

Edited by
Sébastien Clerbois
and Martina Droth



REVIVAL AND INVENTION

Sculpture through its Material Histories

Peter Lang



Materials may seem to be sculpture's most obvious aspect. Traditionally seen as a means to an end, and frequently studied in terms of technical procedures, their intrinsic meaning often remains unquestioned. Yet materials comprise a field rich in meaning, bringing into play a wide range of issues crucial to our understanding of sculpture. This book places materials at the centre of our approach to sculpture, examining their symbolic and aesthetic language, their abstract and philosophical associations, and the ways in which they reveal the political, economic and social contexts of sculptural practice. Spanning a chronology from antiquity through to the end of the nineteenth century, the essays collected in this book uncover material properties as fundamental to artistic intentionality.

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SÉBASTIEN CLERBOIS

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MARTINA DROTH



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Acknowledgements

This book began as a three-day international colloquium at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in 2005, organized collaboratively by the ULB and the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, at which 20 speakers, from seven countries, delivered their papers in two languages. The idea for the conference originated in an exhibition titled *Bronze: The Power of Life and Death*, curated by Martina Droth at Leeds, which examined the rich symbolic meanings of bronze. A shared interest in the language of sculpture's materiality brought Martina Droth and Sébastien Clerbois together on this project and resulted in the present volume. Only a small selection of the papers given at the conference is presented here, yet it was the breadth and depth of all the contributions – by speakers, chairs and those attending – that have informed this project, and the editors would like to thank all those who participated for enriching our understanding of the subject so greatly.

This has been an expensive project, in particular as we sought to overcome language barriers where possible. The conference was presented in English and French by simultaneous translation (and we were indebted to David Stephens, Carine Puttevels and Vincent Buck for their skilful interpretation throughout the conference), but it would have been prohibitive to publish this book in two languages. We opted for English as the common language, so as to assemble French, Belgian and German contributions in one volume, and allowing the work of these scholars (which so often remains untranslated) to be brought to a wider European and American readership. As well as including several translated texts, this book presents a number of papers written in English by scholars of a different first language. We are immensely grateful to our contributors and to our translator, Christopher Bourne, for their tremendous efforts, and for their patience and willingness, to work with us through the challenges this presented.

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The Henry Moore
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Introduction

Sculpture has long been the more marginal field relative to painting, treated as a specialism, a subject apart, rather than one that is integral to the history of art. This situation has begun to change markedly over the past twenty years or so, perhaps at least partly because of shifts in contemporary practices, which have given sculpture a newly configured place within wider, more loosely-defined approaches. The history of sculpture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is one that is marked, if anything, by the disappearance of works that may be defined as 'sculpture' with any clarity, while at the same time evidencing a trans-disciplinarity within which few works are made that do not evoke some kind of 'sculptural' aspect.

Materials have been central to this. For the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, sculpture's perceived conventionality was inextricably bound up with its objecthood, which in turn was innately defined by materials. The desire for the reinvention of a sculpture for the modern age, as articulated, for instance, by Umberto Boccioni's 1912 *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture*, was ultimately based on a rejection of sculpture's material traditions ('It is necessary to destroy the pretended nobility, entirely literary and traditional, of marble and bronze, and to deny squarely that one must use a single material for a sculptural ensemble').¹

Although Boccioni's own proclaimed attempts to create a model for sculpture that would break new ground were ultimately contradicted by their material transformation into bronze for the modern museum, the resonance of the ideas and assumptions about 'material conventions' left a long shadow, not least because they tended to remain *a priori*, as a means to an end largely left unquestioned. While art writing concerned with more recent and contemporary art has invariably explored its material significance (as per Joseph Beuys, for instance, or Carl Andre or Richard Serra, to name just a few obvious examples),² sculpture's earlier historical

practices were until recently left mostly untouched by these preoccupations, despite such momentous interventions as, notably, Michael Baxandall's *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (1980), Hugh Honour's earlier, ground-breaking series of articles 'Canova's Studio Practice' (1972), and, in the French-speaking world, the monumental *Sculpture, méthode et vocabulaire* by Marie-Thérèse Baudry (1978).³

Shifting decisively away from Platonic approaches, the objective of such studies was not simply to bring questions about materials back into the fold of the history of art, but, above all, to show that these questions, by their very nature, are analytically rich, and unavoidable for a holistic understanding of sculpture. But it is perhaps only in the past two decades or so, with studies such as Nicholas Penny's exhaustive survey *The Materials of Sculpture* (1993), or Thomas Raff's incisive, but as yet untranslated for an English-language readership, *Die Sprache der Materialien* (1994),⁴ that the implications of 'ordinary' material traditions – bronze, in particular, but also wax, wood, marbles – have been brought to the fore, becoming subject to similarly intensive and productive analyses extending across a range of art historical methodologies.

