Book Reviews

BEAT WYSS
Hegel's Art History and the Critique of Modernity
Trans. Caroline Dobson Saltzwedel
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 288 pp.; 66 b/w ills. $64.95

JEAN-MARIE SCHAEFFER
Art of the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger
Trans. Steven Rendall
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. 352 pp. $31.95

The tradition of grand theoretical speculation about art—defined by questions such as why art has a history, how beauty relates to morality, and how art reveals deep features of existence unavailable to ordinary rational inquiry—has fallen on metaphysically lean times. Initially, this predominantly German philosophical tradition (identified mainly with Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel) helped an emerging discipline of art history distinguish itself from general historical, belletrist, and antiquarian writings. Now, however, such philosophical forms of inquiry, except as the subjects of historiography, have been largely expelled from the scholarly field of art history, dismissed for reasons both of metaphysical afflatus and the scholarly prejudices engendered by certain notions of genius, cultural homogeneity, and intertwined narratives of artistic progress and political freedom. Until the past decade, the resulting vacuum was filled by theories of interpretation and meaning that on their face and in operation could not have appeared more different to art historians than those "deep" metaphysical investigations they replaced. But seen from the vantage point of the ongoing philosophical tradition outside of art history, many such theories, particularly those drawn from semiotics and poststructuralism, turned out to be perhaps only the latest moves in a dialectic—against Kant and Hegel, yes, but also (like the 19th-century critics of idealism such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, and Karl Marx) still within their wake.

These two books, one by an art historian (Beat Wyss), the other by a philosopher of art (Jean-Marie Schaeffer), interrogate that philosophical tradition in both its original premises and its contemporary incarnations. Each offers a diagnosis of current-day thought about the arts as deeply beholden to the speculative tradition, and each charges that this survival of speculative thought amounts to a corruption in our understanding of the arts.

Although Wyss's book is substantially a treatment of Hegel's aesthetics, he is ultimately less concerned with the philosopher's particular theory than the "mentality of modern times" (p. xii) it most thoroughly exemplifies, what Wyss identifies as the assumption that history allows a kind of movement toward perfection, that the historical development of art exemplifies a narrativelike unfolding in which reaching a certain goal is the implicit rationale of the self-perfecting process all along. This was, of course, Hegel's view of the historical process as being essentially the story of Spirit's arriving at a consciousness of itself through being embodied in a dialectical development of human institutions and cultural expression. It was a view, of course, that survived in much Marxist and Frankfurt School political critique. Yet it is hard to see where in the "mentality" of modern time—if we are speaking of the contemporary moment—such a belief can still be found. In academic contexts, a suspicion of "grand narratives" is so often ritually invoked that it is hard to see what room is left for any faith in a history driven forward by an engine of grand metaphysics. Wyss allows that his book—published in 1985 and only now translated from German—might be seen as something of a former *soixante-huitard*'s self-criticism. But Wyss's work is no postmodern diagnosis of modernism's triumphalism; he sees postmodernism as guilty of the modernist conviction it claims to disavow. Rather, his text is an attempt to "rescue images from concepts" (p. xi), to undo the subordination of art to philosophical theory that Wyss charges is not only Hegel's legacy but also a defining feature of modernism itself. His method, however, is not one of dialectical criticism or explanatory analysis. Nor does his account offer any of the readily available historical counterexamples to Hegel's philosophical theory. Instead, it is a narrative retracing of the history of art as seen through Hegel's historicizing eye. In this way, Wyss's commentary runs somewhat parallel to Hegel's, yet the aim is not to follow the dialectical progression of knowledge throughout history but to bring Hegel's understanding into perspicuity to such a fine degree that it cannot but collapse of its own metaphysical weight. (Wyss calls this method of reading "imitative translation," a verbal aikido in which one subverts one's opponent by moving along with him, rather than against, deflecting his energy into empty space.)

