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Mieke Bal

Organizing a conference and subsequent volume is a dialogic practice that requires putting a productive program together to make genuine exchange possible. This afterword allows me to express my wholehearted gratitude to all the speakers and participants who brought so many ideas and debates and beautiful, memorable phrases to the event, and to thank specifically Michael Ann Holly, Mark Ledbury, and Gail Parker at the Clark, as well as co-convenor Marquard Smith, for the tireless work that lies behind this event and its publication.

All these conventional yet seriously meant words are also a form of procrastination. It is fitting to do a bit of procrastinating, as that is frequently one of the elements of research, an element of which little has been said so far. For every research project ("what are you working on?") there is that merciful period of "doing the research." It takes a lot of persuasion to convince a Ph.D. candidate that you will only know what you are looking for when, while writing, you find that glaring gap staring at you. This is one of many ways in which Arjun Appadurai, in his oft-quoted article "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," has brought the somewhat dusty notion of research back to actuality. He proposes the paradox that research must be original and innovative, yet that it must also fit standard paradigms and traditions to be approved in peer review. This paradox is expressed in the prefix "re-," which stands for repetition. In this afterword I aim to bring together some of the issues addressed in this volume in order to revive Appadurai's program.<sup>1</sup>

A conference on research is, similarly, a paradox. Research is done in archives, libraries, or solitary studies, not in collective talk and discussion. One cannot do research while attending a conference. Moreover, spending time talking about that somewhat shameful, vague preparatory activity seems the most futile waste of precious research time—each conference attended means another two days of research down the drain. This makes my task rather daunting. And to make matters worse, I am not an obsessive researcher, and visual art is only one of the fields in which I practice "research." Hence, I am doubly an outsider to this endeavor.

In addition, the processual aspect of conferences also counteracts the obsessive, disciplined nature of research. In a conference, I like it best when, at the end

of a session, the discussion becomes a bit fierce and people start to talk without order or even a unified topic (Ernst van Alphen's analysis of alternative, more associative than storing and systematizing uses of archives would call it, following Buchloh, anomically), preferably shouting over one another, with the chair unable to maintain discipline. In view of this preference, the genre of the response is a bit problematical. I am now asked to bring order to what, in my view, should not have any, and to foreground certain questions with the inevitable result that others won't come up again. Before you know it, a response becomes a form of policing, or disciplining. I don't feel like doing that at all. Instead, I will pull some strands out of the volume's fabric, present some personal research experiences, add some words to our vocabulary, and allege some artworks as allies.

### Group-formation, Disciplining, and "We"

The first question I have been meaning to ask concerns the self-evidence of the idea that "we" are "in" a discipline and that "our" forms of research are therefore specific, perhaps special. But we know, and if we didn't know, Foucault would tell us: disciplines *discipline*. When one speaker said that she was the only non-art historian, I was a bit amazed by her perception of "us." I counted many non-art historians present. Indeed, I am one of those, and so are Ernst van Alphen, Celeste Olalquiaga, and Tom Mitchell, as well as others that I surely overlooked, verifiable by consulting the information on contributors. This is reason enough for some "monster-envy," to allude to Marc Gotlieb's take on the matter of research, art history, its insiders, and its monstrous outsiders.

But our brief was to talk about *research* in the *visual* arts. I am aware that, given who convened this conference and edited this volume, "arts" in its title is used in a rather loose way to include visual artifacts that don't go by the name of "art." So I won't criticize the judgment implied in the discipline's name that repeats itself in the volume's title. Yet, with the exceptions of Olalquiaga and Mitchell, very little has been said of such nonartistic visual things. Do keep in mind, though, that such "other" things may have more trouble gaining entry into the archives where art historians seek refuge against the threat of their ignorance, personal opinion, and imagination. Hence, even if one is committed to that more open object-domain of visual analysis, one is thrown back onto "art" when entering the archive. However, *research* and *visual* are the defining concepts around which our discussions have circled. Hence, whereas I cannot and would not pretend to be what I am not—an art historian, or even a specialist in visual culture—I will be a



variant of a Winnicottian or Kleinian mother, a good-enough citizen of the group that produced this volume.