This book forms part of this ongoing endeavour: to arrive at an understanding of sculptural objects and trends in sculptural practice by working through an analysis of that which is most fundamental, empirical and matter-of-fact about sculpture: the material of which it is made. Given that sculpture is always made of materials, it may seem nonsensical to assemble a volume addressing seemingly disparate subjects and periods – from antiquity through the Renaissance and the Fin de Siècle, on works and trades variously associated with marble, bronze, ivory, wax, clay or plaster. But in making the materials of sculpture the common thread, these essays, in their different subjects and methodologies, converge on a singular preoccupation: to prioritize a way of looking and an approach to sculpture that acknowledges materials and materiality as central, from which meanings and implications emanate that can only be recognized through this process.

In this book, the analysis of sculpture's forms, images, methods, patronage and dissemination, radiates out from attention to materials. The essays range from looking at ways in which creativity is both constrained and inspired by material limitations, the desire to extend and exceed what seems materially possible; they examine origin and availability not only in

terms of giving rise to technical expertise and specialisms, but also in terms of how they underpin national identity and political zeal; and they show the ways in which inherent qualities, such as hardness or colour, become embedded in cultural codes at different periods.

The conference that formed the basis of this book, a three-day international colloquium in Brussels in 2005, organized collaboratively by the ULB and the Henry Moore Institute, was much more wide-ranging in scope than was possible to reflect in this book. In particular, while a number of valuable contributions on twentieth-century and contemporary art were given at the conference (including Jessica Ullrich's paper on contemporary wax sculpture, Dominic Rahtz's analysis of Carl Andre's metal floor works, and the materials of Arte Povera by Nicholas Cullinan), the present volume ends with the nineteenth century, so as to concentrate precisely on case-studies around materials that have been considered as 'traditional' for sculpture. The book opens with two historiographic essays, which trace the role that considerations of materials have played in the evaluation of different periods of art history. Michael Cole traces a historiography of the study of materials over the past two decades: while focusing on Renaissance scholarship, his essay provides a useful introduction to the chapters that follow, in setting out some of the ways in which the methods of art history have shaped and influenced the field. Following on, Carol Matusch demonstrates the extent to which materials are taken for granted in perceptions of classical sculpture: that, paradoxically, while the estimation of classical works is almost wholly grounded in a material hierarchy (bronze versus marble), the absence of more detailed considerations of how these materials function in relation to ancient culture has led to contradictions or blind-spots in the scholarship.

The remaining essays are arranged chronologically up to the end of the nineteenth century, but beyond the time-line, the reader will also encounter thematic discussions, in particular those that touch on perceptions of a hierarchical order of materials. The notion that the 'noble' materials of marble and bronze were more highly regarded than wax or terracotta is an analytical model that stands up well to examination, but the essays show that not only are there special exceptions, but that hierarchies cannot be applied universally and that they evolved in specific ways at specific moments. From this point of view, Maarten Delbeke's article on Giacomo Vivio's notional

wax relief shows that, in the sixteenth century, wax was considered ideal for representation as much on an artistic as on a theological level, while it is usually regarded as a material at the margins of sculptural practice, for example in the process of making a bronze, or in the production of specialized items, such as ex-votos or death-masks. Malcolm Baker, in a similar way, shows that in eighteenth-century sculpture, materials historically regarded as inferior or cheaper, or related only to technical processes (such as plaster and clay), were seen very differently by eighteenth-century audiences, and were often valued as works in their own right. On the other hand, materials have their own codes at different moments, and are thus capable of causing variations in the generic view associated with them. Fabio Barry rightly explains how marble, which is often defined rather generically as a singular material in the antique world, esteemed for its remarkable range of different types, each of which had the capacity of inflecting different readings. White marble, Barry argues, was not simply white, but depending on marble-types, ranged in degrees of whiteness which expressed meaning in subtly differentiated ways.

