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David Hockney and the Memory of Michelangelo

Raymond Carlson



David Hockney
In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci,
1962

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Introduction

fig. 1

David Hockney***In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci, 1962*****Oil on canvas, 213.3 × 91.4 cm****Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,****Madrid, Inv. no. 584, 1978.12**[\[+ info\]](#)**1**

For her exceptional help, bibliographic references, productive insights about David Hockney, and generous observations about the painting while we studied both sides of it together, I extend my profound thanks to Marta Ruiz del Árbol.

2

Nevile Wallis, "General Notes: School of Ironic Painting," *Journal of the Royal Society of the Arts* 110, no. 5075, 1962, pp. 854–55.

3

On this particular group of painters, see most recently Martin Gayford, *Modernists and Mavericks: Bacon, Freud, Hockney and the London Painters*. London, Thames and Hudson, 2018, pp. 194–205.

4

The exhibition was on view from August 15 to September 8, 1962.

Shortly after David Hockney (b. 1937) graduated from the Royal College of Art in 1962, he and several classmates became the subject of an article both disdainful and prescient.¹ The author was the art critic of *The Observer*, Nevile Wallis, who had seen their work in several local exhibitions. Dubbing them the "School of Ironic Painting," Wallis claimed the group's wry visual commentary had yet to acquire real bite.² But their success obliged him to close with the admission that "London galleries will see much more of them." Artists cited in the article such as R. B. Kitaj (1932–2007) and Derek Boshier (b. 1937) would indeed grace galleries in and beyond the British capital, although none more so than Hockney.³

Had Wallis been capable of predicting Hockney's full success, he may have devoted more ink to the young Yorkshireman. Instead he briefly described two paintings by Hockney that he had seen at the *Image in Progress* exhibition at London's Grabowski Gallery.⁴ The first was *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* [fig. 1], about which Wallis wrote: "He [Hockney] may

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Wallis, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 854.

6

On this monument, designed by Michelangelo and located in the Roman Basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, see within the substantial bibliography: Ernst Steinmann, "Studien zur Renaissanceskulptur in Rom. II. Das Grabmal des Cecchino Bracci in Aracoeli," *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 1, 1908, pp. 963–74; Claudia Echinger-Maurach, „Michelangelos späte Grabmalskonzeptionen und ihre Nachfolge," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 50, 2006, pp. 49–92; Christoph Luitpold Frommel, „Michelangelo und das Grabmal des Cecchino Bracci in S. Maria in Araceli," in *Docta Manus. Studien zur italienischen Skulptur für Joachim Poeschke*, ed. Johannes Myssok and Jürgen Wiener. Münster, Rhema, 2007, pp. 263–77; Pina Ragionieri, „Tomba di Cecchino Bracci," in *Michelangelo architetto a Roma*, ed. Mauro Mussolin. Milano, Silvana, 2009, pp. 124–27; William Wallace, "Michelangelo, Luigi del Riccio, and the Tomb of Cecchino Bracci," *Artibus et Historiae* 35, 2014, pp. 97–106. On Michelangelo's poems about Bracci, see especially: A.J. Smith, "For the Death of Cecchino Bracci," *The Modern Language Review* 58, 1963, pp. 355–63; Ann Haddock, "Michelangelo's Revelatory Epitaphs," *Neophilologus* 67, 1983, pp. 525–39; Michel-Ange Buonarroti, *Épithaphes pour la mort de François des Bras*, trans. and ed. S. Matarasso-Gervais. Aix-en-Provence, Alinea, 1983; Franz Voelker, "I cinquanta componimenti funebri di Michelangelo per Luigi del Riccio," *Italique* 3, 2000, pp. 23–44.

7

Homosexual acts were banned in the United Kingdom until 1967 based on the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. On the cultural climate in Britain at the time of the law's reassessment surrounding the so-called Wolfenden Report of 1957, see Brian Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses: Homosexuality in Postwar Britain*. Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

depart from a rectangular canvas, adroitly shaping like a coffin-lid his memorial to Cecchino Bracci, a scarecrow figure in bowler hat with a wreath encircling his name."⁵ Wallis was observant. *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci*, which entered the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection in 1978, is made from two separately-stretched canvases that Hockney joined before painting.

Despite his attention to Hockney's approach to constructing canvases, Wallis clearly knew nothing of the painting's subject: the deceased young Florentine Francesco ("Cecchino") di Zanobi Bracci (1528–1544). After Bracci's premature death, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564) became responsible for designing his tomb in Rome, and he wrote fifty poems about Bracci, one of which Hockney transcribed on the painting.⁶ Wallis could be forgiven for his ignorance, as Hockney's painting and title make no explicit mention of Michelangelo, and the related poems remain little-known to this day.

The most apparent feature of Hockney's painting (its construction) and its least known (its literary source in Michelangelo's poetry) were closely yoked. At this stage in his career, Hockney sought innovative means of building canvases and choosing textual sources for subjects concerning same-sex desire. In so doing, he aimed to challenge assumptions about a painting's status as a work on canvas and the representability of same-sex love, as homosexual acts were illegal in Britain at that time.⁷ Neither of these artistic problems was wholly new, as Hockney knew. *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* shows how Hockney found innovative solutions by elaborating construction techniques from his prior work and by mining Renaissance history, given his access to new translations of Michelangelo's poems and his recent travel to Italy.

“Drawing” with Canvas



fig. 2

David Hockney
Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style, 1961
Oil on canvas, 232.5 × 83 cm
Tate, London, Purchased with Assistance
from the Art Fund 1996, T07075

In 1961 Hockney first began making paintings with multiple canvases that he built and combined himself. These included *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style* [fig. 2] and *Figure in a Flat Style*, which were exhibited together in the *Young Contemporaries* show the following year. Of the former painting's assembly, Hockney later reflected:

“I can remember a precise moment when I realized that the shape of the picture gave it a great deal more power. To make a painting of a packet of tea more illusionistic, I hit on the idea of ‘drawing’ it with the shape of the canvas. The stretcher is made up from sections and I made the stretchers myself. It was quite difficult stretching them all up – the back is almost as complicated as the front; it took me five days.”⁸

The painting's scale substantiates the days of work behind it. Together the four canvases of *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style* measure over two meters in height. Faint white painted lines give depth to the resultant illusionistic box, which encloses a seated, life-size figure. This figure is encased by signs of Hockney's labor, which was not only needed to build the bespoke box but also fueled by drinking the represented brand of tea, Typhoo.

In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci similarly combines multiple hand-made canvases to create an illusionistic space enclosing a life-size figural subject. The canvases' composite outline echoes the black coffin shape painted around the title figure. The painting thrives on the ambiguity created by this doubling: do the two forms create an illusionistic coffin in which the figure lies buried, or do they show the grave into which the corpse is being interred? Achieving this took planning. A view of the back of the painting shows that the

⁸ David Hockney, *David Hockney*, ed. Nikos Stangos. London, Thames and Hudson, 1976, p. 64.



fig. 3

Figure 1, seen from the reverse
Photo provided by Department
of Conservation, Museo Thyssen-
Bornemisza.

small trapezoidal canvas is fastened to the large rectangular canvas with two metal angle brackets at the corners and three thin wooden planks between them [fig. 3]. To give stability to the vertical stretcher bars of the large canvas, Hockney added a horizontal wooden cross brace. These deliberate steps in construction contrast with Hockney's eschewal of the typical first step of preparing a canvas: applying a priming layer. Because Hockney spread his paint onto raw, unprimed canvas (as he often did in this period), it seeped into the fibers.⁹ To offset the resultant dulling of the colors, Hockney applied varnish to part of the surface, creating a selective shine that is key to the painting's subject. Whereas *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style* overlaid the figure with the logo of the tea box to create a sense of enclosure, *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* achieves this effect with diagonal streaks of paint that, together with the varnish, evoke a gleaming lid.

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I am grateful to Marta Ruiz del Árbol for showing me images taken by conservators of the canvas reverse seen through bright light, which helps to illuminate how certain paint layers have seeped into the canvas fibers.

Well-delimited spaces intensify the desire Hockney weighed upon his figural subjects and reflect his avowed debt to Francis Bacon (1909–1992). Many of Bacon's paintings show a figure in the middle of an interior space defined by stark lines, as in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza's *Portrait of George Dyer*

fig. 4

Francis Bacon
Portrait of George Dyer in a Mirror,
 1968
 Oil on canvas, 198 × 147 cm
 Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
 Madrid, Inv. no. 458, 1971.3

[\[+ info\]](#)

fig. 5

Francis Bacon
*Three Studies for Figures at the Base
 of a Crucifixion*, ca. 1944
 Oil on three boards, each 94 × 73.7 cm
 Tate, London, Presented
 by Eric Hall 1953, N01671



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In addition to visiting the Leeds Art Gallery in his youth, Hockney also sold his first painting in 1954 at the Yorkshire Artists Exhibition (Hockney, *op. cit.* note 8, pp. 34–39).