*Research* has at least two distinct standard meanings. First, it is preparatory work, invisible, which preps us for writing. Hence, we hold assumptions to the effect that research is the preliminary reading, inside archives and libraries or outside, "in the field," after which writing follows. Yet, it has been said in this volume: in the humanities, reading is never entirely preliminary; reading and writing most often go together, and while writing we recognize the gaps in our reading. The other standard meaning is implied in, for example, that tautological notion of a research university or research institute. It is what we do when we are not teaching or doing administration or administering to the remnants of our personal lives. Both these assumptions seem wrong, according to many authors here.

As has been remarked, research in the first sense is concurrent with, not really preparatory to, writing, which has implications for the sense of loss Michael Ann Holly has so movingly invoked. If we do research on (objects of) visual art, it is because that visual thing grabbed our attention enough to motivate the research. For a brief moment we "had" it, encountered it; then, when we wanted to get closer to it, we lost it. Research is that desperate attempt to get it back, or to finally get it.

Research in the second sense is indispensable for teaching, not its "other," as the allocation of work time to the various components of the job suggests. More importantly, teaching is a form of research. We have all experienced how an idea took shape, got bounced around, and transformed during a class or seminar session. Most importantly, if this fails to happen, this lack indicates that we are poor teachers. When it does occur, the students become involved, implicated in the research. I have always fought against the distinction between the two activities and their supposed individualism. If you take your students seriously, they are partners, not subordinates. Teachers gain as much for their research from teaching as the students gain for their learning. Teaching involves listening, and if you do that well, your reward is in great gain for your research project.

Another recurring assumption I would like to bring up for contestation is the idea that we are so attached to, so fond of research. To be sure, having done the research is a primary condition for research projects and a standard for result assessments. Suggesting that you have "done the research" for the project is a rhetorical skill to be acquired first thing if you ever wish to earn a grant, but what does that entail if the two contestations of the cliché I just brought forward have any value? Having read and, preferably without questioning it, absorbed (or at least

photocopied and stored away for later use) what others have written before you is a common way of substantiating the claim to have done the research.

But once the writing begins, you have to read all over again. I have experienced many times the terrible mistakes, the blinkered look that omitting this rehearsal can entail. Research can be devastating. What happens a lot of the time is that the ideas waiting to take shape in the encounter with the object go down the drain, vanish into thin air; the streamlining that comes from other writings can kill off the visions you had when you first started on the project. Are "we" so attached to research, really? I'll leave that question hanging. Probing into other people's suffering is too indiscreet for my taste.

First, let's discuss the figure of the researcher and go back to the first session of the conference, where Arjun Appadurai was a primary figure (Smith, Holly), "outsider art history" became a category (Gotlieb), and in an oral exchange at the conference, Dick Cheney was brought in as a disastrously poor researcher. In analogy to Marquard Smith, I too have memories of three formative moments of the discovery of research—and, I must add, its discontents. I will briefly evoke these in order to bring some order into the many ideas that these papers inspire. So, rather than claiming to be among the "we," I will cast myself as a fellow-struggler, trying to be a good-enough researcher.

### Bad, Good-Enough, Lucky, or Blinkered Researcher

The first time I understood "research" was when, way back before embarking on anything serious such as a Ph.D., I had an intuition about a particular description in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. I told the relevant professor what I had in mind, something about how visual and yet metaphorical that description was. I asked her what I should do to get beyond the level of intuition in order to write my first article. I expected some clues regarding visuality, metaphor, narrative, and a few of the best titles on Flaubert, specifically where description—one of his major skills—was discussed. Her answer was: "You start with reading everything published on Flaubert." I got started, wasted lots of time, and realized nothing in the references I had been reading was of any help whatsoever. This was because I read without knowing what to look for. This was my lesson in the practice of research: the professor's suggestion held the ideology that the preparation had to prime, to "humble me," for the lofty task of writing; and that it had all but killed my project. The voracious reader my professor wanted me to be is, I submit, not a researcher, or at least not a successful one: it is a procrastinator, like Flaubert's Bouvard and Pécuchet.