If we allow ourselves to anticipate conclusions to be drawn from this book, we would stress the diversity of sculptural techniques and their bearing upon the perception of the materials used. As Martin Hirsch's examination of fifteenth-century Bavarian clay sculptures, or Sébastien Clerbois' chapter on colonial Belgian ivories, show, the choice of material can often be explicitly linked to economic and political circumstances; in the case of ivory looted from the Congo, sculpture became a vehicle for political imperatives. Other essays focusing on technical developments, show that the use of particular materials is often codified by a highly-complex system of cultural or symbolic conventions, which determine perception. As Emilie Passignat shows, style can determine material practice: the stylistic convention of the *figura serpentinata* was at the origin of a systemized practical approach to wax- and terracotta-modelling among the Italian Mannerist sculptors. Adding to the complexity of the relationship between materials and styles, Philippe Malgouyres explains pertinently that, in the case of sculptures made from coloured stones in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a confrontation between sculptor and material in which the material had a sort of autonomy: its qualities could be seen as

intrinsically aesthetic and resonant, corresponding to the innate qualities of the stone, which the sculptors took into account. As these chapters show, materials are never inert. On the contrary, their use has a significance, or often a range of significances, governed by constraints, hierarchies and symbolic frameworks which, when combined, become highly complex and constitute a moment when, rather than being a means to an end, the material takes centre-stage in the work's significance.

It becomes apparent that a consideration of materials can enable us to break away from traditional interpretations and methodologies, such as those that take iconography as their starting point. Catherine Chevillot's chapter on nineteenth-century *mouleurs* (mould-makers), a convoluted history long-avoided by scholars of nineteenth-century sculpture, sheds new light on the plaster industry, revealing the fact that 'plaster' (not unlike marble), was developed in many forms and degrees of fineness, and that its many specialized trades evolved around and alongside developments in sculptural practice.

Since the conference took place in 2005, much new research and many new publications have appeared in the field (the bibliography, which includes selected references from the essays, as well as further reading, reflects this). This book builds upon and contributes to this burgeoning interest, and we hope it will encourage further research on the many issues it raises, both in terms of the specific materials addressed, but also, equally importantly, in terms of the methodologies it presents in the study of sculpture.

Notes

- 1 Umberto Boccioni, 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture', 1912, reprinted in Jon Wood, Alex Potts and David Hulks, eds, *Modern Sculpture Reader*, Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2006.
- 2 Alex Potts, 'Tactility: The Interrogation of Medium in Art of the 1960s', *Art History* 27 (2), 2004, pp. 282–304.

- 3 Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1980; Hugh Honour, 'Canova's Studio Practice, I: The Early Years' and 'Canova's Studio Practice, II: 1792–1822', *Burlington Magazine* CXIV, 1972; Marie-Thérèse Baudry, *Sculpture, méthode et vocabulaire*, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1978.
- 4 Nicholas Penny, *The Materials of Sculpture*, New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1993; Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe*, Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1994.

MICHAEL COLE

The Cult of Materials

Few topics in the history of sculpture have seen as much success in recent years as those relating to 'materials' and 'materiality'. Looking over the literature of the last two decades, in fact, it is easy to come away with the impression that the subject of the present volume, along with the conference that occasioned it, have entered the very centre of the field. And nowhere is this more true than in studies that focus on Renaissance objects. In recent years, Francesca Bewer, Frits Scholten, Thomas Raff, Norberto Gramaccini, and Edgar Lein, among others, have given us chapters on the significance of copper and bronze.¹ There is a substantial new literature on founders and the small library of recent catalogues not only on coins, medals, and figures, large and small, but also on bells, mortars, and holy water pails and fonts – topics nearly ignored before 1990, and where the interest is driven at least in part by a fascination with bronze *per se*.² Daniela di Castro, James Mundy and Suzanne Butters have written on the significance of porphyry; Joachim Strupp and Fabio Barry of other marbles and colored stones; John Paoletti of wood; Paola Venturelli, Martha McCrory, and Denise Allen of gems; Christine Goettler, Megan Holmes, and Jay Bernstein of wax.³ It is not even unheard of in recent years for monographic works on artists who worked in different media to be arranged by materials rather than by chronology – witness Charles Avery's 1987 book on Giambologna.⁴