Wyss largely derives his understanding of Hegel's thought from the *Lectures on Aesthetics*. This focus naturally reveals much about Hegel's philosophy of art, yet it insufficiently conveys the degree to which the era of art—art "considered in its highest vocation"—was only one part of the development of Spirit for Hegel and, though a necessary stage in that development, not as substantial an embodiment of Spirit as religion or philosophy.[1] Thus, Wyss focuses on the thesis of the "end of art" as if it were of pivotal importance when, understood in the context of the whole of Hegel's scheme, it is only the moment at which art reaches internal limits in its capacity to serve as a vehicle of Spirit's development toward self-knowledge and thus when it cedes this role to religion. In any case, Wyss (like Schaeffer, as we shall see) aims to free art from the deforming effects of philosophy's grasp. What remains of art and its understanding is, however, left an open question. If one pulls aside all the philosophical veils standing between observer and artwork, will one find in the end that the artwork is no longer there?

The bulk of Wyss's book is the first chapter, "Hegel's Last Walk through His Museum," a narrative that proceeds simultaneously through galleries of an imaginary museum (Oriental, Classical, Christian), moments of a day (dawn, noon, evening), and geographic loci (East to West).

Hegel asserted that Spirit (which he thinks of as the most fundamental form of existence, even if in its development it must be embodied in ordinary empirical reality) originally began to see itself in artistic representation in the art of ancient Egypt. Here, rather than in ancient Persian art—which Hegel believed was too sensual to offer a determinate subject matter in which Spirit could find itself reflected—the first true symbolism arises. Hegel called this the "symbolism of the sublime," in which meaning and form were distinguished for the first time radically enough that a symbol of divinity could suggest that it is not merely what it means—that it refers to, or stands for, the divine but does not embody it, except in the sense of being its unworthy opposite.[2] Hegel thus understood Egyptian art, hieroglyphs, and the pyramids as all functioning as symbols of what could not yet be fully represented, expressing what was as yet impossible for Spirit to state perspicuously, but arousing in spectators a sense of the mystery that at that moment in the historical development was still unfathomable. A crucial element in understanding this and later stages of Spirit's development, which Wyss neglects, is that Hegel sees not only the *modes or genres* of artistic

representation as exhibiting a progressive developmental history but the *content* of that representation—the nature of Spirit—as admitting a development as well. So it is not that a fully realized notion of Spirit is unclearly expressed because of a too primitive technique; rather, the understanding Spirit has of itself is, in the beginning, itself inchoate.

One could read Wyss's work as an elaborate precis of Hegel's ideas, filled out with an art historical context that explains not so much the philosophical moves Hegel makes as what sorts of contemporary examples of art, architecture, or literature he would have had in mind when he made those moves. However, this would be to overlook Wyss's method and discursive form. In retracing Hegel's itinerary he is in a way making it less idiosyncratic, less the vision of a lone philosopher, and more a familiar sight. We see Hegel standing not outside of history, bringing the path of Spirit to an end with his own philosophy, but as a figure within history, telling the story of how a culture represents itself *to itself* in its art (this being a secular, "commonsensical" gloss of Hegel's philosophy). It should be said that Wyss's writing style, although engaging, is not without its own occasionally frustrating idiosyncracies. The book is written in sometimes extravagantly florid prose, much more digressive than linear (as if to counter the lockstep historical march of Hegel's Spirit), and displays a minimal scholarly apparatus, despite the obviously considerable erudition that informs it. A descriptive header announcing a new theme is added to every other page.

Hegel finds the second and highest stage of art's development in Classical Greece. Here, only with sculptures of the human figure—albeit divine figures given human shape—was inward Spirituality revealed in outward sensuous form. In contrast to the symbolic art of the East, in which the form of the pyramids, for example, pointed toward an Other that remained a mystery, Greek sculpture symbolized nothing extraneous, simply itself. In other words, if in Eastern art Spirit's lack of clarity regarding itself was commensurate with only an opaque form of expression, in Greek art Spirit's more lucid knowledge of itself was appropriately expressed in the manifestly intelligible human form: human form was the best image there could be at that moment of the divine.