Fig. 1. Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669), *Lucretia*, 1664, Oil on canvas, 47½ x 39¼ in. (120 x 101 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

The second moment was the one I have described in my book *Reading Rembrandt*, this time an extremely positive one: when, before ever having written anything about art, I went to a guard at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., asked for a painting by Rembrandt that was not in the galleries (fig. 1), and, thanks to the effective and generous help of the art historian Arthur Wheelock, the next morning was taken to the workshop where the painting was in cleaning. When the cloth that covered the painting was removed suddenly, I saw Lucretia's head move. Was I a monstrous outsider, according to Marc Gotlieb, or the governess from *The Turn of the Screw*, according to Alexander Nemerov's witty way of giving that literary figure art-historical stature? Both, and neither. As indispensable as the experience and the imagination was, it was not until I was able to reason why I had that vision—as Nemerov would have it, to *see* the contours of it instead of spinning tales about it—that I could meaningfully write about the painting as such.<sup>2</sup>

But the sensation never disappeared, and since then, every time I see that painting, I realize again how its “agency” is located in that earring that hangs obliquely, a sign of movement in a still image, so that as a viewer I am confronted with my own immodesty of witnessing Lucretia's plight. This was a true encounter, an experience that turned me into a researcher eager for more such encounters. I learned that the object can speak, and speak back. Was this research, or serendipity? True, it happened in an archive of sorts. And while there, I made the most of the opportunity to explore what else was there, what might never be seen in the galleries. It was not a particularly meticulous instance of research; yet, it could not have happened in the gallery, where no cloth would cover the painting and then be removed.

Then, my third moment: the day before the conference at the Clark, after visiting that same National Gallery, I went to the storage of the Hirshhorn Museum to view some paintings by the French artist Balthus. Immediately before, I had been at the Clark, benefiting from its wonderful library, while I prepared to write a book about his work. Having learned to value research to bolster self-confidence when I embarked on a project on an artist I knew precious little about, I had already read all the meager scholarship about him. I had seen how critics agreed on the fact that a working-class, broad-shouldered man in one of his key paintings, *Les beaux jours* (*The Golden Days*), was naked to the waist, and the adolescent girl in the room was glowing with the anticipation, expressed by the fire at the right edge of the painting. The sign of her awaking sexual excitement and the anticipation that the hot guy on the right was about to fulfill it was indicated by the glow from the fire shining on her person (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup>





Fig. 2. Balthus (French, 1908–2001), *The Golden Days* (*Les beaux jours*), 1944–46, Oil on canvas, 58 1/4 x 78 3/8 in. (148 x 199 cm), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1966

Seeing the real thing—in the alleged “immediacy of viewing”—I knew this interpretation was simply wrong. Neither fire, beyond the fireplace to which it is confined, nor naked back and shoulders glow. The color contrast between the man’s hand, which is off-white, and the rest of his upper body, clad in an admittedly tight orange sweater, is rather stark, as if meant to counter the point about glow. For a colorist such as Balthus, this had to be a sign. I was not particularly looking to disprove the critics; I believed them, and just wanted to do what art historians do: check the facts, that activity of the final phase of research. Yet all critics without exception reiterate these two alleged but fictitious facts, dreaming away about stereotypical working-class male bodies and hot prepubescent girls. While granting them that liberty, I still wish to insist on the importance of being earnest about fact checking. For these two nonfacts are among those that continue to this day to discredit this artist as a pervert.

This awareness makes me wish to add a category to the list of types of art

historians I have been accumulating during the reading of the papers in this volume. In addition to the intuitive, the fanatic, the fortress-ensconced, the one with monster-envy, and the outsider, the one desperately seeking the lost object, and the one swimming around in an excess of meaning, there definitively is the category of the *prudish* art historian. This figure looks at images for fear of finding there those forbidden things of life.<sup>4</sup>

Iconophobic, this is the stubbornly blinkered art historian, the one who refuses to see even what is in front of his or her very own eyes. This is the historian who dares not look. For me, this moment was an experience of practice, of work (to speak with Joanne Morra) of seeking out an object not so much lost (I had been staring at the poor reproduction), as the one I didn’t know I needed until I saw it. With Olalquiaga, I would say this was finding what I already had, though I had it “badly.”

The practice within which this moment of “discovery” occurred was not an ivory tower kind of descent into the archive (if you will allow me to mix my metaphors and confuse directions), in fact, it was through talking with the guard, the handler, and the registrar (three people who look at these paintings on a daily basis and know more from seeing them than I knew from reading about them) that I was able to see the sleeve on the alleged naked body of the man at the fireplace. Not that they mentioned it. It was just that our dialogue, or my simple chat with them, compelled me to look longer, and better, to have something to converse about. Speaking with the workers at the museum or in the archive belongs to the implicit and unspoken practices that are part and parcel of research, part of what Van Alphen called fieldwork, the doing and the looking together.

