

TRANSATLANTIC ROMANTICISM: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, 15-17 OCTOBER 2009

A conference sponsored by the Royal Academy of Arts, London; the Terra Foundation for American Art; University College London; and the Yale Centre for Studies in British Art.

Organized by: Dr. Alison Bracker (Royal Academy of Arts); Professor Andrew Hemingway (University College London); Dr. Martin Postle (Yale Centre for Studies in British Art).

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The Conference:

The object of this conference is to rethink romanticism in the American visual arts within a trans-Atlantic framework. The tendency of both art-historical interpretations of American art and of American Studies approaches has been to interpret their object in terms of a set of distinctly national characteristics. This approach has its value, but the great cultural movements of the modern period – in this instance Neo-Classicism and Romanticism – were inherently international and can not be detached ultimately from trans-Atlantic economic relations and the great political conflicts and rivalries of the period. *Trans-Atlantic Romanticism* will provide a forum in which to consider developments in the American visual arts of the period c.1789-1848 in relation to cognate developments in Britain – not only the key European centre for Americans seeking art training in Europe until the 1840s, but also a nation particularly associated with the cultural trends that were becoming known as Romantic. The twelve papers and keynote lecture address the issues of Romanticism from a number of perspectives: (1) The urban context in which artists worked in Britain and the United States, and notably London and New York, as a basis for comparing the socio-economic and institutional frameworks of Romantic culture. (2) The literary discourse of early nineteenth-century Romanticism in relation to new attitudes to the arts and their place in society more generally. (3) The work of individual artists who acted as link figures between British and American cultures, including Benjamin West and Washington Allston. (4) Related developments in landscape and genre painting in Britain and the United States, represented by the work of Thomas Cole, John Quidor, John Martin, and JMW Turner.

The conference venue will be at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art on Friday 16 October, and in University College London on Saturday 17 October. Conference fees are: £50.00 to waged attendees and £25.00 to students and unwaged. The fee covers a drinks reception at the Royal Academy and tea, coffees, and a sandwich lunch on the Friday and Saturday.

Inquiries and booking requests should be directed to the Conference Assistant, Dr Philippa Kaina, at the Department of History of Art, University College London. [Click here to view UCL conference page](#)

The Programme:

Thursday 15 October 2009, Royal Academy

Keynote, Private View and Reception

- 6.30 -7.30 Keynote Address: Professor Alan Wallach (College of William & Mary):
Thomas Cole and Transatlantic Romanticism, Reynolds Room
- 7.30-9.00 Reception

Friday 16 October 2009, Paul Mellon Centre

- 9.00-9.30 Coffee and Registration
- 9.30-10.0 Welcome and Introduction

Romanticism and the Modern City

- 10.00-10.45 Professor Dell Upton (UCLA): 'The Urban Ecology of Art in
Antebellum New York'
- 10.45-11.30 Professor Emeritus William Vaughan (Birkbeck College, University of
London): "'The pit of modern art' – Ambitions and Practices in the
London Art World in the Early Nineteenth Century'
- 11.30-12.0 Discussion
- 12.00-1.0 Lunch

Literary and Pictorial Imaginary of Native Americans

- 1.00-1.45 Professor Mark Ford (University College London): 'Cooper's Frontier'
- 1.45-2.30 William Truettner (Senior Curator, Smithsonian American Art Museum):
Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710-1840
- 2.30-3.00 Tea

Romanticism and Conservatism

- 3.00-3.45 Dr. Sarah Monks (University of York): 'A werewolf in London: Benjamin
West's American accent'
- 3.45-4.30 Professor Andrew Hemingway (University College London): 'The Politics
of Style: Allston's and Martin's *Belshazzars* Compared'
- 4.30-5.30 Roundtable Discussion
- 5.30. Drinks Party

Saturday 17 October, University College London

9.30-10.0 Coffee

Romanticism and the Landscape Genre

10.00-10.45 Dr. Kenneth Myers (Curator of American Art, Detroit Institute of Arts): 'William Dunlap's *A Trip to Niagara* (1830) and the Cultural Construction of Landscape Experience in Jacksonian New York'

10.45-11.30 Professor Emeritus David Bindman (University College London): 'John Martin and Thomsa Cole'

11.30-12.15 Professor Leo Costello (Rice University, Houston): "'Gorgeous but altogether false": Turner, Cole and Transatlantic Ideas of Decline'