11

On Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, see Dawn Ades, "Web of Images," in *Francis Bacon*, ed. Dawn Ades and Andrew Forge. London, Thames and Hudson, 1985, pp. 8–23 (18–20).

in a Mirror [fig. 4]. Hockney had studied Bacon's work in person for many years, and the Leeds Art Gallery that Hockney visited in his youth acquired one of Bacon's paintings in 1951.¹⁰ Bacon's grouping of individual paintings to form a single artwork, as in his triptych of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* [fig. 5] that the Tate acquired in 1953, was a key precedent for Hockney.¹¹ But while Bacon divided discrete subjects across three boards in his triptych, Hockney physically attached his different quadrilateral canvases to extend a single figure across them. Bacon's eroticized figures each rend themselves apart through violent disassembly; Hockney's desired figures become whole through static assembly.



fig. 6
David Hockney
We Two Boys Together Clinging, 1961
 Oil on board, 121.9 × 152.4 cm
 Arts Council Collection, Southbank
 Centre, London, ACC5/1961

Hockney's act of joining canvases was a counterpoint to his contemporaneous exploration of the physical interlocking of same-sex bodies. His paintings such as *Adhesiveness* (1960) and *We Two Boys Together Clinging* [fig. 6] foreground how desiring male bodies latch together. While the former painting's title might relate to phrenology, as has been noted, Hockney was surely playing as well with its obvious significance as stickiness.¹² These two paintings pulse with energy as figures bridge the linear contours that separate them. By contrast, Hockney's paintings made with multiple canvases manifest a process of unification at odds with their subjects' isolation. *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* shows a figure sequestered from possible admirers, and connecting canvas edges was a determinate process suited to Bracci's terminal state.

¹² Robert Martin, "Fetishizing America: David Hockney and Thom Gunn," in *The Continuing Presence of Walt Whitman: The Life After the Life*, ed. Robert Martin. Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1992, pp. 114–126 (118).



fig. 7

David Hockney
Peter.C, 1985
 Oil on canvas, 111.7 × 40.6 cm
 Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester,
 1985.22

Hockney had previously used conjoined canvases of different sizes to represent an inaccessible subject in his full-length portrait of his friend and classmate Peter Crutch (d. 2002), made in 1961. The painting, *Peter.C* [fig. 7], captures the gentle swoop of Crutch's sandy hair and the faint smile drawing back his red lips. Hockney made a different painting of Crutch after observing him dance with his girlfriend, and *Peter.C* functions as Hockney's memorial for an unattainable, beautiful male beloved that he names in large capital letters.¹³ *Peter.C* and *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* thereby foreground the artist's relation to a human model through text and image. Both paintings allude to their subjects by incorporating the large, hand-painted capital letter "C," evocative of Hockney's use of codes in this period to mark same-sex desire.¹⁴ In explaining why he chose male models while at the Royal College of Art, Hockney later said that he believed Michelangelo was similarly attracted to the male subjects in his work.¹⁵ *Peter.C* and *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* thereby reflect the overlap of personal and historic categories in Hockney's early work.

13

The painting of Crutch dancing, *The Cha Cha that was Danced in the Early Hours of 24th March 1961*, is in a private collection.

14

Hockney described his interest in alpha-numerical codes as stemming from his reading of the poet Walt Whitman (Hockney, *op. cit.* note 8, p. 62).

15

Hockney, *David Hockney*, p. 88.

16

Tusiani groups the 50 poems about Bracci together as the seventy-third entry in his volume under the heading: "In Memoriam Cecchino Bracci." See Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Complete Poems of Michelangelo*, trans. Joseph Tusiani. New York, The Noonday Press, 1960, p. 58.

17

English translations of a selection of Michelangelo's poetry prior to Tusiani's edition included Michelangelo Buonarroti and Tommaso Campanella, *The Sonnets of Michelangelo Buonarroti and Tommaso Campanella*, trans. John Addington Symonds. London, Smith, Elder, and Co., 1878; Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Sonnets and Madrigals of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, trans. William Wells Newell. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1900; Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Sonnets of Michelangelo*, trans. S. Elizabeth Hall. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1905; Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Poems*, trans. Cecil Clifford Palmer. Zurich, Johannespresse, 1941.

18

For a pioneering examination of Michelangelo's relationship with Cavalieri in English, see John Addington Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti: Based on Studies in the Archives of the Buonarroti Family in Florence*. London, John C. Nimmo, 1893, II: pp. 125–50.

19

Emily Porter-Salmon, "Textual Cues, Visual Fictions: Representations of Homosexuality in the Work of David Hockney," PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2011, pp. 93–94.

20

Invented in England in 1959, Letraset has a complex history that has been charted in Adrian Shaughnessy, *Letraset: The DIY Typography Revolution*, ed. Tony Brook and Adrian Shaughnessy. London, Unit Editions, 2017.

Michelangelo between Auden and Whitman

The title of Hockney's *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* and the reproduced poem on the canvas are taken from Joseph Tusiani's translation of Michelangelo's poetry, published in 1960.¹⁶ Among Michelangelo's more than 300 poems and fragments of varied forms, only a selection had been previously translated into English by that year.¹⁷ Tusiani's volume thereby made Michelangelo's lesser-known poems, including epigrams written for the death of the beloved Bracci, available all together to Anglophone readers for the first time. Previous publications had included other poems by Michelangelo that convey related amorous themes, and past scholarship on Michelangelo had addressed this aspect of his work, particularly the famous drawings and poems he made for the Roman nobleman Tommaso de' Cavalieri (1513/14–1587).¹⁸

By focusing on the poems about Bracci, Hockney opted to explore relatively uncharted terrain in Michelangelo's literary output. His painting is the earliest modern response to these particular poems and most sensitive visual interpretation. Michelangelo thereby joined other poets whose writings Hockney mined to convey same-sex desire in his artworks, particularly W. H. Auden (1907–1973), C. P. Cavafy (1863–1933), and Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Like these other authors, Michelangelo's canonical status could have lent potential legitimacy to an exploration of same-sex desire in this painting, as Emily Porter-Salmon has argued in her extensive study of homosexuality in Hockney's art.¹⁹ It is nonetheless worth stressing the obscurity of these particular verses by Michelangelo, which were far outside any literary canon in this period.

In the lower right corner of the painting, Hockney included the first of Michelangelo's fifty poems about Bracci, a four-line epigram, the opening verse of which he also reproduced in the center of the painting under Bracci's nickname, Cecchino [figs. 8–9]. He set these words in a neat typeface using the newly-invented Letraset transfer medium.²⁰ Hockney had chosen to write poetry in small lettering in other paintings, particularly *The Third Love Painting* [fig. 10], which incorporates the final verses of Whitman's *When I Heard at the Close of the Day*, a poem written a century earlier. Later reflecting on this painting, Hockney said: "I assume people

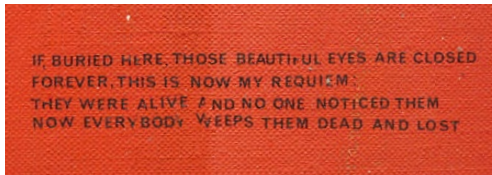


fig. 8
Detail of the reproduction of
Michelangelo's poem in Letraset in
the lower right corner of the painting
In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci

fig. 9
Detail of the center of the painting
In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci



fig. 10
David Hockney
The Third Love Painting, 1960
Oil on board, 118.7 × 118.7 cm
Tate, London, Purchased
with assistance from the Art Fund,
the Friends of the Tate Gallery,
the American Fund for the Tate
Gallery and a group of donors 1991,
T06468

are always inquisitive and nosy, and if you see a little poem written in the corner of a painting it will force you to go up and look at it. And so then the painting becomes something a little different: it's not just, as Whistler would say, an arrangement in browns, pinks and blacks."²¹

The insouciance of Hockney's phrase, "something a little different," belies the complex interplay between text and image that he intended. A viewer must get close to *The Third Love Painting* to see Whitman's hand-written verses, which are among his most explicit poetic lines to reference same-sex desire. The citation begins: "for the one I love most lay sleeping/ by me under the same cover in the cool night." Alongside these words are scrawls of phrases Hockney later recalled having seen in the men's bathroom at the Earl's Court underground station.²² The rudimentary script on *The Third Love Painting's* paint-surface-made-lavatory-wall contrasts to the formal typeface on *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci's* paint-surface-made-coffin. Whitman's poem marks "the close of the day" to link daily activities of male bodies that live and love together. Michelangelo's poem marks the close of a life to isolate a male body that is desired but expired.