This was also an experience of the “disorderly” or “anomic” temporality of research: I knew, or thought I knew, the painting. I had “done the research,” yet the shock and pleasure of seeing the actual object changed everything about it. I submit that research happened not when I did all the reading, but when I went to the storage to see the “real painting.” This casts some light, perhaps comforting, on the idea of loss of which Holly has spoken. The encounter with “the real thing” was not at all an immediacy; it was by necessity an almost arbitrary step in a longer process of reading-cum-writing. It could as well not have happened. I might have done all the research-as-reading and made the blunder of copying that cliché interpretation that would only have reconfirmed standard false knowledge, not added anything to it. I am sure sometimes I have done just that—cheated—when the painting was out of reach.



What I lost that day in the storage space of the Hirshhorn was not the object; for the object, in fact, I found. What I lost was the innocence of assuming that research-as-reading is “good-enough” research. And the painting? I found it at the end, although with the realization that it eluded me more the more I looked at it. But why is that loss sad? It is what attracts us to paintings and other visual artifacts to begin with: the knowledge of their ultimate elusiveness. There lies their agency; there lies what makes the encounter possible.

This issue is bound up with the notion of archive itself. There is a misunderstanding that has been pointed out by Jacques Derrida—and more accessibly by his best “translator,” Jonathan Culler—and in his wake, in art history, by Norman Bryson. The notion of context is central to the idea of research, and we haven’t talked much about it. That notion remains tainted by a self-evident truth that infects our ideology of the archive. Context is simply, also, text, and equally in need of interpretation. Those writings by our predecessors that we have to read as “research” enter the archive the day they appear in published form. Instead of taking them as the hidden truth about our subject, they should be interpreted.<sup>5</sup>

Like visual objects, they are things “capable of being responded to”—to recycle Alex Potts’s beautiful phrase—and instead of reading them as something comfortably familiar, we should adopt an attitude of readiness to Friedrich Nietzsche’s “encounter the unfamiliar.” In that sense, Marc Gotlieb’s hilarious analysis deserves to be turned upside down. His tone was ironic, his cases to die for, his style brilliant. But my sense of humor was a tiny bit confined by the relentless and nonrepentant use of the term, now a new category, of “outsider art history.” As one of those monsters, I can assure you that I have seen similar cases: for example, discussion of Rembrandt van Rijn, the hypochondriac who believed his buttocks were of glass and therefore never sat down, which allegedly shows in some paintings, as well as within articles appearing in the august pages of the *Art Bulletin*. As Gotlieb said, that research-dense, often boring journal could have been included in his analysis.

Picking up on this question of irony, I would like to offer a distinction from literary theory between exclusive and inclusive irony. Inclusive irony includes the self and is a more effective tactic than defensive exclusive irony. For example, I’d ask how ridiculous are studies that can only speculate about possible antecedents of poems the sculptor might possibly have seen, but perhaps not; articles that bury the visual objects under tons of ancient documents that lead up to strictly nothing beyond the speculative possibility that, for example, Gian Lorenzo Bernini might

have read a particular poem by a contemporary. “So what?” is that delicious English phrase we should recite as our mantra when embarking on research.

This brings me to what is specific about research in the *visual* arts, a bit underdiscussed in these papers (that’s what you get when “insider art historians” speak). Ideology has it that a picture is worth a thousand words, that it cannot be decoded, that its meanings, effects, and affects go in all directions. Anxiously, the scholar flees into the archive, where the meanings of the objects can never be disclosed but can be pointed at and gleaned in a multitude of ways that might make up for their elusiveness. And then implicit hierarchies can be brought to bear on the documents, with artists’ statements at the top. This anxiety is responsible for the ongoing predominance of intentionalism—the confusion of the two senses of “meaning” in English. The painting “means” becomes “the artist means to say”; out goes the visibility, in comes those thousand words that veil it. There is a powerlessness in front of visibility that makes the archive a refuge and that, at the same time, forecloses research in the other sense to which I have only hinted but which has gone around our discussions: discovery of the not-yet-known, the as-yet-invisible.<sup>6</sup>

#### Four Aspects of Research to Count With

Four tools for this task have been alluded to, but I wish to bring them out more explicitly. One is *analogy*, a form of logic. Many times, in the course of the papers collected here, analogies have been deployed—between scholar and hunter, seeker, gatherer; between artist and anthropologist; between archival research and fieldwork; between research and curiosity; between archive and Internet; between art and loss. Some analogies remain implicit, or in the mind of the beholder only, such as the one between Nemerov’s juxtaposition of incipient war and imaginary visions. Analogy is one of those tools to “get at” something hard to pin down. As such, it is very valuable. But like a series of questions, it must be sustained in repetition-with-difference. Not all analogies work. Some are confining, some enriching. My proposal would be to discuss the role of analogy in research between recognition and discovery, between what you know (and what it, therefore, helps you to see) and what cannot be known: the as-yet-invisible I just mentioned.