12.15-12.45 Discussion

12.45-1.45 Lunch

Washington Irving's Romanticism and the Visual Arts

1.45-2.30 Professor Paul Giles (University of Oxford): 'Washington Irving and the Ghosts of Colonialism: From Transatlantic to Transpacific'

2.30-3.15 Dr. Wendy Ikemoto (Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Courtauld Institute of Art): 'John Quidor and Memories of Revolution'

3.15-3.45 Tea

The Modern City and the Romantic Imaginary

3.45-4.30 Dr. Matthew Beaumont (University College London): 'Broad Ways, Narrow Ways: The Transatlantic City in Poe's "The Man Of The Crowd"'

4.30-5.30 Roundtable Discussion

Conference Paper Abstracts

Dr. Matthew Beaumont (University College London)

Broad Ways, Narrow Ways: The Transatlantic City in Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd'

This paper, which opens with an account of Poe's experiences in London as a child, offers a re-examination of his celebrated short story 'The Man of the Crowd' (1839) in relation to its representation of space. In particular, it explores his attempt to think about urban space in terms of a 'transatlantic city'; that is, a spectral, composite city of the imagination that, like one of Francis Galton's composite photographs of the late nineteenth century, blurs aspects of separate entities, in this case New York City and London. This 'transatlantic city', it will be argued, constitutes a crucial part of Poe's crypto-religious mythology of modernity.

Matthew Beaumont is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at University College London. He is the author of *Utopia Ltd.: Ideologies of Social Dreaming in England 1870-1900* (Brill, 2005), the editor of *Adventures in Realism* (Blackwell, 2007), and the co-editor of *As Radical as Reality Itself: Essays on Marxism and Art for the 21st Century* (Peter Lang, 2007). He is currently co-authoring a book of interviews with Terry Eagleton.

Professor Emeritus David Bindman (University College London)

'John Martin and Thomas Cole'

This paper examines the influence of John Martin on Thomas Cole in the period before the latter came back to England in 1829. Martin clearly had a decisive influence on Cole as the only contemporary "elevated" landscape painter whose work was available to him. This paper is, however, more concerned with differences between the artists, especially their conceptions of geology and of the age and creation of the earth and mankind.

David Bindman is Emeritus Professor of the History of Art at University College London. He has written widely on British art, especially on Blake, Hogarth and Roubiliac. In recent years he has worked on the theory and representation of race, and is general editor of the series 'The Image of the Black in Western Art'.

Professor Leo Costello (Rice University, Houston)

"'Gorgeous but altogether false": Turner, Cole, and Transatlantic Ideas of Decline'

After seeing the paintings of J.M.W. Turner in person for the first time in 1829, Thomas Cole condemned the artist for having strayed from the representation of nature into mannered effects of atmosphere and colour: "gorgeous, but altogether false," was Cole's verdict. These reactions are well-known by now, but this paper seeks to reconsider them in several related ways. It is remarkable, firstly, to note how precisely Cole reiterate a set of by then standard critical responses to Turner in England. Cole, for instance, repeatedly mourned a loss of solidity and form in Turner's work, in favour of the depiction of air, mist, and colour. In so doing, Cole also repeated the common accusation of a decline in Turner's work beginning in the mid-1820s.

This paper seeks to consider the stakes of these questions of the loss of solidity and individual decline for two painters and cultures deeply concerned with the rise and fall of empires. I will place Cole's reactions within imperial discourses of degeneration and progress, in both America and Britain, considering not only how the subject of decline informed the work of these painters but how it was applied to individuals in the context of both developing and fragmenting national identities during an age of reform, industrialization and expansion.

Leo Costello, Ph.D. (Bryn Mawr College, 2003), is Assistant Professor of Art History at Rice University in Houston, Texas. His book, *J.M.W. Turner and the Subject of History* is under contract with Ashgate Press. He contributed to the catalogue of the exhibition *J.M.W. Turner*, organized by Tate Britain (2007-8) and his article on Turner's *Slave-ship* appeared in the anthology edited by Markman Ellis et. al., *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies (1640-1838)* (Palgrave MacMillan (2004).

Professor Mark Ford (University College London)
'Cooper's Frontier'

This paper will examine the ways in which James Fenimore Cooper represents the various tribes who feature in his Leatherstocking novels, with a particular emphasis on his bestseller of 1826, *The Last of the Mohicans*. It will consider the nature and implications of the friendship between Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, and explore Cooper's heroic figuration of Chingachgook's son, Uncas, and his demonization of the evil Magua.

