughout this article, I will often use the term ›money‹ in a rather loose sense. Economists, by contrast, usually distinguish between ›money‹ and ›currency.‹ ›Money‹ is really anything people can use to buy something else with; thus, ›money‹ concerns the measure of value. ›Currency‹ usually refers to the medium of exchange and may refer to coins as well as paper money, by which is meant a wide range of circulating media, including

bank and government notes, but also merchant bills, checks, letters of credit, bills of exchange, and traveler's checks. In the technical terminology of American legislation, however, ›currency‹ means bank and government notes, whereas the term ›money‹ is generally reserved for coins. The division stems from the common-law tradition, which considered bank notes simply as commercial instruments and would define ›currency‹ as anything ›passing current in the market as money‹ or, more simply, as ›circulation.‹ The old terminology, however, has not been sustained in more recent legislation and, in conformity with modern economic and legal literature, it has become customary to speak of ›paper money‹ and, on the other hand, include coins in the term ›currency‹ (NUSSBAUM 1957: 52; EAGLETON/WILLIAMS 2007: 188).

With all that said, let us consider the current one-dollar note. This note is truly unique in that no other piece of paper money, American or non-American, communicates such abundant information about the nation's history, the structure of the nation, and its highest goals and aspirations. Paraphrasing W. J. T. Mitchell (1986, 1994, 2006), we might say that the current one-dollar note desires, perhaps even impels us to realize the magnitude or importance of the existence of a *national* currency. Literally, as an icon the one-dollar note is produced and put into circulation as capturing something sacred and honored with a relative worship – the American nation. It does not therefore stand for something else but rather is a form that enables a singular meaning. Thus, the one-dollar note serves as a sign of immortality within an American cultural memory, even though historically it is specifically located and has meant different things in different times.

The note's face most prominently features a portrait of George Washington, the first president of the United States. Other iconographic details include the numeral ›1,‹ which stands for the bill's nominal value, its denomination, and the seals of the Treasury Department and of the Federal Reserve Bank, which stand for the two institutions guaranteeing its value. In addition, there are the facsimile signatures of the Treasurer of the United States and of the Secretary of the Treasury (the note shown below bears the signatures respectively of Rosario Marin and John W. Snow). Likewise on the face is a serial number with a prefix and suffix letter to identify it (in our case this letter is an ›F,‹ which indicates that the note was issued by the Federal Reserve Bank in Atlanta). Also indicated is the series of which the note is a part (in our case the series year is 2003, which indicates that a change in the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury had occurred in that year). The phrase

›Federal Reserve Note‹ signifies the issuing institution as well as the decree authorizing the note's production, hence its ›kind‹ or ›class.‹ The sentence, »This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private« summarizes the dominant fiscal theory. In addition, just to make sure there is no mistaking the semiological relation, there is again the phrase ›The United States of America.‹ Thus, the presence of the United States of America as a fiscal and/or monetary community is established in words and in image. The final stamp of approval is the Treasury Seal, which has appeared on every piece of paper money issued by the Treasury Department since 1862.

FIGURE 2

\$1 Federal Reserve note, Series 2003, face (top) and back (above)



On the note's back are repeated both the nominal value and the phrase ›The United States of America.‹ The famous phrase ›In God We Trust‹ gives the note a divine imprimatur. The phrase encodes the conviction that the contract governing the relations between the state and the citizens derives

its legitimacy from God. In plain English, it means that the people of the United States should trust that God has empowered the state to fulfill the promises and obligations articulated on the note, in particular the paying back of debts. However, the phrase ›In God We Trust‹ means all this specifically to people who know that it is the national motto and who value it. (They may not know, though, that it has been the national motto only since the Act of July 30, 1956.) Similarly, the two circles – the one featuring a picture of a pyramid capped by an eye, the other featuring a stylized bald eagle – are also meaningful primarily to people who know that they represent the two sides of the Great Seal of the United States, put there during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt (TSCHACHLER 2010: 53ff.).