When, in the late 1970s, the great Rudolf Wittkower put together a general introduction to sculpture as a medium, the result was a book on the sculptor's 'processes and principles'; when, in the early 1990s, Nicholas Penny published his take on a topic of similar scope, the book was *The Materials of Sculpture*.⁵ Penny explained in his introduction that he had considered organizing the book according to techniques, but rejected the idea, since 'modelling and casting were carried out in the same or similar

materials, and moulded work was often modelled as well.⁶ This implies that Wittkower's scheme had come to seem inadequate to the range of material Penny wished to cover, but the difference between the two books also emblemizes the distance the field as a whole has travelled. At least where the Renaissance is concerned, it is all but an expectation today that scholars of sculpture, and especially of the unpolychromed sculptures that make their materials so conspicuous, will ask about the meaning of the substances from which those objects were made. And this is not just true of the history of sculpture: such developments run parallel with, and may even be indebted to, the emergence of similar interests in the history of architecture, painting, and other media. Publications like the terrific London National Gallery volumes *Giotto to Dürer* (1991) and *Dürer to Veronese* (1999), which present matters of technique in newly accessible ways, encourage us to meditate on the physical object.⁷ Rebecca Zorach's essays and book on the visual embodiment of copia and excess in sixteenth-century France demonstrate that the very idea of materiality was a major Renaissance concern.⁸ The special issue of *Art History* that Graham Larkin and Lisa Pon published on 'the materiality of print in early modern Europe' make a similar case for works on paper.⁹ Then there is the new literature on color. Updating Theodor Hetzer's classic *Tizian: Geschichte seiner Farbe* (Titian: A History of his Colours) is Daniela Bohde's 2002 book *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe: Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians* (Skin, Flesh and Colour: Corporeality and Materiality in Titian's Paintings).¹⁰ And Paul Hills's *Venetian Colour*, also from 2002, concretized its subject with a subtitle – *Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass* – which immediately signalled the ways that a history of materials would let his account of the city's art move comparatively from one medium to another.¹¹

Among the earliest writers to consider the significance of colored stones was Georges Didi-Huberman, whose remarkable 1986 article and 1990 book on Fra Angelico set up their arguments with the claim that 'there is nothing "abstract" in Fra Angelico's paintings: on the contrary, everything is excessively *material*' (emphasis his).¹² A primary focus of Didi-Huberman's studies was Angelico's creation of fictive marbles out of blotches of paint that threatened always to materialize, establishing their relationship to the thing they represent, in various respects, as one of

‘dissemblance’. The author intended his book at least in part as a polemic against some dominant trends in Renaissance art history – he took a stance, notably, against Michael Baxandall’s use of Angelico as a touchstone in formulating a humanistically inflected language that could characterize a period aesthetic – but one of Didi-Huberman’s most lasting contributions was his recognition that a deep historical and even devotional literature attached to the actual stuff out of which Renaissance painting, sculpture and architecture alike were made.

Nearly contemporary with Didi-Huberman’s book were Philippe Morel’s first studies of the Renaissance grotto and its sculptures.¹³ By contrast to Didi-Huberman, Morel dealt with the later sixteenth century and aimed to relativize the assumptions of the enlightened *scientific* perspectives with which we, guided by the revelations of real science, are sometimes tempted to approach Renaissance objects and monuments. Writing on secular rather than sacred creations, environments in which nature’s own generative forces were the major theme, Morel demonstrated that the origins of stone, its formation in the earth, and the processes by which nature transformed it, were preoccupations of Renaissance artists, writers, and patrons alike.

The difference between these studies, and their distance from, say, Penny’s only slightly later book, with its emphasis on the physical properties of materials and the techniques to which they lent themselves, is what makes the particular scholarly turn we are witnessing so intriguing. The literature on materials in general is beginning to look substantial enough to count as a sub-field of the discipline – something that was not obvious before 1985 – yet that literature remains strikingly heterogeneous. It is less an outgrowth of any single historical discourse than an unexpected point of convergence, and that convergence does not always constitute a real dialogue. Is it possible, then, to say anything general about why this field is now thriving, why these lines of research have become so seductive?