21

Hockney, *op. cit.* note 8, p. 44.

22

Ibid.

Hockney in Italy

Such textual citations of Whitman, a titan among American poets who made the country's landscape his subject, were linked to Hockney's broader interest in the United States, which he first visited in 1961. The choice of Michelangelo as a poetic source similarly reflects Hockney's interest in Italy, which he visited for the first time in December of that same year.²³ One of the two other paintings that Hockney exhibited at the *Image in Progress* show alongside *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* was *Flight into Italy – Swiss Landscape*, which recorded his tumultuous overland journey for that trip. In his accompanying statement published in the exhibition catalogue, Hockney wrote: "it did occur to me that my own sources of inspiration were wide, – but acceptable. In fact, I am sure my own sources are classic, or even epic themes. Landscapes of foreign lands, beautiful people, love, propaganda, and major incidents (of my own life)."²⁴ These varied sources coalesce in *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci*. During a second trip to Italy with his American friend Jeff Goodman in the summer of 1962, Hockney visited Florence, Rome, and Viareggio and apparently made preparatory drawings for the painting with young men in Florence serving as models.²⁵ An example of Hockney's graphic development of this subject is a print sold at auction in 2006 that uses the techniques of etching and aquatint.²⁶ The print shows Bracci set within a shape resembling a coffin, his eyes closed and hands within a black shroud. It also includes the phrase "in memoriam Cecchino Bracci" in hand-written letters, as well as the same poem by Michelangelo in a clear typeface.

Graphic practice was a key means for Hockney to explore poetry, as he also made two prints in 1961 based on translations of poems written in Greek by C. P. Cavafy.²⁷ One of them includes pairs of verses from Cavafy's poems, including the closing lines of *The Mirror in the Front Hall* about a tailor's assistant who examined himself in a mirror [fig. 11]. This print shows the figure before the mirror with the label "Peter," substituting Cavafy's subject with Hockney's classmate-crush Peter Crutch. The print also incorporates darkened shapes around the figure and his mirrored reflection, showing Hockney's approach to framing figures that would reemerge in his Bracci designs. Hockney's engagement with the writings of Cavafy and Whitman may have led him to select Michelangelo's epigram about Bracci, given that these authors

23

Hockney embarked on his trip to Italy by van with his friend Michael Kullman (Hockney, *op. cit.* note 8, p. 87).

24

The catalogue notably makes small errors in its listing of the painting, misspelling Hockney's title ("IN MEMORIAM: CHECCINO [sic] BRACCI") and citing an incorrect width ("84 × 84 in" [213,3 × 213,3 cm]), as the painting's width measures 36 rather than 84 inches. *Image in Progress*, with an essay by Jasia Reichardt. London, Gryf Printers (H. C.) Ltd., 1962, [unpaginated].

25

Peter Webb, *Portrait of David Hockney*. London, Chatto and Windus, 1988, p. 51.

26

The print was sold as lot 326 at Christie's in London at the "Prints and Multiples" auction (sale 5049) on October 25, 2006. The print is signed, dated, and numbered "1/1" in pencil.

27

Early English translations of Cavafy's poetry that Hockney could have accessed include C.P. Cavafy, *Poems of C.P. Cavafy*, trans. and notes by John Mavrogordato. London, Hogarth Press, 1951; C.P. Cavafy, *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, trans. Rae Dalven, intro. W.H. Auden. New York, Brace and World, 1961.

fig. 11
David Hockney
Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, 1961
 Etching and aquatint on paper,
 40.5 × 49.7 cm
 Tate, London, Presented by Jonathan
 Cheshire and Gareth Marshallsea in
 memory of Peter Coni 1994, P11377



fig. 12
Anonymous
Tomb of Cecchino Bracci,
S. Maria in Aracoeli, Rome,
 sixteenth century
 Black chalk, pen, and brown ink
 on paper, 39.5 × 55.8 cm
 Metropolitan Museum of Art,
 New York, The Elisha Whittelsey
 Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey
 Fund, 1949, 49.19.20



all wrote poems about the tombs of men who died young. One salient example is Cavafy's *Tomb of Iasis*, which begins: "I, Iasis, lie here – the young man/ famous for his good looks in this great city."²⁸

Cavafy's poems are rooted in the city of Alexandria, while those about Bracci are directly related to the place of his death, Rome. Upon visiting the Eternal City in the summer of 1962, Hockney certainly could have seen Bracci's extant tomb in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli [fig. 12]. Michelangelo had agreed to design the tomb at the behest of Bracci's uncle, Luigi del Riccio (d. 1546), who is named in the tomb's Latin inscriptions. The wall tomb incorporates a marble portrait bust of Bracci set into a niche, and below the bust is a sarcophagus that traverses the tomb's three bays. Hockney's painting does not show explicit details that connect it to the original tomb's design. At most, the wreath at its center may refer to the laurel crown bestowed upon Michelangelo's poetic model, Petrarch, on the Capitoline hill where the basilica is located, and this motif also functioned as an emblem for Michelangelo. Three interlocking laurel wreaths feature on his own tomb at the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence. More direct sources for Hockney, however, include the practice

28
 C.P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, trans.
 Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard,
 ed. George Savidis, 2nd Edition.
 Princeton, Princeton University Press,
 1992, p. 76.

of wreath-laying at funerals common in England as elsewhere in the twentieth century, as well as the logo of a wreath of leaves on the Typhoo tea box that he had incorporated into his *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style* the previous year.

Hockney's *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* shows careful engagement with the text of Michelangelo's poem. Hockney's fondness for poetry is evident in a short interview of 1970 together with R.B. Kitaj, in which he remarked on poetry's affinities with painting, saying: "I've always known or detected strong connections and thought a poet must be a bit like me, rather than a novelist. It's the way an idea starts with something you look at, or hear, and your imagination begins to work."²⁹ When making *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci*, Hockney allowed his own imagination to build off the poem he cited, reproduced below in his transcription of Tusiani's translation, as well as the original Italian:

*If, buried here, those beautiful eyes are closed
Forever, this is now my requiem:
They were alive and no one noticed them;
Now everybody weeps them, dead and lost.*³⁰

[*Se qui son chiusi i begli occhi e sepolti
anzi tempo, sol questo ne conforta:
che piet  di lor vivi era qua morta;
or che son morti, di lor vive in molti.*³¹]

Hockney likely selected this poem because of its opening position in the group of Michelangelo's poems about Bracci, and Hockney's repetition of the incipit in the center of the painting coincides with the poems' emphasis on the beginning of a life cut short. Hockney clearly paid attention to the original positioning of the verses he cited, as his quotations from Whitman and Cavafy's poems mentioned above are both taken from the poems' final verses.

The subject of Michelangelo's poem is Bracci's eyes (a synecdoche for his entire body), and the first verse's emphasis on their closure coincides with Hockney's placement of the join between the two canvases where Bracci's shut eyes should be. Hockney similarly located the join between two

29

David Hockney, "David Hockney in Conversation with R.B. Kitaj," *The New Review* 3, 1970, January-February, pp. 75-77 (76).

30

Buonarroti, *The Complete Poems*, p. 58.

31

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Rime e lettere*, ed. Antonio Corsaro and Giorgio Masi. Milan, Bompiani, 2016, p. 321.

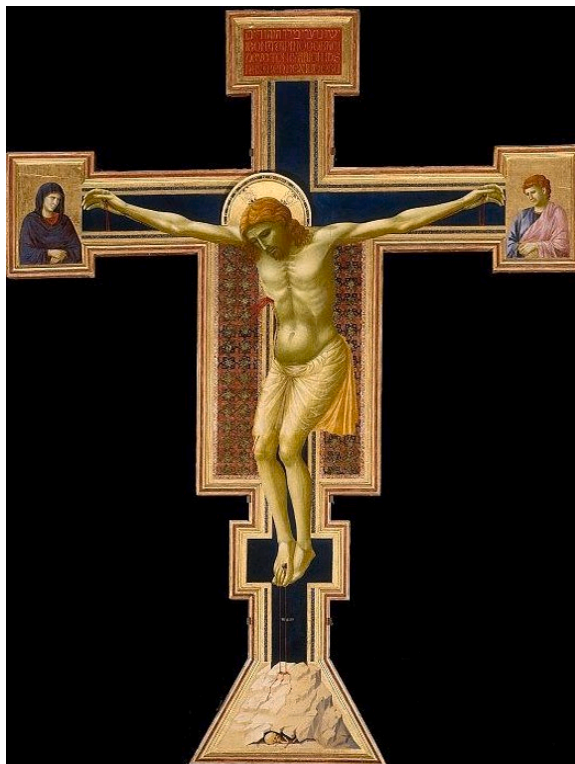
canvases along the eye sockets of the figure in *Tea Painting in an Illusionistic Style*. Art historians such as David Freedberg and Megan Holmes have studied how eyes can enliven a figural image while their cancellation can remove its efficacy, and the black strikethrough created by the join of Hockney's canvases voids his subject's potential for life.³² No further act of painting could undo this fatal gap. But even though the closing verse of Michelangelo's poem emphasizes that Bracci's eyes are "dead and lost," these are by no means his last words on the subject. Many of Michelangelo's other 49 poems about Bracci deal with the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which he places in tension with the exceptional beauty of Bracci's body. While Hockney does not reproduce these other poems, his painting's subject and material support imply Bracci's potential resurrection through allusion to Christian devotional paintings.

