

**Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880–1914*. Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, 255 pp., 90 black-and-white illus., \$99.95 U.S.**

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much more personal form of commemoration. Engraved with the names of each of the 58,000 Americans who sacrificed their lives in the conflict, it stands, not like the white crosses of Normandy, drawn up in the ranks in which the men served, but as a collective, black granite tombstone of monumental proportions, where family members attend their loved ones and openly weep before the graven record of a lost name.

Thomas demonstrates that the scholars of architecture have rediscovered its profound emblematic resonance, temporarily eviscerated by International Modernism. As Spiro Kostof has pointed out, built form is shaped by and for human rituals.<sup>6</sup> Its transactions operate in both directions, to enhance or degrade the prestige of the participants, or to add yet further associations to sites of communal experience. President Bill Clinton staged his 1993 inauguration party at the Lincoln Memorial by design, just as Robert Kennedy used references from Lincoln's funeral for his brother's last journey to Arlington cemetery (pp. 152, 162–64). On the other side of the coin is a decision by a former Ontario premier to present his government's budget on the premises of a manufacturer, who was also a party supporter, rather than in the Legislative Assembly, where budgets are delivered customarily. This account follows the Lincoln Memorial through all its incarnations, into the popular media of film and editorial cartoon. It is a site that stands at the heart of what America holds most dear, a fact amply demonstrated by the number of recent publications on the subject targeted at school-aged children between the ages of 4 and 12: "Give me a child until he is seven ..."<sup>7</sup>

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#### Notes

1 Thomas (p. 157) adds that there were 400 lynchings of black citizens between 1918 and 1927, as well as a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s.

- 2 Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven, 1989).
- 3 Thomas (pp. 144–45) quotes Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7–25; and John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1992), on issues to do with collective memory and commemoration as the prerogative of the elite. Recent periodical literature on architectural symbolism includes Deborah van der Plaats, "Seeking a 'symbolism comprehensible' to 'the great majority of spectators': William Lethaby's architecture, mysticism and myth and its debt to Victorian mythography," *Architectural History* 45 (2002), 363–85; Gregory Paul Caicco, "Building memory (damming the Deluge)," *Fifth Column* 10, 2/3 (1998), 18–27; Iris Aravot, "Interpretations of myth in contemporary architectural writing," *Journal of Architectural Planning and Research* 13 (Winter 1996), 271–300.
- 4 Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman, eds, "Introduction: Toward a New Architectural History," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV* (Columbia and London, 1985), 1–6; Bernard Herman, "The 'new' architectural history," *CRM Bulletin* 17, 2 (1994), 6–7.
- 5 Eve Blau, "Representing Architectural History," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, 2 (1997), 144–45. Most of the theoretical analysis takes place in the periodical literature, such as Nicholas Adams, "Editorial: the Architectural History Foundation: research and publishing today," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53 (September 1994), 263–64; Sylvia Lavin, "Theory into history, or, the will to anthology," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (September 1999), 494–99; Glen Hill, "Architectural history research after postmodernism," *Architectural Theory Review* 5 (November 2000), 72–88, while book publications tend to be focused on anthologies such as Kate Nesbitt, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995* (Princeton, 1996); K. Michael Hays, *Architectural Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).
- 6 Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals*, 2nd ed., (New York, 1995).
- 7 Of the twenty-two books on this subject listed by Amazon.com, thirteen are intended for school-aged children.

Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880–1914*. Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, 255 pp., 90 black-and-white illus., \$99.95 U.S.

This excellent study is a model for the combination of historical, visual, and theoretical analyses. Kristina Huneault explores the representation of working women in late Victorian and early twentieth-century Britain in painting, press illustration, photography, and trade union banners, the latter well-illustrated and one of the author's contributions to the study of visual culture. Her categories of working women include do-

mestic servants, flower girls/women, factory workers, sweated labour, and trade unionists. She moves from working women's representations by others to the intervention and assertion of their identities in their own representations and public displays.