Hegel believed, however, that this moment of perfect adequacy—between the state of Spirit's knowledge of itself and the means by which it represented itself—was fleeting. In late Greek art, Hegel finds an "air of affliction" suggesting a dim but undeniable sense that there was more to Spirit than what sensuous beauty could express.[3] This leads to the third stage of art history, what Hegel calls the "romantic" (not to be confused with the much later movement of Romanticism). Here, the unity of form and content, or, more specifically, the unity of the Idea and its material shape, is sundered. The Classical form of art attained, Hegel says, "the pinnacle of what illustration by art could achieve"; its sole defect was the defect of art itself: art takes Spirit as its subject matter in only a sensuously concrete form. However, Hegel says, while the Classical period's understanding of Spirit was adequately represented in the bodily shape of a man (corresponding to the way in which Greek gods were the object of "sensuous imagination" alone), the later period of romantic art corresponded to a realization of Spirit (within Christian thought) that can be expressed not in the realm of the natural and sensuous but only in the realm of inward faith and devotion.[4]

In this transition from the Classical to Romantic epochs of art, Hegel discovers the "end of art." This thesis, often misunderstood, is that art at the end of the Classical age had reached its limits insofar as it stood as a cognitive vehicle through which Spirit could know itself. Wyss somewhat misleadingly treats the thesis of the end of art as if it proclaims a falling-off of artistic quality or significance, but this is far from Hegel's view. The end of art is for Hegel only the end of art's capacity to continue to serve as the source of absolute knowledge, being too bound up as it is with material matters to achieve a purely conceptual form. Hegel sees art as unable to offer truth about the world in anything other than sensuous appearance. In the romantic period of "art after the end of art," religion and philosophy, free of the constraints attending to material forms of expression, can best serve as the modes through which we represent our knowledge, subjective and abstract, of ourselves to ourselves. Art no longer serves as the primary vehicle through which Spirit is *self*-conscious.

It is here, in the passages of his *Aesthetics* devoted to art after its end, that we find many of Hegel's deepest commentaries on the arts. He speaks of this post-Classical art as "set free," no longer suffering from the burden of being the principal organizing mode of self-consciousness.[5] This disavowal of any remaining imperative for art finds a natural expression in today's discourse of artistic pluralism. Indeed, current questions of the status of art as an institution, the nature and rhetoric of artistic autonomy, and the role of art in the public sphere are all anticipated in Hegel's attempts to find a place for art in his philosophical system. That he would ask these questions before the emergence of the historical avant-garde—with its two paths of political engagement and hermetic isolation—suggests such concerns need to be answered by reflecting on more than just that component of modernism. It is worth asking as well whether the Hegelian model of art as in its essence a vehicle of truth might not have found discomfiting survival, not only in critical theorists such as Theodor Adorno (who similarly articulates a theodicy in relation to art) but also in avant- (and neo-avant-) garde attempts to conjoin the exercise of autonomy and the capacity to serve in voicing a progressive political critique.

Hegel has been called the father of art history for the historicizing model he offered the field of art history. Yet he can also be understood as part of the process of the historicization of art that occurred in the early 19th century, rather than its prime philosophical exponent. One of the virtues of Wyss's approach from the inside, as it were, is that the correlations and connections between Hegel's thought and contemporaneous institutions, such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel's new museum built near Hegel's own lodgings, are brought into relief in a way that avoids portraying one as merely the expression of the other.