32

David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp. 415–18; Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2013, pp. 183–190.

Christ and Cecchino

fig. 13
Giotto di Bondone
Crucifix, ca. 1290-95
 578 × 406 cm, egg tempera
 and gold leaf on panel
 Santa Maria Novella, Florence



Hockney's construction of *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* from multiple canvases was informed by his time in Italy and his experience of seeing large, devotional panel paintings there. In his autobiography, Hockney remarked on his youthful belief in the quadrilateral essentiality of paintings: "The idea that paintings should be rectangular or square was so fixed in every student's mind that even Italian paintings of the Crucifixion, constructed in the shape of the cross, still appeared in my memory as rectangular."³³ While at college in London Hockney could have observed panel paintings in the National Gallery to dispel this idea, and he recalled being particularly struck by the construction of many-sided polygonal paintings upon visiting Florence in 1961 [fig. 13]. "Seeing in the Uffizi that big Duccio, the Crucifixion, did confirm my belief in the power you can give to a canvas by shaping it to suit its subject," he remarked.³⁴ *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci's* two-part construction echoes especially the practice in the Renaissance of attaching pinnacles above larger panels in certain altarpieces.

³³
 Hockney, *op. cit.* note 8, p. 64.

³⁴
Ibid., p. 87

Hockney's decision to make paintings from multiple canvases also imported the affective capacities of such Renaissance paintings, and *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* alludes to widespread devotional imagery of Christ. The verticality of Bracci's life-size body invokes the Crucifixion, but the wrapping of his limbs against his body with a shroud more closely relate to the later stage in the Passion narrative of Christ's entombment. Michelangelo himself explored the complex relation of these narrative episodes and combined elements of them in a manner commensurate with reformist Christian theology, as Alexander Nagel has brilliantly shown, but it is unlikely Hockney thought explicitly about this facet of Michelangelo's art.³⁵ Rather, an entombed body offered a visual challenge appropriate to an artist who also dared himself to find lesser-known textual sources to explore same-sex desire.

Christ's entombment and subsequent resurrection are fundamental to the doctrine of Christian salvation, and Hockney himself has commented on the representational complexities of the resurrection. During a set of extended interviews, Hockney and Martin Gayford discussed the different modes of representing Christian narrative scenes in Western art. After Gayford compared strategies of different Renaissance artists, Hockney responded: "In any case, you could argue that the whole point of Christianity is the Resurrection, not the Crucifixion. It's more difficult to paint, certainly more difficult to photograph."³⁶ To the extent that *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* explores the possibility of Christian resurrection, it is part of a longstanding preoccupation with this theme in Hockney's early work. The first artworks he made at the Royal College of Art were drawings of skeletons, which not only show studied knowledge of anatomy, but could also carry valences of the skeleton as a marker of salvation and Christ's death on the cross.³⁷ In addition to the skeletal figures emerging from tombs in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, Hockney was presumably aware of the skeleton in Masaccio's famous *Trinity* of about 1427 in Florence's Basilica of Santa Maria Novella [fig. 14]. Masaccio's skeleton can be understood in relation to Christ's crucifixion above the burial place of Adam, the promise of resurrection made possible by Christ's sacrifice, and the fresco's role within a funerary context.³⁸

35

Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

36

David Hockney and Martin Gayford, *A History of Pictures: From the Cave to the Computer Screen*. New York, Abrams, 2016, p. 138.

37

On the relation of anatomical study to Christianity in English art, see Meredith Gamer, "Criminal and Martyr: The Case of James Legg's 'Anatomical Crucifixion,'" in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 495–513.

38

Rona Goffen, "Masaccio's *Trinity* and the Letter to Hebrews," in *Masaccio's Trinity*, ed. Rona Goffen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 43–64; Charles Dempsey, "Masaccio's *Trinity*: Altarpiece or Tomb?" *The Art Bulletin* 54, 1972, pp. 279–81.

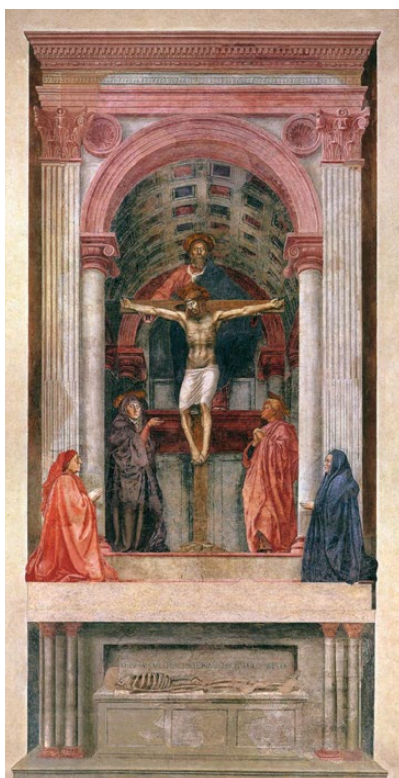


fig. 14
Masaccio
Trinity, ca. 1427
 Fresco, 667 × 317 cm
 Santa Maria Novella,
 Florence

39

Kent L. Brintnall, *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011, pp. 135–170.

40

Within the extensive scholarship on the torsion of Michelangelo's figures, see especially David Summers, "Maniera and Movement: The *Figura Serpentinata*," *Art Quarterly* 35, 1972, pp. 269–301; Michael Cole, *Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the Art of the Figure*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2014.

Given Hockney's declared interest in the work of Francis Bacon, his generational predecessor offered a model for reconciling Christian subjects in Italian Renaissance paintings with modern approaches to depicting the human form. Bacon's paintings with the crucifixion as their subject use extreme affective violence to destabilize both figural representation and fixed theological meaning, as Kent Brintnall has adroitly shown.³⁹ Bacon's contortions of the human body stage him as a modern successor to Michelangelo, who was famous for pushing the capacity of bodily torsion to new extremes.⁴⁰ Whereas Bacon radically warped figures, in this case Hockney historicized them, pivoting away from Michelangelo's representations of the nude. *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* shows a moment of clear biographical significance in the life of Michelangelo, which parallels Hockney's own lived experience given the painting's similarity to his portrait of Peter Crutch.

Conclusion

fig. 15

David Hockney
***The Second Marriage*, 1963**
 Oil, gouache and collage from torn
 wallpaper on canvas, 197.8 × 228.7 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne, Presented by
 the Contemporary Art Society
 of London, 1965, 1525-5



Hockney's deployment of poetic citations from Michelangelo, as from Whitman and Cavafy before, reflects his personal identification with historic experiences of same-sex desire, as well as his search for textual sources to confront the dilemma of representing such desire. Poetry would remain crucial to Hockney, who revisited Cavafy's poems in a suite of etchings from 1966, but his subsequent paintings show him seeking different means to visualize same-sex desire. In the catalogue for the recent retrospective of Hockney's art, Andrew Wilson pointed to the thematic difference between Hockney's treatment of same-sex desire in paintings at the beginning of the 1960s and his paintings of the immediately following years, such as *The First Marriage* (1962) and *The Second Marriage* [fig. 15]. Wilson wrote: "If many of Hockney's paintings of a few years earlier bravely trumpeted homosexual desire – specifically his own desire and fantasy – these are all paintings that by their very domesticity normalise that desire into images of companionship and commitment."⁴¹ *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* deserves to be seen as a crucial fulcrum of these two stages in Hockney's artistic development.

41

Andrew Wilson, "Pictures with People In," in *David Hockney*, ed. Chris Stephens and Andrew Wilson. London, Tate Publishing, 2017, pp. 49–55 (53).