In a general sense, what gives money its authority – for instance what distinguishes a bank or government note from a piece of paper torn from a magazine – is its backing by a trustworthy individual or institution, reinforced (but not guaranteed) by its look and feel, its ›peculiar properties of representation‹ (FOUCAULT 1970: 175f.) or, more simply, its ›design.‹ Currency design generates meaning through embodying pieces of paper or metal with symbolic significance; it gives functional artifacts a symbolic form. There are two distinct kinds of design features. Firstly, there are those that are purely ornamental or have security implications. Secondly, there are those that have historical or idealistic significance, such as the Great Seal of the United States, pictures of famous buildings, monuments, paintings, and portraits of Great Americans. Clearly, it is the latter kind of design features that are employed in constituting the symbolic domain. A currency speaks to us through these images, which are its rhetoric of endearment. Conceptually, therefore, this text owes a great deal to the interdisciplinary field of visual studies.

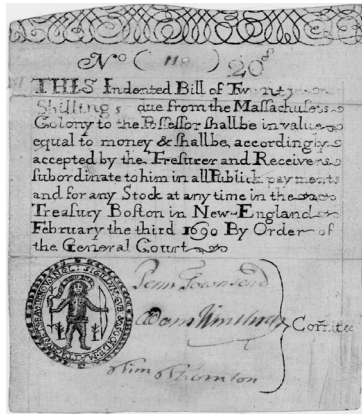
Theoreticians distinguish between two areas of visual studies, respectively called ›iconology‹ and ›iconography‹ (MITCHELL 1986; REYNOLDS 1997; BURKE 2001). Iconology is the theory of images, attending to what images are and how they convey meaning, as well as to the social and political contexts of image production and consumption. By contrast, iconography focuses on specific images, pictures, and likenesses, such as images on the currency, religious icons, and photographs. Through its own hermeneutics, iconography also focuses on images' inner tensions and structures, as well as on their temporal and affective interplays. In German-speaking Europe, the two different areas are respectively called ›Bildwissenschaft[en]‹ (SACHS-HOMBACH 2005) and ›Bildkritik‹ (BOEHM 2007).

Currency iconography has its own language, together with its own grammar, which includes syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Hence we talk about a note's face and back, its rectangular space, its types of design features, much as we talk about a coin's obverse and reverse. We talk about different denominations and types of notes and coins. In addition, we talk about more subtle codes of representation ranging from literal depiction to more abstract and arbitrary symbols and metaphors. These codes extend to choice of subject matter, point of view, composition, and so on – whatever affects the generation of meaning. Images on currency are, then, constructions that are shaped by, and help shape, history. Reading them depends not on their fidelity to truth and reality but upon the particular narratives in which they are placed. Obviously, the narrative control of images becomes more ideologically imperative when questions of identity are at issue. Such questions acquire additional force during periods of instability or unrest: In the United States, these would be the War of Independence, the Civil War, the Great Depression, and the renewed financial and economic crisis of the present.

At the beginning of European settlement in North America, metallic money (>specie<) predominated as the basis for most of the colonies' money. Yet unlike in other colonies, in North America not enough coins of any kind were available ever, and there was an almost complete absence of precious metals in what is now the United States of America – gold was not discovered in any usable quantity until 1848 and silver even later. These facts left Americans little choice. Like it or not, they had to rely on paper money, which developed early and increased rapidly (DOTY 2008). Massachusetts led the way in 1690, when it issued its famous >Bills of Credit< in order to pay soldiers returning from a disastrous military expedition against the French in Canada. At the time, the venture stopped the mouths and assuaged the passions of the hungry (and angry) soldiers and seamen. Among later historians, it has earned for early American paper money the distinction of being the first authorized paper money issued by any government in the western world (GALBRAITH 1975: 45ff.).

A text notice takes up most of the space on this bill, which was typical of early paper money. The main >art< – the colony's seal – featured a human figure that was done in a decidedly down-home folk art design. That figure, though labeled by numismatists as >Standing Indian< or >Indian on the colony Seal,< bears a striking similarity to the figures on the popular late-sixteenth-century European >Wildman< thalers. This could have been

FIGURE 3  
20s, Massachusetts, 1690



Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society

deliberate. The colony's seal was printed on the bill from an engraved copper plate that had been modeled from a 1675 woodcarving by John Foster. The original seal, however, was produced in 1629 by a London silversmith, who in all likelihood would have been familiar with ›wildman‹ figures (TSCHACHLER 2010: 81f.).