Mark Ford is a Professor in English and American Literature at University College London. He is the author of a critical biography of the French poet, playwright and dramatist, Raymond Roussel, and has published numerous articles on 19th- and 20th-century British and American poetry and fiction. A collection of these, *A Driftwood Altar: Essays and Reviews*, was published in 2005.

Professor Paul Giles (University of Oxford)
'Washington Irving and the Ghosts of Colonialism: From Transatlantic to Transpacific'

Washington Irving has a reputation of being the first major American writer of the nineteenth century to question the values and benefits of U.S. national independence. Not only are works like *The Sketch Book* largely set in Europe, they also project ghosts and split selves as emblems of ways in which the American body politic itself became fragmented. This paper will relate Irving's transatlantic interests to the spectres of colonialism, suggesting ways in which his texts foreground certain kinds of haunting, and how the style of gothic in early-nineteenth-century American aesthetics was related to various kinds of social and political turbulence. I will also suggest that Irving's interest later in his career in Western exploration, notably in *Astoria* and *A Tour on the Prairies*, effectively transposed this postcolonial consciousness from a transatlantic to a transpacific scene. One of the curious things about Irving's Western writing is how signally it fails to accord with the rhetoric of "Manifest Destiny" that was being promulgated by the Young America movement at the time, and how instead it deploys a

rhetoric of geographical displacement to introduce all kinds of comic ironies into the American literary scene.

Paul Giles is Professor of American Literature at the University of Oxford. Among his recent books are *Atlantic Republic: The American Tradition in English Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2006); *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Duke University Press, 2002); *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730-1860* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). Forthcoming from Princeton University Press in 2010 is *The Global Remapping of American Literature*. In 2010, Paul Giles will also be moving to Australia to take up the position of Challis Chair of English at the University of Sydney.

Professor Andrew Hemingway (University College London)
‘The Politics of Style: Allston’s and Martin’s *Belsbazzar’s* Compared’

The contemporaneity of Washington Allston’s *Belsbazzar’s Feast* with the painting on the same theme by the English painter John Martin has often been remarked and was a topic of discussion at the time. Allston began his huge canvas in 1817 and left it unfinished at his death in 1843; Martin painted his in 1820, and exhibited it to great acclaim at the British Institution in the following year. The pair were friends; but despite their mutual respect they disagreed radically in their conceptions of how their common theme should be depicted, a disagreement that issued in paintings that not only belonged to different genres but that were executed in contrasting styles. In this paper I argue that these differences in style effectively posited divergent conceptions of the contemporary audience for painting and of the artist’s relationship with that audience. That in effect Martin’s painting interpellated an emergent bourgeois democratic subject, whereas Allston’s interpellated a conservative elitist one that corresponded with a Federalist politics and was essentially anti-democratic. Allston’s painting had this significance partly because the style he adopted was quintessentially that of the “English School” as this was codified in the period of the Anglo-French wars and their aftermath, and in its backward-looking character it corresponded with the conservative vision of “Englishness” that informs the stories of his close friend Washington Irving.

Andrew Hemingway is professor of history of art at University College London, where he teaches US art and culture since 1800, aesthetics, and Marxist theories of culture. He has also held visiting appointments at the University of Connecticut at Storrs and Northwestern University. His books include: *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926-1956* (Yale University Press, 2002), and he is also editor of *Marxism and the History of Art from William Morris to the New Left* (Pluto Press, 2006), and editor, with William Vaughan, of *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). His book “*The Mysticism of Money: Precisionist Painting and Machine Age America* is due to appear with Periscope Press in spring 2010.

Dr. Wendy Ikemoto
'John Quidor and Memories of Revolution'

This paper examines John Quidor's review of American revolutionary history in a pair of paintings titled *Rip Van Winkle and his Companions at the Inn Door of Nicholas Vedder* (1839) and *The Return of Rip Van Winkle* (1849). Based on Washington Irving's popular birth-of-a-nation story, the first composition pictures Rip in his colonial village, and the second his awakening to a post-Revolutionary town. Quidor's before-and-after structure frames a critical question about the efficacy of the Revolution: how different are colonial and independent America? The inquiry extends as well to the realm of painting. My paper looks toward Quidor's comic quotation of old master art as a commentary on the relationship of American painting to European aesthetic tradition. The artist explores what national independence meant not only for American history but for American art.