The second tool is *motivation*. This is as varied as the people who do research. Some may be after the glory of a career, others seek financial rewards (although those would probably do better to seek other employment). Some seek the thrill of the encounter with the magic of the beautiful, or to share in tragedy, or to reap-proximate a lost childhood encounter. Some wish to understand on levels that logic





Fig. 3. Eija-Liisa Ahtila (Finnish, born 1959), Still from *Where is Where?*, 2008, Six-screen video installation, 52 min, Crystal Eye Ltd., Helsinki

and facts alone cannot provide. In my confessional moments the latter would be at least part of my motivation, as far as I can know it. The kind of self-reflection we have been conducting in these pages has hopefully brought each of our readers closer to self-understanding. I am convinced that a better understanding of our own motivation is a valuable guide into that confusing

and exciting place, the archive, the library, or the storerooms of the museum.

A third tool is *serendipity*—another one of those English words that have no equivalent elsewhere. The happy-lucky moment is indispensable, even if it mostly remains unacknowledged. How else would one ever be able to come up with something valuable, especially now, in the age of information overload? I recently had such a moment that was quite stunning. I share this experience because it supports my case against intentionalism and for a relevance-driven kind of short-term research.

I was writing a lecture on the newest work by the Finnish cinematographer Eija-Liisa Ahtila, a huge installation called *Where is Where?* devoted to postcolonial cohabitation and our contemporary imagination-cum-memory of the Algerian colonial war. It represents a Finnish poet, a woman in her fifties, who writes about the Algerian war of independence. Somewhere in the first five minutes of the 52-minute piece, on one of its six screens I saw this image (fig. 3). It struck me forcefully for several reasons, from the mundane (I was in Paris at the time) to the biographical (I have an Arabic-speaking friend from the same general region as where the piece is partly set) to the artistic (I found the image unusually beautiful) to the semiotic (I was sensitive to its bilingualism).

The image occurs in the story, briefly and unemphatically, when Algeria gradually penetrates Finland and its poet's mind. It is a beautiful image of a sign with the name of a street inscribed on it. The sign is framed by ornate white Arabic architecture. The sign has Arabic letters at the bottom, and the top is formally identical to signs still in use today in Paris: "7<sup>e</sup> arrondissement." This double writing brought to my mind, the first time I saw it, the double meaning of the Arabic word *mektoub*. It means "what is written," including the mundane inscriptions on such signs; and it means destiny—the great destiny that tragedy stages.

Destiny is insinuated in this banal sign in that, as much as it is historical, a trace of the colonial times in which the story is set, it is more importantly a forward-projecting trace—a Derridian one. It is a trace of colonization, but also, today, a trace of the double culture that resulted from it. It points forward to that culture in which the poet lives, mourns, and overcomes her mourning. It also points backward to the culture from which the work's second center came, the seemingly arbitrary murder by two Algerian boys of a third, simply because the latter was European. The anecdote is taken from Frantz Fanon's case studies toward the end of *The Wretched of the Earth*.<sup>7</sup> The writing is bilingual, bicultural, and, for Western spectators who know no Arabic, only half-understandable. Yet the half we do not understand belongs where it is, in Algiers; the readable French half doesn't belong there. It is a trace, then, of a world, fictively staged in *Where is Where?*, where indeed "where?" is no longer a determinate place, a protected site, an isolated location, but rather a question mark of the future. Of course, with this intuitive sense of the importance of this image, and with my research habit, I needed to find out what the Arabic script meant.

I did, and I was stunned. The street indicated in this instance of *mektoub* is called, as if by chance, "Street of the Detained." As if to demonstrate the redundancy of intentionalism, it turned out that the artist, who had sought out this image and was responsible for its inclusion in the work, did not know that her image seemed to refer with exactitude to the situation of the two boys in her work, detained for psychiatric examination because they had committed an act of resistance against colonial violence. And as further support of the case for serendipity, I don't know any Arabic; I had just encountered this word some time ago as the title of a film.