FIGURE 4  
›Wildman‹ thaler, Germany, 1629



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wildermann\\_thaler.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wildermann_thaler.jpg) [06/22/10]

By 1750, every single one of the thirteen colonies was using paper money. On the eve of the American Revolution, Alexander Hamilton, who eventually became the first Secretary of the Treasury, estimated that the money supply in America »consisted of one-fourth specie and three-fourths paper money« (NEWMAN 1997: 13). Individual bills bore all kinds of political mottoes – such as »Issued in defence of American Liberty« and »*Ense petit placidam, sub Libertate, Quietem*« (»By arms he seeks peace under freedom«). These mottoes (as well as images of eagles, bears, snakes, and the like) were expected to contribute to a sense of identity as American patriots. Generally in order to foster commitment and attachment to the idea of popular sovereignty, anti-British propaganda was produced in mass quantities in numerous forms. Pamphlets, newspaper articles, editorials, broadsides, songs and poems, cartoons and speeches, sermons, letters, and plays were utilized. Many of the people committed to a sense of political community and identity quickly came to see the currency as an important tool that could further its realization.

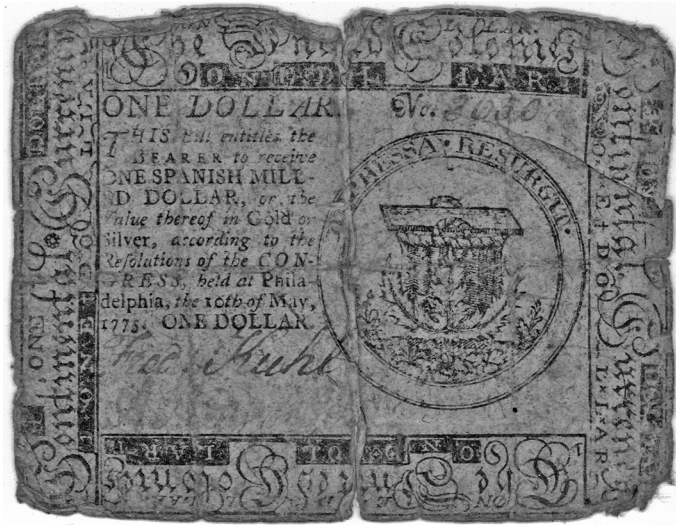
During the colonial era, the ›peculiar properties of representation‹ on America's money had been those of a ›foreign‹ sovereign. Following independence, the United States' very first official coin was emblazoned with the inscription ›We Are One.‹ In 1791, Alexander Hamilton recognized coins as »vehicles of useful impressions« (in MCGINLEY 1993: 249). Hamilton, good federalist that he was, had in mind ›impressions‹ of the nation's founders. However, as of 1792, all coins would have one side devoted to a representation of Liberty, while the other side would show an eagle. This is owed largely to George Washington's objection to having his name and portrait placed on the nation's coinage, considering this a ›monarchical‹ practice. Still, the fledgling republic had very little gold or silver, so that the new coins did not monopolize the coinage in the first decades of the republic. As a result, what symbolic messages there were on the coinage, they were at first heavily diluted by the presence of foreign (or localized) coins.

As regards paper money, the so-called ›Continental currency‹ was issued in such excessive numbers during the War of Independence that soon it was caught up in a destabilizing hyperinflation. By January 14, 1779, the date of the last issue of the Continentals, the bills had depreciated so much that \$100 in specie would purchase \$2,600 in paper currency. By February 1781, the date of the last listing, \$7,500 in paper dollars was needed to buy \$100 in Spanish silver dollars. Not surprisingly, this led to strong fears among politicians and strong reactions among people in general. Indeed, the at-

tempt to build national identity at the expense of economic and political stability – the production of symbolic rather than real capital – soured many Americans on the idea of a paper currency for generations to come. James Madison, one of the founders, too was disgusted, calling the current »rage for paper money« an »improper or wicked project,« which only a strong federal government committed to »hard money« and a country run on republican (that is, on representational) principles would be likely to avoid (MADISON 1990: 1018).

FIGURE 5

**\$1, Continental Currency, motto ›DEPRESSA RESURGIT‹  
(›Though oppressed it rises‹)**



Source: American Numismatic Association Money Museum

When the United States Constitution was finally thrashed out, the document *implicitly* denied the federal government the right to issue paper money, at the same time as it *explicitly* denied the individual states the same prerogative. »No State,« says Art. 1, sec. 10, §1, »shall [...] make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts.« Therefore, the question is, if the States cannot issue paper money, this must mean that the federal government can. This is not the case, as the Tenth