Following is an annotated list of seven premises that seem to underlie recent writings on the materiality of Renaissance art. They are speculative, and not all of them motivate all authors. My intention in sketching them is not so much to account historiographically for the kind of essays that the present volume features, but rather to foreground at least some

of the reasons why the topic of materiality has, in recent years, seemed so *timely*. It seems valuable to articulate these because they are frequently tacit in the literature itself. And it seems useful to present them together, in brief form, rather than dwelling on any individually, since the goals of individual essays are often plural and intertwined. Just as the literature itself is strikingly diverse, so are individual contributions often guided by more than one purpose.

The history of materials is a social history of art

If there is a single book that has informed every writer mentioned in this paper – in France and Germany, no less than in England and the United States – it is Michael Baxandall's 1972 *Painting and Experience*.¹⁴ That book, with its discussions of gold and ultramarine, attuned a generation of scholars to the importance of the substances painters applied to their surfaces, and it is difficult to think of another volume that has been so influential. Baxandall raised the issue of materiality in the context of what he called 'a primer in the *social history* of pictorial style'. Among his crucial sources for thinking about materials were the contracts that accompanied commissions: by demonstrating how patrons, in the course of the early Renaissance, began to value the hand of the painter more than the pigments out of which the painting was made, Baxandall sought to ground Renaissance painting in economics.

Much of the more recent literature on materials may seem to show the social history of art and the history of style parting ways. Writers on gold, jewels, and coloured marbles continue, not surprisingly, to emphasize their preciousness; the cost of things remains a major topic for the history of collecting, and scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the nature of the art market and even to the history of shopping. Still, reflections like Tom Nichols's, on the relationship between the low cost of Tintoretto's paintings and their similarly cheap *aesthetic*, remind us that scholars interested in the economics of painting can also attend to facture.¹⁵

The history of artists' materials appeals to 'scientific' sensibilities

Those who have written recently on the materiality of Renaissance sculpture in particular may recognize a greater debt to Baxandall's 1980 *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* than to *Painting and Experience*. That book demonstrated that materials have not only a price but also a cultural history, and that that history can be researched in texts, particularly those dealing with the investigation of the natural world. Baxandall himself looked especially to Renaissance medicine and alchemy, a literature that subsequent scholars have mined for the light it might shed not only on wood but also on materials like bronze and clay.¹⁶ Morel, in fact, referred to the grotto as nothing less than a 'theatricalization of alchemy', and alchemy also turns out to be the 'what' behind the title of James Elkins's 1998 book *What Painting is*. Historians interested in the intersection between art and science have explored a number of their common domains – meteorology, astrology, physics – but none have brought them back to materials as readily as this.

The history of materials is a feminist history of art

As David Summers observed some two decades ago, a Renaissance tradition shaped by Aristotle commonly gendered the opposition form/material, male/female.¹⁷ To study materials – or still better, to study the way that traditional discourses on the arts have suppressed an acknowledgment of materiality (our word for which derives from the Latin *mater*, mother) – could seem to expose prejudices in the discipline. In 1992, Patricia Reilly published a widely read article on 'writing out colour in sixteenth-century art theory'.¹⁸ This followed on the heels of Jacqueline Lichtenstein's great 1989 book *La couleur éloquente* (The Eloquence of Colour), which

demonstrated how seventeenth-century French lovers of the coloured canvas drew on Italian Renaissance models to work against a Platonic metaphysics that equated painting, makeup, and sophistry.¹⁹ More recently, Rebecca Zorach, returning attention to the issue of style, has suggested that French suspicions of Italianate art were bound up with views on normative sexual behaviour.²⁰

Writing in this vein has frequently had meta-historical goals, tracing genealogies from Renaissance works to modern critical positions. Rubens has been a beneficiary, and Titian is enjoying a heyday that he has not seen since the time of Panofsky. Among the more lively questions in the most recent literature is how the stances taken by Lichtenstein and Reilly bear on media other than painting. Lichtenstein herself oriented the topic when she made a point of illustrating her objects exclusively through reproductive prints, on grounds that 'engraving ... does not alter with reproduction', and that engravers 'set themselves the challenge of creating with a burin an oratorical equivalent to the eloquence of colour'.²¹