Wyss ends his text with suggestive discussions of the Hegelian impulse in four very different thinkers: Max Nordau, Oswald Spengler, Hans Sedlmayr, and György Lukács (whom he refers to, respectively, as a "technocrat, a conservative nihilist, a Catholic, and a Marxist-Leninist," p. 173). Wyss treats this "unholy alliance" of thinkers as successors to Hegel, but it is unclear whether their thought follows from his as much as they—and he—emerge out of currents of thought (theological, Enlightenment, historical) that preceded them all. In any case, what these thinkers share, along with Hegel, is a vision of art (and culture more generally) as having reached a terminus in its development, in which it comes to stand in the wrong relation to human life and thus suffers a forced abrogation of some putatively essential role. If Hegel found this moment of artistic superannuation in the immediate post-Classical, Christian period he idiosyncratically called romantic art, these critics found the object of their scorn in what they felt to be one of the actual Romantic movement's later incarnations: the modernist avant-garde. So Nordau argues that art has degenerated from (in Wyss's words) a "healthy realism" to a "sickly idealism" (p. 182), or from an objective to a pathologically subjective mode. The end of art would be not just the end of the avant-garde Nordau despises, but the triumph of science over all the arts, which, when tamed, would serve merely as entertainments. Hegel and Nordau each thought of art as having been put in service as a vehicle of truth. In Hegel's case, this was a legitimate duty for art to discharge; in Nordau's view, it was a demand on art that art could only pretend to fulfill. Both thinkers, however, see that role played by art, legitimately or not, as taken over by a greater, more adequate form of knowledge.

Wyss may overstate the degree to which Spengler's nihilistic view of cultural decline—in which a culture that was essentially "organic" and "whole" was usurped by a "mechanical," fragmented mode of life (p. 194)—can be assimilated to Hegel's account of art reaching an internal end. But in both thinkers, as well as Hegel's other successors, one can see how a faith in Enlightenment notions of rationality and progress, and the freedom they engender, sat uneasily with a fear of the pervasive dehumanizing effects of the instrumental reason those notions made possible. Spengler is also, like Hegel, committed to

discovering a putative logic of history. If for Spengler this meant a conventional history of great men, of individual, distinct cultures each having its own quasi-organic development, he described his methodology in language borrowed from Hegelian-influenced contemporary models of art history: the historian's task was to trace the "form-language of history" (p. 195), as if to offer an analysis of culture founded on a style developing organically.

Wyss's third Hegelian standard-bearer is Sedlmayr, the Christian Nazi sympathizer whose *Loss of the Center* describes the history of the West, and by reflection the history of art, as determined by man's relation to the divine. Sedlmayr finds his version of the end of art in the period after the French Revolution, when communication between the divine and human spheres had broken down and humanity declared itself autonomous, replacing God with, in Wyss's words, "new gods and idols" (p. 211), such as the machine. Sedlmayr decries what he charges is a state of "stylistic chaos" (p. 212)—not a plurality of styles so much as a failure of genuine style—which requires a naturally developed and effective authority that the modern age, without God or royalty, possesses. He even finds this loss of absolute values in the familiar modernist disjunction between form and content and the consequent thematizing of visual autonomy. Wyss is particularly effective in his account of the ways in which Sedlmayr—whose quick professional advancement as critic and scholar occurred during the Nazi period, and whose analysis of the chaos of modern times, blamed in part on artists, does not mention the catastrophe of World War II and its aftermath around him—engaged in a massive act of displacement, turning the artists of the previous 150 years into the scapegoats of the present and pushing the Nazi era into the unconscious.

Finally, Wyss addresses Lukács's claim that the avant-garde was not just blind to but in fact imitated the distortions of everyday capitalism. Lukács's charge of decadence in art comes from the political left, while Spengler's, Nordau's, and Sedlmayr's come from the right. But all, Wyss argues, are united in adopting the totalizing historical perspective of Hegel, in which art is posed as ultimately having only one kind of content (the disclosure of truth); art joins in and, at its highest moments, reflects history's rational unfolding; and art reaches limits (internal or external) in its development, after which, without radical transformation, its significance for human life is extinguished.