The stillness and inaccessibility of its subject inform the same features of Hockney's dissonant pairs in his later *Marriage* paintings, and *The Second Marriage* similarly incorporates multiple conjoined canvases with a horizontal join along the male figure's eyes.

That Hockney did not produce other paintings explicitly related to Michelangelo's poetry is unsurprising given this shift in his work. Hockney returned briefly to Michelangelo in his 2001 study of optical techniques in artistic practice, citing Michelangelo as an exemplar for the avoidance of using lenses and visual tools.⁴² Indeed, the Italian Renaissance would serve Hockney well when attending to representational problems of perspective and illusionistic space, but salient figures in that context were Piero della Francesca (1416/17–1492) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). *In Memoriam of Cecchino Bracci* achieved a different afterlife in Hockney's subsequent work thanks to its multi-part construction and desirable subject. These features became crucial to his photographic collages of the later twentieth century, not to mention his large-scale paintings made from dozens of canvases extending into the following century. By 1962 Bracci's eyes were permanently shuttered, but Hockney's camera lens had yet to open and close. ●

42

David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*. New York, Viking Studio, 2001, p. 184.

A chance encounter

New information on Balthus's *Card Game*¹

Marta Ruiz del Árbol



Balthus
The Card Game, 1948–50
(detail)

[\[+ info\]](#)

fig. 1

Erica Brausen, 1959,
photograph by Ida Kar

**1**

This article draws attention to one of the tasks of museum curators: to investigate the provenance of the works belonging to the permanent collection. A painting's ownership history is often incomplete, with collectors who remained anonymous or periods in which all trace of the piece is lost. Our work consists in trying to fill in these blanks while immersing ourselves in the – very often fascinating – lives of the people who owned these paintings before they entered the Museum.

2

Jean-Yves Mock, formerly Erica Brausen's assistant at the Hanover Gallery, tells of this episode in his biography of her. See Jean-Yves Mock: *Erica Brausen. Premier marchand de Francis Bacon*. Paris, L'Échoppe, 1996, p. 1.

3

On Brausen's life, see Mock, *op. cit.* note 2, and the obituaries published in the British press, such as Barry Joule: 'Obituary: Erica Brausen'. In *The Independent*, 30 December 1992 (see <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-erica-brausen-1565959.html>, last accessed 13 February 2019).

It all began one day in 1953 when the director of the Hanover Gallery in London saw a stranger enter the premises. From the far end she watched him walk around in silence before going up to her to congratulate her on the selection of pictures hanging on the walls. 'It's closing down', replied the owner laconically. However, her sincere admission of bankruptcy turned out to be her salvation. For that anonymous visitor happened to be an art-loving banker who decided on impulse to save the gallery and became its new owner.²

It had not been easy for Erica Brausen (1908–1992) to open her gallery [fig. 1]. Born in Germany, she emigrated to Britain not long before the outbreak of the Second World War and came up against the restrictions German citizens then faced, such as being banned from setting up their own business. After marrying a friend to obtain a work permit, Brausen joined the staff of the Redfern Gallery. Only in 1947, thanks to the financial support of the US businessman Arthur Jeffress, was she able to fulfil her wishes: to open the Hanover Gallery.³

Following its opening Brausen succeeded in turning the establishment into one of the most active and modern galleries on the European post-war scene. At 21 she had gone

fig. 2

Francis Bacon
Painting, 1946
 Oil and pastel on canvas,
 197.8 × 132.1 cm
 The Museum of Modern Art,
 New York



to live in Paris, where she had struck up close relationships with artists and intellectuals of the international avant-garde. One of the artists she met in the French capital was Joan Miró, who encouraged her to settle in Palma de Mallorca in 1935. On the island Brausen ran a bar that was frequented by the local cultural elite until she found herself forced to flee by boat to Britain at the height of the Spanish Civil War. By then she had built up a large web of contacts that enabled her to organise exhibitions in London for artists such as Paul Klee, Alberto Giacometti, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, Hans Arp and Hanna Hoch, among others. From the outset she combined this focus on artists with a firmly established European reputation with a more experimental side that turned the gallery into a launchpad for a new generation of British painters. Notable among them was, without a doubt, Francis Bacon.

Encouraged by Graham Sutherland, Brausen visited Bacon's atelier in 1946. What she saw in the studio of the then unknown painter fascinated her so much that she came away with *Painting* [fig. 2]. Barely two years later, in 1948, she managed to sell the work to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. After this stroke of fortune, she was contacted by many other institutions, keen to follow in the footsteps of the first and most important contemporary art museum in the world. In November 1949 she staged the artist's first one-man show, which played a decisive role in launching him on the international scene.

Nevertheless, although the collaboration between Brausen and Bacon was a resounding success both for the gallery and for the British artist's career, their relationship did not only bring joy. In 1953 Arthur Jeffress decided to withdraw his financial support owing precisely to his dislike of the artist's works. It was at this point, when everything seemed to be coming to an end, that the visit of that above mentioned stranger prevented the gallery's imminent closure. His name was Michael Behrens (1911–1989).

Michael Behrens and Erica Brausen

The new owner of the Hanover Gallery was not only a reputed banker who went on to buy the Ionian Bank in 1958; in 1953 he had diversified his investments by purchasing a restaurant called La Réserve. However, his personal interest in the gallery was not merely commercial. It seems that Michael Behrens's decision was prompted by his fondness for art, as well as by his unquestionable business acumen. Indeed, he was not only a frequent visitor to the West End galleries but also owned a small art collection.

'Michael Behrens soon developed great admiration and regard for Erica', recalled Jean-Yves Mock years later.⁴ Mock, her assistant from 1956 onwards, explained about the relationship between the banker and the art dealer in his biography of Brausen. Together they kept the gallery running for a further two decades, until 1973, and weathered the greatest crisis of her entire career: Francis Bacon's desertion after he signed a contract with the Marlborough Gallery in 1958.

Despite being attracted to art, Behrens did not purchase works from his own gallery and did not take the opportunity to snap up for a good price a few significant twentieth-century pieces that passed through the establishment during those years. The impulse which had spurred him to bail out the gallery did not lead to additions to his collection. There was, however, one exception. In his account Mock tells of a work the banker did acquire from the Hanover Gallery.⁵ It was not a Francis Bacon, or a Lucian Freud, an artist whose first solo show was staged by the gallery. Nor was it an Alberto Giacometti or a Henry Moore. The painting he purchased for 2,970 pounds was a Balthus. He earned a sizeable profit when he decided to sell it in the early 1980s, with Erica Brausen acting as an intermediary.⁶ It was precisely after it changed hands that the banker became aware of the business opportunities he had let slip away and of the profits he could have made had he invested in some of the artists his business had represented.⁷

4
Mock, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 2. Mock worked at the Hanover Gallery until it closed in 1973 and later became a curator at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

5
Mock, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 2.

6
Despite closing the London gallery, Brausen continued to be an art dealer throughout her whole life and collaborated with Gimpel Fils at their Zurich gallery.

7
Mock, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 2.

A Balthus in the Hanover Gallery

fig. 3
Balthus
The Card Game, 1948–50
Oil on canvas, 140 × 194 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
Madrid
[\[+ info\]](#)



fig. 4
Photograph of one of the rooms
of Balthus's solo exhibition
at the MoMA, New York, 1956

The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza owns only one Balthus, *The Card Game* [fig. 3]. Interestingly, the work also passed through the Hanover Gallery and later belonged to a British private collection. The coincidences between the history of Behrens's picture and the provenance of our painting led us to harbour hopes it might be the same canvas.

It is known that *The Card Game* was painted by Balthus between 1948 and 1950. Shortly afterwards the painter sent it to his dealer Pierre Matisse in New York, where it was also shown in the solo exhibition organised by the Museum of Modern Art in 1956 [fig. 4]. On 14 April 1959 the canvas was acquired by Erica Brausen for 2,970 pounds and shipped to

London.⁸ It passed from the Hanover Gallery to an anonymous collector and later appeared in the Thomas Ammann Fine Art gallery in Zurich. In 1982 it became the property of the prominent collector Hans-Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza and when the museum named after him opened in 1992 Balthus's canvas was among the works that were sent to Madrid.

To discover whether *The Card Game* could be the work that once hung in the British banker's house, we first contacted the Thomas Ammann gallery to see if they could supply us with the name of the previous owner. After examining its archives, the Zurich gallery informed us that the entire sale operation had been conducted by Erica Brausen and that the owner had remained anonymous.⁹ Despite not solving our enigma, this piece of information tied in with Mock's account of the sale of Behrens's Balthus, in which the German dealer also acted as an intermediary.¹⁰ It brought us a little closer to confirming the hypothesis that the Thyssen canvas might have previously belonged to the English banker. But the definite confirmation it was the same work came when, on examining his biography, we discovered that he was also the father of the painter Timothy Behrens (1937–2017).