*Mektoub*: the word itself is a trace of destiny, is a —graphy as trace. As that which is (already) written, it is the trace where temporalities become complex. It is the concept—only visually presented in this modest street sign—that makes sense of such enigmatic speeches as when the poet says, attempting to put her mourning into words: "Stretching, hanging, lacking the courage to notice time passing/Face adrift, the two sides extending across each other/Held aloft upon time, will it hold?" It makes sense of that strange word "illiterate" in her further statement, "If we are always forgiven, that makes us illiterate." The written message, and our capacity to process it, is our responsibility for destiny, so that forgiveness becomes meaningless.

The fourth tool is *secrecy*, or rather, the modesty, discretion, perhaps prudery of withholding information. In the age of an abundance of information





Fig. 4. Doris Salcedo (Colombian, born 1958), *Unland: the orphan's tunic*, 1997. Wood, cloth, hair, and glue, 31 1/2 x 96 1/2 x 38 1/2 in. (80 x 245 x 98 cm). Collection Fundación "la Caixa," Barcelona

and an ill-directed belief in its general value, sometimes not disclosing information is the right form of using research. For this I allege another artist I work on, the Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo. In part of her three-part installation *Unland*, she inserted a tattered piece of fabric into her sculpture. In carefully measured documentation, Salcedo reveals that she does extensive research in remote regions of Colombia, gathering testimonies of victims of violence. This information, as well

as the name of the sculpture in question, *Unland: the orphan's tunic* (fig. 4), suggests that the piece of cloth is from a dress that an orphan wore day after day. The six-year-old girl who gave the artist her worn dress had been wearing it continuously since witnessing both her parents' slaughter.<sup>8</sup>

It is as an artist, not a scholar, that Salcedo conducts extensive research. This research infuses her sculptures and installations with a sense of purpose, commitment, and the need to bear witness. Thus she provides one answer to Marquard Smith's inquiry into research in practice-based Ph.Ds. But what I find important to foreground is the reticence to disclose more than the fact of research itself. Some bits of knowledge drift in and out of the resulting product like a social buzz; some are too precarious, too sensitive to spell out. Yet there is no question that Salcedo could not have produced the sculptures that so affect us with their sadness, revolt, and hope without the extensive, months-long research. At the same time, publicizing the name, location, and circumstances of the orphan would not only have endangered the child but also severely limited the artwork's impact, reducing it to the anecdotal level and providing the viewer the opportunity to trade affect for pity and the need of a political change-of-heart into feel-good condescension. Thus, her research is as indispensable as is the need to withhold the resulting information.<sup>9</sup>

### Only Words

With these four research tools in mind, then, let's turn back to the word "research." In addition to confusing different meanings, there is something to the word itself. Arjun Appadurai, as well as Michael Ann Holly's dictionary, notes that the word has that nagging prefix "re-" in it for a reason. Andreas Huyssen had already pointed that out about Marcel Proust: re-search is searching again. Huyssen talked about the déjà-vu aspect of memory images. I love the idea, but what does that mean? Appadurai referred to the fact that research, in order for it to be recognized and, for example, financially or professionally supported, has to follow preestablished protocols, what we call with grandeur "methodology."<sup>10</sup>

This demand dates back to the time when research was simply disclosure of hitherto unknown material, to the time when "verification" was key—until Karl Popper came along and introduced, with the concept of "falsification," the rule of uncertainty of all empirical truth. Fixed protocols, recognizable enough to be appreciated, preclude innovation beyond disclosure of new material; they preclude, that is, innovation of approach. Appadurai, in the same though perhaps somewhat overextended paper, also wrote that the paradox of research is the tension between that "re-," that slavish following of protocol, and the innovation that is necessary to guarantee the publication an extended "shelf-life." The banality of these rewards cannot hide that the tension is there and, as far as I am concerned, is crucial. But as Akira Mizuta Lippit has reminded us, protocol or commandment is the other side of that other meaning of archive's *arché*, commencement. Searching for a new beginning, we are thrown back on the commandments of regulation.<sup>11</sup>

I propose to be a little more sparing with the use of the word "legitimate"—as asking what is legitimate entails accepting a priori rules and laws that preclude novelty and that are themselves subject to scrutiny. As much as we have been musing here over Appadurai's article, the full title of it has not been examined: "*Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination*." With the first phrase he did not mean that we must go and give talks in beautiful tourist destinations also known as "third world" countries and tell the allegedly underdeveloped colleagues there how to do research. He was referring to the need to develop a dialogic sensibility that makes it possible to learn mutually from contact with different modes of doing research: "governess modes" (as per Alexander Nemerov's allegorical use of James's figure), where the imagination is made reason's equal and facts are not gathered before we have made the questions meaningful. Governess modes, but then dialogic, and "cross-culturally."