Like Wyss, Jean-Marie Schaeffer aims to dissolve the Hegelian impulse in art history, but for him, Hegel is only one example of a long and varied history of philosophical treatments of art—including that of the Jena Romantics, Arthur Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger, all of whom Schaeffer indicts with the charge of exemplifying what he calls the "speculative philosophy of art" (p. 67). Such philosophy, Schaeffer charges, asks one fundamental question about art—"What is art?"—and answers it by construing art as in its essence a cognitive vehicle through which certain fundamental truths, primarily philosophical and spiritual, about the nature of reality are disclosed. In this theoretical stance, discourses about art, particularly those of a philosophical nature, adopt the mandate of offering legitimacy to art by showing how it serves as such a means of revelation. The counterpart to this theory, in which, in a sense, all art's deepest content is the same—an order of ultimate truths—is a theory of reality in which mundane, ordinary existence probed by science and instrumental rationality is held to be secondary or only epiphenomenal to a more fundamental reality, which art in its highest moments discloses. Although this formulation of the speculative theory of art would serve comfortably as an account of Romanticism, Schaeffer aims his charge much more broadly. Indeed, he treats roughly the whole of modernist philosophy of art as a series of versions of Romanticist aesthetics and diagnoses modernism itself as suffering from a motivating Romantic conception of art at its core.

Schaeffer offers rigorous and nuanced criticisms of the thinkers he locates in this tradition, showing the ways in which their theories, understood in even the most charitable light, are internally inconsistent or fail by their own criteria to achieve what they are meant to do. On this level, Schaeffer's text would serve as an excellent guide to thinkers in a tradition whose arcane terminology and metaphysical presuppositions often discourage a deep engagement with their texts (a frustration felt by nonphilosophical readers and, it should be said, many Anglo-American philosophers as well). The section on Schopenhauer, who may have had a greater immediate influence on artists than any other modern philosopher, is especially lucid and persuasive. Yet Schaeffer's book is no mere survey of philosophical positions to be dissected and discarded. His larger motivation is to execute a sustained attack on the very idea of a speculative theory of art, and perhaps the philosophy of art as practiced in general today. Part of this critique is Schaeffer's demonstration of the myriad ways in which such theories of art have been motivated by extraphilosophical considerations, such as a felt crisis within modernity in the religious foundations of human reality and in the transcendental foundations of philosophy. In short, the speculative theory of art is an expression of a desire for a reenchantment of the world and for a reintegration of the disparate strands of human existence. In such a world, Schaeffer charges, art was saddled by philosophers with a compensatory function: not only uncovering some deep truth unavailable to ordinary rational thought, but also disclosing a truth about mundane reality that reveals it as an expression of a more profound spiritual absolute. Thus, for Novalis, poetry was supposed to "romanticize" life; for Hegel, art would sublate empirical reality into an embodiment of the Ideal; the young Nietzsche, influenced by Schopenhauer, spoke of art rending the veil of *Maya* and freeing us from the tyranny of the will; and, finally, Heidegger saw poetry as pushing us from our "inauthentic" existence toward listening to the "word" of Being. The result of the speculative theory of art occupying such a place in modernity—shaping its art and its art historical methodologies—is for Schaeffer almost unreservedly negative. It is not just that such a philosophy of art has presented itself as offering theoretical descriptions of art that were, in truth, covert evaluative definitions of art—that is, definitions of art that privileged one form of art over another as being more genuine (Heidegger is extraordinarily reserved in granting the status of "true art" to any of the artworks he considers). It is also that such theories collapse the distinction between the artistic and aesthetic spheres, ignore aesthetic pleasure in favor of cognitive values that may be found only in certain forms of art, and propound utopian or teleological narratives that constrain if not severely curtail the terms within which art is made available to experience.