Her thesis that "imagery is intimately tied up with identity" (p. 5) is applied to identities of the represented subjects, or the artists, or the audience/spectators. Her plan is to map the complex, socially and economically contradictory identities of working women within the historical relations among images, social orders, and real work. Much of women's work required throwing off pretensions to hegemonic femininity, handling

male workers' anxieties about competition, and negotiating with middle class employers, both male (in sweated labour and factories) and female (in domestic employment). As subjects, working class women challenged gender proprieties and the gendering of labour as masculine. These women, then, were often considered dangerous for polluting and disrupting the social order (p. 5). Sweated labour, for example, was done in the home, but paid work in this location denied the home's hegemonic idealization as the site of domesticity and solace, since sweated labour was done in hardship and poverty. The women's presumed loss of femininity was seen as endangering the British "race." Representations often found ways to tame such disruptions, as by "feminizing" sweated labour in depictions of workers as "helpless" women in need of protection, or in the use of female beauty to portray servants or flower girls as healthy, palatable, and even desirable.

In her introduction, Huneault defines the problems of the representation of working women and her theoretical methods and queries. Imagining working women within the codes of femininity proved difficult for male and female artists. The importance of this dilemma is central to the nature of images as shapers of social formations and identities through cultural representation. Huneault is sensitive to methodological nuances which she explains in her first chapter. Post-structuralist critiques of binarism are useful to establish the complexity of representation and the historical fluctuations of the meanings of work and of femininity that deny "the construction and maintenance of falsely unified subject positions" (p. 8). Huneault describes visual culture as operating in multiple ways, to "jar and reveal the tensions" or "to grease the wheels of conventionally structured identity," smoothing over contradictions and tensions (p. 9).

Addressing the ways images affect social formation, Huneault insists on the importance of the intertextuality of images, their relations to other visual, literary, and historical representations. She attempts to negotiate the paths between subjective readings of images and social representations to examine how meanings may be produced. One of her methods is semiotics, an approach, she argues, "that works to articulate the mechanisms of this interdependence" (p. 10) by focusing on factors that create or affect meanings.

Her other method is a borrowing from psychoanalysis, from both Freud and Lacan, that does not focus on the personal psychology of the artist or the subject, but rather on the processes of subjectivity, "how subjects come to a sense of themselves," as understood by many feminist scholars (p. 10). Rejecting the reduction of a work of art to an expression of personal desire, Huneault applies psychoanalytic tools to social and cultural production. She considers "the logic of desire itself as a social index," and applies "an historically and politically

engaged approach to the psychic structures that underpin individuals" (p. 10). Throughout the book she employs concepts of identification, desire, the gaze, and abjection (the last borrowed from Julia Kristeva). In this way, she argues that objectification and identification are necessarily interconnected, drawing on Victor Burgin's work. The central importance of vision in psychoanalytic processes of identification and the imaginary further justifies her use of psychoanalysis, as the self is defined in relation to what it sees of itself (i.e., the Mirror Stage) and what it sees of others (the real and the Symbolic, p. 11).

As her chapters move through various images and voices, these methods allow her to investigate "the interpenetration of self and other" (p. 10), the crux of her research. By this phrase Huneault means that in applying psychoanalysis to cultural products, she will presume that "subjective distortions, displacements, and repressions" are culturally produced (p. 10). As an example of this understanding, in chapter two on the domestic servant she begins with a painting by James Paterson of a kneeling maid, possibly in the artist's studio, and examines the exchange of looks between the maid and the unseen viewer, most likely the artist/master (p. 30). Huneault melds analyses of posture, class, gender, desire, and social hierarchy in her examination of this painting to convey how the exchange of looks reinforces the social identity of the unseen artist/master; it is he toward whom the servant looks while kneeling and scrubbing beneath a mantel holding paintings by Paterson, but "the master seeks only himself" (p. 50). Huneault compares this and related paintings to advertisements and cartoons, illuminating similar patterns among the images related to class differences between maid and mistress, or tensions between identification with the mistress and the servant's life circumstances. She also recognizes differences among genres, as in the ways desire is conveyed in a "high art" painting signed by an artist and in an anonymous graphic commercial advertisement. Huneault presents some interesting variations on representations of domestic servants in paintings by Edith Hayllar in comparison with paintings by male artists. At the end of this chapter Huneault raises the issue of race in connection with advertisements of Vinolia soap which, like the well-known Pears soap ads, featured black Africans and linked images of black domestic servants to imperial marketing and the racializing of domestic labour.