8

Information provided by email by Tate Library & Archive, which holds the archives of the Hanover Gallery, on 24 January 2019.

9

Email from Patrizia Solombrino of Thomas Amman Fine Art, 25 May 2018.

10

Mock, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 2.

Tim Behrens and *The Card Game*

fig. 5

From left to right: Timothy Behrens, Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach and Michael Andrews at Wheeler's, Old Compton Street, 1963, photograph by John Deakin



As a young man Michael Behrens's son Tim became involved with the artists of the British New Figuration movement of the second half of the twentieth century. The youngest of all the painters of the School of London, he came into contact with them through Lucian Freud, whom he met in 1955 while studying at the Slade School of Arts. During the following nine years, Behrens and Freud became close friends and even lived together. Thanks to Freud, he became acquainted with the whole London art scene and, among many other artists, coincided with Bacon, who was still represented by Tim's father's gallery at the time [fig. 5].

Despite owning the Hanover Gallery, Michael Behrens did not approve of his son's decision to devote himself to art and their relationship was very strained. Indeed, the young artist's first solo exhibition in London was not held at Erica Brausen's gallery but at the Beaux-Arts Gallery, where Frank Auerbach and Michael Andrews also showed their work.

It was not until his mature years that Tim Behrens, then established in La Coruña, remembered his past and admitted the importance of his father's influence on his artistic leanings. 'After the war', he recalled, 'when I was nine or ten, my father started collecting art and I started painting. But as we always got on badly, it took me half a century to recognise the obvious connection between the two beginnings'.¹¹ The painter went on to tell of how some Saturdays he had accompanied his father to London's West End galleries and how Michael came to own several works by Matthew Smith,

¹¹

Tim Behrens: 'T. Behrens por T. Behrens'. In *T. Behrens* [exh. cat.]. Madrid - La Coruña, Círculo de Bellas Artes - Kiosco Alfonso, 2003, p. 23

fig. 6

Michael Andrews

Portrait of Timothy Behrens, 1962

Oil on cardboard, 122 × 122 cm

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
Madrid

[\[+ info\]](#)



Corot and Forain. When recalling his father's collection he briefly mentioned all the artists who had belonged to it but spoke at greater length about a painting that had made a particular impression on him: a Balthus entitled *The Card Game*.

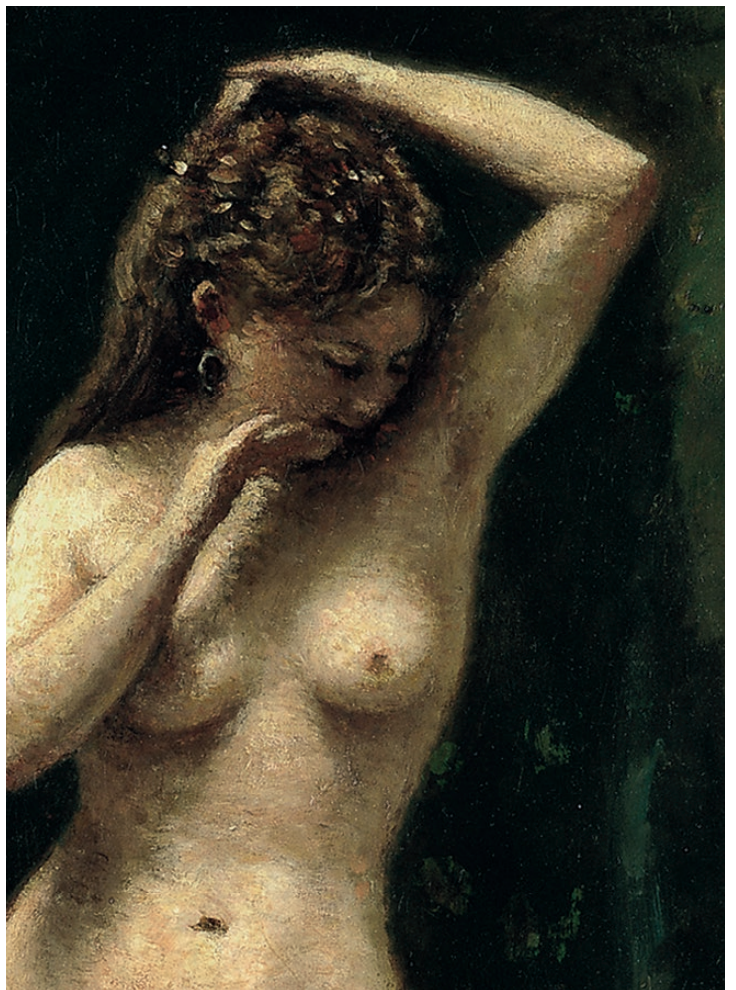
Thanks to Tim Behrens's statement and the importance he attached to the Balthus canvas during his formative years, we now know which work his father purchased from Erica Brausen. All the pieces of the puzzle fit together and we can put a name to the private collector in whose home the picture now in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza hung for years.

Balthus, Tim Behrens and Michael Andrews

It so happens that a portrait of Tim Behrens is on display not very far from where the Balthus usually hangs in the Madrid museum [fig. 6]. When the young artist and banker's son was immortalised by the painter Michael Andrews in 1962, the striking image of the pair of children playing cards was already engraved on his retina. ●

The Secret Life of Corot's *Diana bathing*

Clara Marcellán



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
Diana bathing (The Fountain), about 1869–70
(detail)

[\[+ info\]](#)

fig. 1

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
Diana bathing (The Fountain),
about 1869–70
Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection
on loan at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-
Bornemisza, Madrid

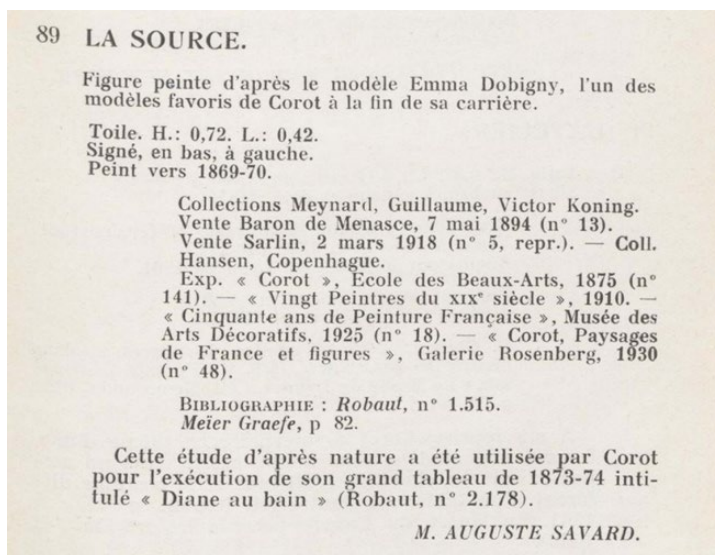
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During the autumn of 2018, Camille Corot's *Diana bathing* [fig. 1] took part in the *Corot: Women* exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. It is standard procedure for museums to request background information on the past owners, exhibition history and bibliography of the works they borrow for temporary shows. This information helps the curator and the people in charge of the project to fully document the ideas and argument presented. As on other occasions when we loan works, we took the opportunity to review and update the information on this painting, which is shown at the end of the article with the changes marked in red. The in-depth study carried out, which also contextualised

fig. 2

Entry in the Corot exhibition catalogue (L'Orangerie, 1936)



the picture with the many Corot paintings of the same genre brought together for the show, allowed the organisers and us to piece together and complete its exhibition history and the list of private collections to which it has belonged.¹

Until this recent study we only had record of two exhibitions in which *Diana bathing* had been included before 1999, the year it joined the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: the posthumous Corot exhibition that took place in 1875, and the group show *Vingt Peintres du XIX^e siècle* held at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris in 1910. Reading through the main monographs on the artist, and aided by digitisation and search engines, we discovered that the painting appeared in the catalogue of *Corot*, a monographic exhibition staged at L'Orangerie in Paris in 1936.² Not only was it listed among the works included in the show, but the catalogue entry [fig. 2] provided details of exhibitions and former owners that did not match the information we had. Unravelling the data, we have managed to reconstruct twenty years of exhibitions and changes of ownership that reflect the intense life of this painting between the final months of the First World War and the start of the Second.

¹

We are grateful to Mary Morton, head of French paintings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, who curated the *Corot: Women* exhibition, for exchanging information on this work.