Schaeffer finds the antidote to the speculative theory of art in Kant. This might seem odd, given that the blame for the disenchantment of the world is often laid at Kant's door. Indeed, along with his Enlightenment contemporaries, Kant defined just those limits of philosophical speculation that later philosophers of art sought to transcend through the revelatory power of art. Schaeffer is not interested so much in Kant's aesthetic theory (which is concerned mainly with finding a transcendental basis for universalism in judgments of the beauty of nature, not art, and is formalist in a way that would make much contemporary art opaque) as in his general metaphysics. What he draws from Kant is an analysis that shows first, that a genuinely theoretical understanding of the arts can be independent of any question of the nature (subjective, objective, universal, and so on) of evaluative judgments of the arts, and second, that a specifically aesthetic judgment of an artwork cannot be reduced to a motivating description of it. These theses, which fit comfortably with a naturalized aesthetics we might find in the philosophy of David Hume (for whom the judgment of beauty is based on a culturally variable, and potentially cultivated, sentiment), offer Schaeffer a theoretical bulwark against the attempts—in his view wrongheaded—of speculative philosophers to tie the question, What is a work of art? to the question of art's potential cognitive or revelatory value.

Both Wyss and Schaeffer approach the relationship between the philosophical tradition and art historical theory and practice as a matter of the former influencing the latter. However, the question of how these two cultural spheres stand in relation to one another can be asked in a different way. We might inquire not just into how such philosophical ideas influenced art historical practice and theory but, more specifically, why such ideas were influential at all. What resources, rhetorical *and* explanatory, did

philosophical models of autonomy and historical development offer art history such that the history, criticism, and practice of art actively adopted (rather than simply passively submitted to) those models? Schaeffer emphasizes that his quarrel is with the status and effects of the "discourse on art" and not "art itself," which "will get along very well on its own" (p. 4). He also allows that the fate of the arts and the discourse about them ought not to be too strongly distinguished: "The visual arts did not invent this discourse; at most, they adapted it to their needs" (p. 5). This may be true as far as it goes. Yet such an observation obscures that there is still a need to explain what it is about these arts that motivated their adoption of philosophical discourse as a constitutive and animating element of their production, and why certain forms of art have been susceptible to philosophical exegesis and others not. Understanding such forms of art means understanding what makes them amenable to philosophy. This is not only a historical but also a philosophical question, and it suggests that the understanding of such art calls for a more fundamental form of philosophical inquiry, not its suspension.[6]

In trying to rescue art from the depredations of philosophy, Wyss and Schaeffer bear the heavy burden, incompletely realized in their texts, of offering a sense of what sort of understanding of art should stand in the place of the philosophy they would proscribe. The ideas of aesthetic pleasure and play that they promote and their injunctions to privilege the art object or image over its conceptual subsumption imply theoretical positions in their own ways as contingent and potentially distorting as Hegelian metaphysics. If art is not a natural artifact but a culturally emergent phenomenon, then some sort of theoretical structure, if only implicitly, supports its production and reception. The idea of a pure art, putatively uncorrupted by theory, simply bears theoretical commitments of a different kind.

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Notes

1. G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art,* 2 vols., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, 111.
2. Ibid., 362.
3. Ibid., 484.
4. Ibid., 179.
5. Ibid., 532.
6. For an account of how the theoretical or philosophical constituents of an artistic style impose internal limits on the shape of its historical development, see Jonathan Gilmore, *The Life of a Style: Beginnings and Endings in the Narrative History of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 38–74.

DEBRA PINCUS
The Tombs of the Doges of Venice
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 275 pp.; 126 b/w ills. $85.00

MARY BERGSTEIN
The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. 240 pp.; 156 b/w ills. $82.50

ANDREW BUTTERFIELD
The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 272 pp.; 60 color ills., 200 b/w. $70.00

THOMAS MARTIN
Alessandro Vittoria and the Portrait Bust in Renaissance Venice: Remodelling Antiquity
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. 312 pp.; 164 b/w ills. $145.00