The history of materials resists the linguistic turn

Art historians sometimes express discomfort at the idea that a painting or sculpture can be reduced to a signifier, or understood as a *text* – it appears to them that the scholars who look at art this way, the best of whom are often not art historians at all, are changing the subject, translating something foreign into a more familiar, workable language.²² Some writers have even pointed in the direction of a kind of post-iconographical art history. This might consist of a newly historical attention to formal properties, or it might move away from the idea of the painting or sculpture as an *image*: here we might return to the example of *What Painting is*, which, in treating paintings as transmutations of pigment ceased to regard them as pictures at all.²³ Elkins's book is unusual, for it is completely indifferent not only to the subject matter of art, but also to pictorial composition, even as it attempts to place material objects within a specific elite historical culture.

Today, we tell our students that they must grapple with something called ‘the work itself’ – by which we usually mean that they should visit museums and see things in the flesh, rather than writing from reproductions, which isolate objects from their physical context, disguise scale, flatten relief, and as often as not distort colour. Is it possible that the appeal of studying materials is that this ostensibly avoids seeing the artworks as a certain kind of sign? If so, the literature could well amount to a kind of territorialism, a sense that, even as our neighbours in the history, English, and philosophy departments write about *our* things, we still have a distinctive expertise.²⁴

There is also a certain wilful blindness to this move. For as soon as most scholars start thinking about the materiality of the work, they ask what different materials *mean*. Treating images as symbols may now seem retrogressive, but we remain interested in, say, the significance of travertine, or *pietra serena*, and if we wish for that significance to be historical we look to old texts. Giving an account of the ‘materiality’ of the painted or sculpted mark may even reproduce one part of the semiotician’s enterprise: the pioneers of deconstructive reading were seriously interested in the materiality of the text, and their attention to materiality shaped some of the earliest art historical treatments of the topic.²⁵

Materiality is the modernity of Renaissance art

No one walking through a museum with a Renaissance to contemporary art collection can fail to remark that, whereas the artist’s choice of materials might once have been almost natural – that is, conventional to the point that it was barely a choice at all – the materials employed since the time of Picasso and Duchamp, and the import of the choice itself, are unavoidable. Cardboard, plastic, felt, fat, fabricated steel – twentieth-century art makes its materials central to the work’s effect or meaning. In her recent book *Das Material der Kunst*, Monika Wagner has gone so far as to suggest that the fetishism or thingness of much twentieth-century art seems to

resist formal analysis, and to demand a different manner of critical thinking.²⁶ Even without wishing to take a position on that claim, we might ask whether this art, and the literature devoted to it, has not made Renaissance historians more aware, by example or by contrast, of the difference in the sixteenth-century artwork's own corporeality.

This leaves unanswered the question of why it should have been in the late 1980s that materials first really seemed to engage early modern studies. Did belated encounters with abstract expressionism, or with minimalism, lead scholars to appreciate the Renaissance work's 'objecthood' differently? Didi-Huberman writes:

If Angelico's surface is more likely to evoke one of Jackson Pollock's drippings than any narrative or perspectivist construction of the Italian Renaissance, this is because it tends to obscure every effect of a *mimesis* of aspect, or motif, in order to foreground in a violent way the *material* existence of the index, the pictorial trace.²⁷

Elkins's jarring juxtaposition of colour-plates similarly seems to equate the surface qualities of Renaissance and post-1945 paintings. And generally, the recent literature represents a generational shift from Wittkower, who confessed at the first paragraph of his Introduction to *Sculpture: Processes and Principles* that 'despite decades of training in reading art-historical prose, I have not often managed to get through a book on modern art from cover to cover'.²⁸

Restoration is the lure

The technologies available to assist and control the conservation and repair of objects have reached a remarkable level of sophistication. This has given the institution that houses historical objects new license with their preservation and even beautification in the hands of experts. It has also meant that what counts as the proper care of objects involves unprecedented expense. The environmental factors that threaten Renaissance paintings