²

Corot. Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, 1936.

'Coll. Hansen, Copenhagen'

The first piece of information that caught our attention in the entry in the catalogue of the Corot exhibition of 1936 was this reference in the list of past owners of *La Source*, the other title by which the work is known: 'Coll. Hansen, Copenhagen'. Wilhelm Hansen (1868–1936) was a well-known Danish businessman and councillor of state whose collection is the origin of the Ordrupgaard Museum in Charlottenburg, near Copenhagen, which is famous for the nineteenth-century French paintings it houses.

The provenance listed Hansen between Louis Sarlin, whose collection was sold at auction in 1918, and Auguste Savard, the owner of *La Source* at the time of the 1936 exhibition. On consulting the catalogue of the sale of Sarlin's collection [fig. 3], we found that the entry accompanying the digitised file held by the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA) included the following note:³

fig. 3
Illustration and entry for Corot's
Diana bathing in the catalogue
of the sale of the Sarlin collection,
1918



3
<https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/collection/item/26895-redirection>
<http://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/26895> (accessed 29 November 2019)

fig. 4

Wilhelm Hansen in one of the rooms housing the collection of French paintings at Ordrupgaard at the opening of his gallery in 1918



The auction did not take place, the entire collection was sold to the Danish collector and businessman Wilhelm Hansen (1868–1936), founder of the Ordrupgaard Museum. The collector Herman Heilbuth (1861–1945) is also commonly cited as the buyer; Hansen, Heilbuth and the art dealers Viggo Winkel and Peter Magnussen teamed up to acquire complete collections from 1916 to 1918.

The next step was to contact the Ordrupgaard Museum to find out if this work had belonged to Hansen's collection at some point [fig. 4]. But there was no trace of *Diana bathing* in its archives.⁴ As the INHA's note indicated, at the start of 1918, Hansen, Herman Heilbuth and the Winkel & Magnussen gallery set up a consortium for buying and selling nineteenth-century French art. Hansen and Heilbuth kept some of the pieces for themselves; otherwise the works were stored and subsequently sold. The consortium in turn established the Foreningen Fransk Kunst (French Art Association), whose purpose was to acquire and disseminate nineteenth-century French art in the Scandinavian countries. As Rasmus Kjarboe has studied,⁵ it is highly likely that Heilbuth put up the money – three million francs – required to purchase the Sarlin collection. If *Diana bathing* was not mentioned in the archives of the Hansen collection, was the information in the catalogue

4

We are grateful to Sara Hatla Krogsgaard, curator at the Ordrupgaard Museum, for checking the institution's archives.

5

Rasmus Kjarboe, *Collecting the Modern*, unpublished doctoral thesis, 2016, p. 348.

of the Paris exhibition of 1936 erroneous? Could the work perhaps have been owned by Herman Heilbuth or the Winkel & Magnussen gallery? The fact that the familiar face who appeared in the press in connection with this and other purchases was Wilhelm Hansen could explain why he may have been identified as the owner.

Over the course of seven months, the consortium acquired prestigious collections of nineteenth-century French painting, such as that of Isidore Montaignac in December 1917⁶ (233 works) and that of Georges Viau in February 1918 (between 207 and 215 works). As with the Sarlin collection, they also purchased Max Flersheim's entire collection of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings (80 works) in March 1918 and successfully bid for important portions of the collections of Alphonse Kahn, and for lots in the posthumous sale of Edgar Degas's collection (25 paintings, as well as prints) in March and May 1918. The substantial financial transactions these purchases entailed – 7 million francs – caused the value of the Danish crown to fall by 4 percent against the franc. But the impact they had on public opinion and the perception of French art was even more significant.

6

The sale was scheduled for 3–4 December 1917, but was called off on the day. See Le Wattman: 'Nos echos...' In *L'Intransigeant*, 4 December 1917, p. 2.

The culture war

Europe had been at war for more than three years when these major sales took place. The armistice marking the end of the First World War was not signed until 11 November 1918. Denmark, like other European countries such as Spain and Switzerland, had remained neutral throughout the war, growing wealthy and becoming a stage for the propagandistic struggle waged between the two sides. In 1917 Barcelona hosted an exhibition of more than 1,400 pieces of French art directly involving representatives of the annual Paris salons (except for that of the independents), which had ground to a halt during the war, and representatives of the French administration in Barcelona. Madrid followed suit in 1917 with one on French fashion, and in May 1918 hosted a show similar to that of Barcelona but on a smaller scale, featuring some 200 works. The proceeds from the sales at the Barcelona exhibition were considered satisfactory (78,798 francs). Compared to the price paid by Hansen and Heilbut for the Sarlin collection alone – three million francs – this sum almost pales into insignificance.

The French press reported on these operations, often from the perspective of national identity and cultural superiority, which were heightened by the war. Regarding the Montaignac sale, a note published in *L'Intransigeant*⁷ the day after it was cancelled referred to the dearth of patronage in France, which was not worthy of the great artists the country had produced, and to how Scandinavian gallery owners had purchased the entire collection for a million francs, under suspicion of acting as intermediaries for German collectors. The latter were accused of buying modern French painting before the war, which French academicians perceived as an attempt at ridiculing French art. Another article on the major sales, published in *Le Figaro* on 1 March 1918, described Wilhelm Hansen as 'a second Jacobsen'⁸ and a defender of modern French painting, recognising the importance of these purchases for the French economy: 'let's not discourage our true friends from loving us!'⁹

The art critic Arsène Alexandre¹⁰ also regarded foreign purchases positively. For one thing, they were beneficial to France because they brought money into the country. And for another, they enhanced the presence of French art on the international market – a cheaper and more effective means

⁷
Ibid., p. 2.

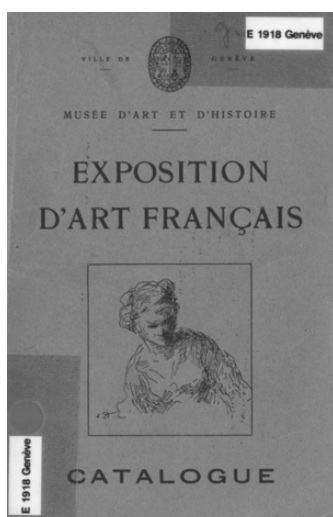
⁸
The collection of French sculpture owned by another Dane, Carl Jacobsen, is the origin of the Ny Glyptotek in Copenhagen. His son Helge Jacobsen developed an interest in modern French painting following his father's death in 1914, but, as Helge points out in a letter to Aster Moeller on 20 May 1918, it was impossible to compete with Heilbut and Hansen and he centred his efforts on completing the Ny Glyptotek's collection of ancient sculpture.

⁹
Valemont, 'Les grandes ventes. Un seconde Jacobsen'. In *Le Figaro*, 1 March 1918, p. 4.

¹⁰
Arsène Alexandre: 'Offensive et Défensive de nos Collections'. In *La Renaissance de l'art français et des industries de luxe*, April 1918, pp. 1-2.

fig. 5

Cover of the catalogue of the exhibition of French art in Geneva, 1918



of promotion than other propagandistic strategies. Ultimately, many of these collections lived on as museums of French art in foreign countries, following the known precedent of Jacobsen and the Glyptotek in Copenhagen. Alexandre did, however, develop the theory that the people who were buying were doing so for Germany, which was purportedly attempting to gain power on the art market in order to speculate after the war. This interpretation is nonetheless still positive from a patriotic viewpoint: French art proved to be far more valuable than its German counterpart.

As reported by Rasmus Kjarboe,¹¹ in 1918 Hansen and his consortium offered to lend a few of the works they had acquired not long before in Paris for the exhibition on French art staged by the Musée d'art et d'histoire in Geneva [fig. 5] in collaboration with the French ministry of foreign affairs.¹² This enabled them to ship new additions to their collection reasonably safely across a continent that was still at war. It was there that Hansen probably first saw *Diana bathing*, which is referred to in the list of works on view as number 13, with the title *La Source*, though neither its dimensions nor its owner are specified.

Writing to his wife from Geneva in June 1918, Hansen proudly mentions that there are only four lenders to this exhibition of French art:

[...] the exhibition is so French-French that it is an undiluted joy to see it, not least since it actually consists only of masterpieces, and you see, it is not unpleasant to know (and to be told) that there are just four exhibitors: Musée de Luxembourg, Collection Hansen, Collection Heilbuth and Collection Beurdeley.¹³

¹¹

See Kjarboe 2016, p. 367.

¹²

Exposition d'art Français, Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'histoire, May–June 1918.