In a series of articles published in 1896, 1897, and 1915 in the *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst,* Heinrich Wölfflin presented what was probably the first serious consideration of photography's role in art historical scholarship when he argued that the photography of sculpture, especially of Renaissance sculpture, should be a crucial concern for all art historians.[1] As Wölfflin put it: "The problem of the photography of figurative sculpture [is] . . . the problem of the point of view. . . . [O]ne must ask oneself if . . . [the photograph] really corresponds to the original intention."[2] Although none of the four books under review explores the photography of sculpture per se,[3] all address "the problem of the point of view" and the question of the "original intention" of both sculptors and patrons, as well as the related issue of contemporary beholders' original reception of sculpture. Although the long shadow of Wölfflin's formalist dichotomies (often based on comparing photographs rather than actual three-dimensional objects) can still occasionally be discerned in their books, the four authors enrich their close visual analyses with original archival research and explorations of the broader social, political, and cultural contexts in which late medieval and early modern Italian sculpture was produced and encountered.

The "problem of the point of view," however, remains central to all four studies. For Wölfflin, there was only one correct view for Italian Renaissance sculpture, which, "thanks to its beauty and clarity . . . is, naturally, none other than the direct frontal view."[4] He also asserted that undisciplined, tradesmanlike photographers had been left to their own devices for far too long, with the result that Renaissance sculpture was being photographed from every conceivable angle in order to try to create what he disparagingly called "malerisch und künstlerisch" photographs, or what we might term self-consciously "artsy" images.[5] The implication, of course, is that photographers should know their place in the social and academic hierarchy, should not have any artistic pretensions of their own, and should instead only carry out the instructions of properly educated art historians, an attitude that very clearly reveals the social and intellectual anxieties of what was still, at the turn of the 20th century, a relatively young and immature discipline seeking academic credibility.

As an example of an "incorrect," workmanlike illustration, Wölfflin presented a photograph taken by the Alinari photographic company of Verrocchio's 15th-century bronze statue of David, seen from the left side.[6] For him, this photograph and others taken from anything other than directly head-on gave dangerously false impressions of the statue. He then claimed that only in the photographs he himself had supervised could one see correct, frontal views that truly reflected the sculptor's original intentions.[7] However, as Wölfflin admitted, these supposed paradigms of correctness were actually taken from a plaster *cast* of Verrocchio's statue, not from the original bronze, which makes his accusations of falseness in the case of the Alinari photograph much less convincing.[8] Similarly, since it is unclear precisely how, let alone where, this statue was first displayed, it is impossible to prove with any certainty exactly what was originally the main, frontal view of the figure—assuming, of course, that it was even intended to be a "one-view" sculpture in the first place. Nevertheless, in a classic example of circular reasoning, Wölfflin used such supposedly correct photographs to prove his thesis about the centrality and frontality of Renaissance art in general.[9]

Although the four books under review also inevitably rely on photographs to prove their points to readers (including some that date back to the later 19th century and were taken by Wölfflin's occasional *bête noire,* the Alinari photographic company), a much wider range of evidence is marshaled to reconstruct original points of view as well as intentions. Indeed, the authors see the point of view and the notion of intentionality as encompassing not just formal considerations but also concerns about meaning, function, and the role played by sculpture in both reflecting and constructing individual and collective identities in late medieval and early modern Italy. Such a multipronged, sociohistorical approach may seem self-evident in light of the (post?) "New Art History" era in which we now operate; nevertheless, it is surprising how essentially Wölfflinian, resolutely formalist, and even reductively connoisseurial most studies of sculpture in this period have been until fairly recently.[10] Close analysis of the formal strategies and stylistic peculiarities of individual Italian sculptors remains essential (especially in light of ongoing problems of attribution and dating), but it is reassuring to see that even in the relative methodological backwater of Italian sculpture studies, a much more wide-ranging and holistic approach is now, at last, standard operating procedure. Ironically, as a kind of "New Formalism" begins to gather disciplinary momentum, late