Research must bring together the repetition (Morra) and the unheard-of novelty of the search for that object that may have been lost and thus inspires “disciplinary melancholia” (Holly). It was lost not or not only in the irretrievable past but also in the excess, the sea of words and the ocean of information. I am not a believer in the ineffable, nor am I one of those who use thousands of words to say that we cannot really write about images. Instead, I think the excess and the loss go together. Analogy, motivation, serendipity, and secrecy are just as important as all those demands that use academic moralism to cover up personal obsessions and insecurities. What is needed is a concept of research specific to visual arts, which has come up, but which I would like to discuss more, namely *close looking*.

Out, then, goes the blinkered art historian; in comes the close reader of images. Sitting in front of a painting, or inside a room full of photographs with teddy bears, or in an archive with undecipherable scribbles, or even, as we have seen, doodles, a student of art—I’ll adopt Van Alphen’s suspension of the epitaph “historian” in the name of the field—will have to look for the longest sustainable time until the object starts to move, morph, and transform.

### Epilogue

Let me add a brief afterword to this afterword. Of the many definitions in the dictionary, Michael Ann Holly cited first the most telling, indeed the most promising one: “to search again, anew.” The Hollywood producer and comedy writer Nicholas Holly answered his mother’s question of what he thought research was with his own list. Among definitions such as “the art of looking meaningful,” or “because when you first searched you didn’t waste enough time,” or “the art of looking past importance,” he included one that, in this time of history, doesn’t seem such a bad one: “a time to make European friends.” The people who convened this conference and edited the volume, as well as all those who, directly or indirectly, made this volume possible, most certainly managed that one.

1. Arjun Appadurai, “Globalization and the Research Imagination,” *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 160 (1999): 229–38. See also Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–19.

2. Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

3. For the comment about glow, see, for example, Nicholas Fox Weber, *Balthus: A Biography* (London: Wiederfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 413. The image is reproduced in color in Mieke Bal, *Balthus: Works and Interview* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2008), 93. The reproduction is ambiguous until one sees the man’s hand, which is much lighter than the orange of the rest of his upper body.
4. I was particularly taken aback when one of my feminist friends called me to task for writing on Balthus at all. She claimed that putting my name to a publication on him would authorize his abuse of girls, regardless of the question of whether I would conclude there was such abuse.
5. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Norman, OK, and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Norman Bryson, “Art in Context,” in *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis*, ed. Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; New York: Continuum, 1994), 66–78.
6. On the relationship between intentionalism and art historical research, see my chapter “Intention,” in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
7. Derrida’s first internationally influential book, *Of Grammatology*, is devoted to this conception of writing as trace that points forward: *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967), published in English as *Of Grammatology*, trans. and introduction Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, preface by Alice Cherki and afterword by Mohammed Harbi (1961; repr., Paris: La découverte/Poche, 2002), 259–61; the anecdote is on pages 260–61. Fanon acts as a psychiatrist, but his diagnosis concerns the colonial situation, not the “patient.”
8. The artist hints at the research in Carlos Basualdo, “Interview,” in *Doris Salcedo*, ed. Nancy Princenthal, Carlos Basualdo, and Andreas Huyssen (London: Phaidon, 2000), 8–35. This book also contains several color images of the work. The anecdote is retold many times, as if critics are overeager in the face of Salcedo’s general reticence. See, for example, Edlie Wong, “The Afterlife of Loss: Situating Memory in the Sculptural Art of Doris Salcedo,” *Critical Sense* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 60.
9. For these issues, see the articles in *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, ed. Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
10. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For Appadurai, see note 1.
11. Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and its less-known sequel, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). On the possible (and impossible puns on *arché*), see Derrida, “Archive-Fever,” *Diacritics* 25 (1995): 9–63.

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