Wendy Ikemoto is currently the Terra Foundation for American Art postdoctoral fellow at the Courtauld Institute of Art. She earned her BA from Stanford University in 2002 and her PhD in the History of Art and Architecture from Harvard University in 2009. Her dissertation focused on paired paintings in the antebellum United States. She is presently developing a study of American art in the Pacific world in the 19th and early-20th centuries. Wendy has won several teaching awards from Harvard as well as major research fellowships from the Terra Foundation and the Henry Luce Foundation (both in conjunction with the American Council of Learned Societies), the Smithsonian American Art Museum/Douglass Foundation, and Harvard University. A version of this conference paper, titled "Putting the 'Rip' in 'Rip Van Winkle': Historical Absence in John Quidor's Pendant Paintings," was published in July in *American Art*.

Dr. Sarah Monks
'A werewolf in London: Benjamin West's American accent'

This paper seeks to problematise the prevailing interpretation of Benjamin West and his paintings as being American in America and British in Britain. This position has conventionally been justified by the fact that he never returned to America after he left in 1760 and by the assumption that his extensive patronage by George III necessarily entailed West in an uncritical obedience to king and country. The significance given to the first of these points will be contested through a consideration of West's continued and active engagement with America, pursued to powerful effect in London (where his studio served as a focal point – and during the War of Independence, a political cell – for radical Americans) and across the Atlantic (where West's connections, correspondence and example galvanised the formulation of a self-consciously American culture, and where West's explicit desires for himself still lay well into his dotage). Equally, the idea that West easily affiliated himself with the Crown will be countered through a discussion of his self-assertion, identification and professional victimisation as life-long democrat.

However, my intention is not to recuperate some lasting American-ness for West, nor merely to reorient perceptions of his politics, but rather to consider his unique status as a major cultural figure whose identity lay somewhere *between* Britain and America, and whose work was radically shaped by crises in their inter-relation. The issue of assimilation, and its accompanying anxieties about the grey/gray area between sameness

and difference (anxieties which lay at the heart of British responses to American independence), will provide a point of orientation for re-thinking West's later paintings and their meanings. By deploying 'either/and' as an interpretative strategy, this paper will consider West's position as someone who worked between states – both president of England's major cultural institution and “not of an English mind”, both courtier and turncoat – and whose reformulation of European pictorial tradition was subtly but therefore powerfully accented by his transatlantic identity.

Dr. Kenneth Myers (Detroit Institute of Arts)
William Dunlap's *A Trip to Niagara* (1830) and the Cultural Construction of Landscape Experience in Jacksonian New York

When scholars discuss William Dunlap's comic play *A Trip to Niagara* (1830) at all, they rarely do more than mention the once-popular musical interlude during which the lead characters occupied a stage steamboat placed in front of a moving panorama of the Hudson River. But Dunlap's play, like contemporary paintings and novels by Thomas Cole and James Fenimore Cooper, played an important role in promoting the emerging cultural practice of landscape appreciation in Jacksonian New York. In his play, Dunlap combined text and scenery to demonstrate “how to” objectify natural environments as aestheticized landscapes, to dramatize the social utility of learning how to do so, and to advertise both the existence and accessibility of recently developed landscape destinations in the Catskill Mountains and at Niagara.

Kenneth John Myers is curator of American art and Head of the Department of American Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Before joining the DIA in 2005, he was curator of American art at the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution. He received his B.A. from Cornell University, and his Ph.D. from Yale. He taught at Middlebury College from 1986 until 1995. While at the Freer, Dr. Myers co-organized the exhibition *Mr. Whistler's Galleries: Avant-Garde in Victorian London* and wrote the accompanying book, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition* (2003). Other publications include ‘Thomas Cole and the Popularization of Landscape Experience in the United States: 1825-1829,’ in Marco Goldin ed., *America!: Storie di pittura dal Nuovo Mondo* (2007); ‘Art and Commerce in Jacksonian America: The Steamboat *Albany* Collection,’ *Art Bulletin* (2000); ‘On the Cultural Construction of Landscape Experience: Contact to 1830,’ in David Miller, ed., *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (1993); and the catalogue for his influential exhibition *The Catskills: Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Mountains, 1820–1895* (1986). He is currently organizing a major traveling exhibition on *Frederic Church: To the Holy Land and Beyond*.