¹³

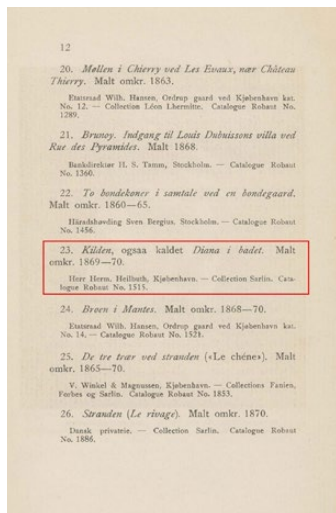
Cited from Kjarboe 2016, p. 369.

¹⁴

Corot. Copenhagen, Foreningen Fransk Kunst, 1918.

It is clear from this letter that the works acquired by the consortium had already been shared out between Hansen and his partner Herman Heilbuth, and that they were both acknowledged as independent lenders. After the show ended in Geneva in mid-June, *Diana bathing* arrived in Copenhagen in time to be included in a monographic exhibition on Corot in October organised by the Foreningen Fransk Kunst, which, as stated earlier, had been established by Wilhelm Hansen and Herman Heilbuth. The catalogue¹⁴ listed it as number 33 with

figs. 6 and 7
Title page and entry in the catalogue
of the Corot exhibition (Kristiania,
1919) and article on the show in
Nationen



the title *La Source*. Luckily for us, the name of the lender was also provided: 'H. Heilbuth'. This is the first reference that expressly links *Diana bathing* to Heilbuth's collection and leads us to doubt whether the work ever belonged to Wilhelm Hansen. The show (and this painting) continued their tour of northern Europe and we find it being featured in the version that the Foreningen Fransk Kunst staged at the Nationalgalleriet in Kristiania (now Oslo) in April and May, listed as number 23 and entitled *The Fountain*, also called *Diana bathing* [fig. 6], again with Heilbuth as the lender. An article in the Norwegian newspaper *Nationen* stressed the loans made by Hansen and Heilbuth, and the importance of Corot's paintings of figures, as appreciation for these works – represented in the exhibition – executed by an artist traditionally only hailed as a landscapist had grown in recent years [fig. 7]. Why did Heilbuth's name not remain linked to the work if, as these catalogues prove, *Diana bathing* belonged to his collection?

Herman Heilbuth

fig. 8

Lars Peter Elfelt and Lars Peter Petersen:
Herman Heilbuth (1931)



Unlike Hansen, his partner Herman Heilbuth [fig. 8] did not leave a mark on art history. Who was this bold investor whose purchases rocked the French art market around 1918? The *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon* (Danish biographical dictionary) devotes only two sentences to his collecting side:¹⁵

Heilbuth was a member of the governing board of the Foreningen Fransk Kunst from 1918 to 1922. His interest in art led to his significant involvement in the purchase of a very valuable collection of painting, which he had to sell at a great loss after the Landmandsbank went bankrupt.

According to this book, the most salient aspects of his life are related to the various companies he ran in the financial and industrial sector and his commitment to radical left-wing Danish politics. With respect to his career, his relationship with the Landmandsbank – the largest bank in Scandinavia, with whose management and board he first became involved in 1914 – played a key role in his art collecting. His privileged status enabled him to take out the loans with which he paid for his much-talked-about acquisitions on the French art market.

¹⁵

Chr. R. Jansen, J. Hassing Jørgensen:
H. Heilbuth i Dansk Biografisk
Leksikon, 3rd ed., Gyldendal 1979–84.
Accessed 29 November 2019 at
[http://denstoredanske.dk/index.
php?sideId=291016](http://denstoredanske.dk/index.php?sideId=291016)

The Landmandsbank went bankrupt around 1922, partly as a result of funding risky operations during the First World War. Art was the best investment for people who had become rich during the war because it offered the highest capital gains. Heilbuth, as a member of the board of directors, was considered responsible, and as the holder of many loans that had to be paid back hastily, he found his personal fortune seriously depleted. As the abovementioned biography states, he sold his art collection in order to meet the payments – not in a public sale, however, but by directly offering works to gallery owners and collectors in the United States and Europe, and it is therefore difficult to reconstruct his collection today. A few of these pieces passed to the bank, as shown by the provenance of a drawing by Ingres in the Fogg Art Museum.¹⁶ Hansen faced the same difficulties as Heilbuth, since he was also on the bank's board of directors and had taken out loans. But whereas Hansen rebuilt his collection after the crisis¹⁷ and continued at the helm of the Foreningen Fransk Kunst,¹⁸ the French Art Association they had established together, Heilbuth never completely recovered and withdrew from cultural life. The outcome of his artistic adventure was very different to that envisaged in the will he made in 1922, which refers to his plans to establish a small museum housing his collection near Ordrupgaard, and to complement the visit to his partner's collection.¹⁹

16

<https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299795?position=33>

17

Between 1923 and 1924 Hansen purchased ten works that had belonged to Heilbuth.

18

In 1928 he organised an exhibition of works from the Louvre and in 1930 another on Rodin, both in Copenhagen.

19

Kjaerboe 2016, p. 402.

20

Cinquante Ans de Peinture Française. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1925.

21

Exposition d'œuvres de Corot. Paysages de France et Figures. Paris, Paul Rosenberg, 1930

The secret life of *Diana bathing*

The information provided by the catalogue of the Corot exhibition (1936) suggested a new owner, Hansen, whom we subsequently ruled out after documenting that *Diana bathing* passed through the collection of Herman Heilbuth, whose name we have added to the list of owners. The other references of which we had no previous record were two exhibitions of 1925²⁰ and 1930,²¹ in which *Diana bathing* was also displayed. The catalogues of both shows refer to it as belonging to the collection of Auguste Savard (1861–1943?). There is therefore only a three-year period – between 1922, when Heilbuth was forced to sell his collection, and 1925, by which time the work was listed as the property of Auguste Savard – in which the painting's location is not known for certain.

Following the exhibition of 1936, we find no further references to the work until 1988, when it reappeared on the market, as part of the sale of Gisèle Rueff-Béghin's collection. The list of owners of the work published by Sotheby's in this connection featured, in chronological order, Meynard, M. Guillaume, Victor König, Baron de Menasce, Louis Sarlin, Boucheron and finally, from 1945 onwards, Gisèle Rueff-Béghin. At the 1999 sale, where Carmen Thyssen acquired *Diana bathing*, Savard's name was added to the list between Boucheron and Rueff-Béghin. We have now added Herman Heilbuth too, but the research into its provenance remains open. ●

Diana bathing's record updated***Provenance**

- Meynard collection
- M. Guillaume, 1875
- Victor Köning, 1890
- Baron de Ménasce, 1894
- Sale of the collection of Baron de Ménasce. Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 7 May 1894, lot 13
- Louis Sarlin, 1903
- Posthumous sale of the *Collection Louis Sarlin*, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 2 March 1918, lot 5
- Herman Heilbuth, 1918
- Boucheron?
- Auguste Savard, Paris, by 1925
- Gisèle Rueff-Béghin, from 1945
- *Impressionist and Modern Paintings and Drawings From the Collection of the Late Gisèle Rueff-Béghin*. Sotheby's, London, 29 November 1988, lot 3
- Private collection
- *19th Century European Paintings, including The Italian Sale*, Sotheby's, London, 1 December 1999, lot 101
- Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection on loan to the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Exhibitions

- 1875
Corot, Paris, Ecole des Beaux-Arts, n. 141. (as: 'Jeune fille au bord de l'eau'; owner: 'M. Guillaume').
- 1909
Salon d'Automne, Exposition Rétrospective Les 'Figures' de Corot. Paris, Grand Palais, no. 18
- 1910
Vingt Peintres du XIXe siècle, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit.
- 1918
Exposition d'art français. Geneva, Musée d'art et d'histoire, no. 13 ?
- 1918
Corot, Copenhagen (Foreningen Fransk Kunst), no. 33 (owner 'Hr. Herm. Heilbuth')
- 1919
Corot, Kristiania (Oslo), Nasjonalgalleriet, no. 23 (owner 'Herr Herm. Heilbuth')
- 1925
Cinquante Ans de Peinture Française. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, no. 18 (owner 'M. Savard')
- 1930
Exposition d'œuvres de Corot. Paysages de France et Figures. Paris, Paul Rosenberg, no. 48 (owner 'M. A. Savard')
- 1936
Corot. Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, n. 89 (owner 'M. Auguste Savard')
- 2000
De Corot a Monet. Los orígenes de la pintura moderna en la Colección Carmen Thyssen Bornemisza, Valencia, Museo del Siglo XIX, p. 16, plate p.17.

*In red, information added following the study