In chapter three Huneault focuses on the often prettified images of flower girls that later became images of flower women, poor street vendors whose work in the public sphere was analogous to prostitution. Flower sellers did not work for a specific employer and were located throughout the city. They were popular subjects in literature (e. g., G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*) and in the emerging sociological studies of the London poor. Both of these textualizations intersected culturally in their images of flower girls. Images of flower sellers were also tied to bourgeois

self-fashioned philanthropic identities. Huneault presents striking contrasts among images of flower sellers and shop girls in the context of representations of urban modernity.

Chapter four addresses factory work, and chapter five addresses sweated labour in the home. Huneault describes the Watercress and Flower Girls' Mission as "a nexus for the three types of women's work ... domestic service, street selling and now manufacturing," the latter being the Mission's central concern, for which it recruited women from the streets (p. 105). Images of the Mission's activities in the press showed work as orderly and workers as docile and pretty. Huneault concludes chapter four with images of laundresses and the ever-present sempstress, ca. 1900. In chapter five she examines the 1906 exhibition in Queen's Hall, London, of sweated labour, anticipated by earlier exhibition demonstrations of workers at employers' displays in international exhibitions, which reconstructed domestic work places and presented workers in them (like colonial villages complete with native villagers that also figured in international exhibitions). The performances of sweated labour in this exhibition raised multiple issues around the "reality" of the performances, the victimization of the workers, and the "truth" of photographic images of poverty or labour. Huneault applies Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection to examine the reception, whether empathetic or reifying, of images and performances of sweated labour.

In chapter six Huneault turns her attention from the representation by others to working women's self-representation with a focus on union banners and photographs of women on strike. This trajectory appears on the surface more triumphant than it is, as Huneault makes clear. The ambiguities of depictions by artists and the press continue in working women's own self-representations through gesture and intertextual connections. Within trade unionism there was a wide range of responses to women's work, women working, and gendered tasks and hierarchies. Working women did, however, present assertive selves in

public displays, in some trade union banners, and in photographs of strikes. Huneault notes the overlapping public marches and displays joining union women with suffragists. Her epilogue looks briefly at the posture of the working woman with arms akimbo, a posture found in photographs and paintings of working women. In the representations she examines, she finds this posture both defiant and naïve, another indication of the complexity, density, and ambiguity of possible readings of images of and for working women.

This study ventures into new territory and is richly illustrated and profoundly analysed. It is also a beginning for other studies, and Huneault notes some areas for future study in her introduction. Some examination of social contexts for Victorian photographic images of the poor and working classes might have helped in exploring late-century photographs. Huneault comments on some conventions of paintings of flower girls and servants, and photographs by 1900 would have registered their own conventions. Paintings by social realists (e.g., Luke Fildes, Hubert von Herkomer) are mentioned, and an image or two might have been worth including, even if they, like most images of workers, stressed victimization, not agency. Huneault examines her images carefully, finding visual contradictions within images and contradictions between press reports and the visual images that accompanied them. Each visual genre carried its own identity, its own political challenges, and its own gendered expectations. The social and political content of images of working women registered differently for artists of different genders and classes. She also explores changing meanings of labour and gender, as well as political interventions into labour activities (strikes, unionism) and labourers' assertive political actions. This book is a model study of visual culture across genres and of the interpenetration of theory and images that elucidate each other.

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Philip Jacks and William Caferro, *The Spinelli of Florence: Fortunes of a Renaissance Merchant Family*. University Park, Penn., The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, 418 pp., 12 colour plates, 145 black-and-white illus., 17 tables, \$75 U.S., cloth.

Tommaso di Lionardo Spinelli (1398–1472) was an enterprising and intelligent Florentine banker and textile manufacturer who raised the fortunes of his family to a level not far below the Medici. His biography, pieced together from the rich documentary trove of the Spinelli family archive, supplies the chronological narrative that holds *The Spinelli of Florence* together. However, the book is much more. Resulting from a collaboration between

architectural historian Philip Jacks and economic historian William Caferro, this substantial study of one wealthy entrepreneur and his patronage of architecture includes a surprising wealth of information on a variety of subjects central to the understanding of mercantile and social life in mid-Quattrocento Rome and Florence. Jacks and Caferro are also careful to frame their commentary on Tommaso Spinelli with reference to other recent documentary accounts of wealthy Florentine families and in relation to trends in historical studies.

The foundation for this study lies in the extensive documentary record of the Spinelli family, acquired for Yale University's Beinecke Library in 1988. Forty-eight of the most significant documents, transcribed with the help of Gino Corti, appear in