William H. Truettner (Senior Curator, Smithsonian American Art Museum)
‘Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710-1840’

Briefly, the talk addresses two major campaigns of painting Indians in North America, the first sponsored by the British and covering most of the eighteenth century, the second an American effort running through the first four decades of the nineteenth century. The importance of these two campaigns cannot be overestimated: collectively they consist of an astonishing range of Indian images, but thematically they share a close relationship. Each was conceived, directly or indirectly, to accompany attempts to

expand white hegemony across North America . But at this point the story becomes more complex. White attitudes toward Indians changed considerably over these two centuries, from one supporting their upward mobility to an alternate view that fixed them at a primitive stage of development. The change came about, I argue, because eighteenth-century enlightenment theories encountered a wall of scientific racism during the first two decades of the nineteenth-century, which whites conveniently used as a cover to disenfranchise Indians during the era of westward expansion.

William H. Truettner is a senior curator of painting and sculpture at the Smithsonian American Art Museum , Washington , DC . He was educated at Williams College (BA), the University of Michigan (MA), and did an additional year of graduate work at Princeton University . His major scholarly interests are the art of the American West, nineteenth-century American landscape painting, art in New England , and museum studies. His publications include a book on the Western artist George Catlin (1979); an exhibition catalogue on the Taos/Santa Fe art colonies (1986); *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier* (1991); with Alan Wallach, *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* ,1993; with Roger Stein, *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory* (1999); *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710-1840* (in press); and articles in professional journals

Professor Dell Upton (University of California, Los Angeles)
‘The Urban Ecology of Art in Antebellum New York’

During the first half of the nineteenth century, New York grew to a size and at a pace never before seen in the United States. In the “city of perpetual ruin and repair” every remnant of its past was relentlessly erased, yet the city’s new identity seemed confused and unformed, a disparate collection of people, objects, and habits assembled from all over the world. New Yorkers quickly developed that charming yet annoyingly provincial self-involvement that still characterizes them. They were proud, even boastful, of their home’s new size and preeminence, but appropriately, given their adolescent status, they were also insecure, unsure of themselves, and needy of constant reassurance. Literary and visual artists in New York were deeply involved both as participants and observers in this process of transformation. Three aspects in particular are important for understanding the climate in which art was created and consumed in antebellum New York: the attempt to systematize urban space and urban life in a rational manner, which involved the commodification of time, space, and goods; the sense of volatility and instability that worked against such efforts and that artists both celebrated and mourned; and the democratic – or anarchic – turmoil of the streets, that demanded a novel kind of urban selfhood equal to the city that it inhabited.

Dell Upton is professor of architectural history and chair of the department of art history at the University of California, Los Angeles. His books and articles range from a study of colonial Virginia churches to critiques of New Urbanism and heritage tourism. He is the author, most recently, of *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (Yale University Press, 2008), as well as *Madaline: Love and Survival in Antebellum New Orleans* (University of Georgia Press, 1996), and *Architecture in the United States*, a volume in the Oxford History of Art series. He served as a consultant and chief

catalogue essayist for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2000 exhibition *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*.

Professor Emeritus William Vaughan (Birkbeck College, University of London)
“The pit of modern art” – Ambitions and Practices in the London Art World in the early Nineteenth Century’

During the early nineteenth century, the market for fine art in London expanded dramatically, with growing opportunities for sale and public display and an increasing number of promoters and purchasers. Yet while this led to an accelerated commodification of art production, there was at the same time a mounting pressure – encouraged by current ‘romantic’ notions of artistic originality and national genius – for art to embody cultural ideals that transcended or opposed the commercial. This talk will consider the variety of ways in which practitioners negotiated this situation.

William Vaughan is Professor Emeritus in History of Art at Birkbeck College, University of London. He has published several books on Romanticism, and British and German art of the nineteenth century, including *German Romanticism and English Art* (Yale University Press, 1979) and *British Painting. The Golden Age from Hogarth to Turner* (Thames and Hudson, 1999). He organized the exhibition on Samuel Palmer held at the British Museum, London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2005-6. He is currently completing a study of Palmer's life and career, which is scheduled to be published by Yale University Press in 2010.

Professor Alan Wallach (College of William and Mary)
Thomas Cole as Transatlantic Romantic

From the time of Cole's initial success in New York in 1825, cultural nationalists desperately wanted the English born Cole to be “American” (hence William Cullen Bryant's exhortation in 1829 in ‘To Cole the Painter, Departing for Europe’ to the artist to “keep that earlier, wilder image bright”). In an age of strident patriotic claims, they succeeded to the point where Cole was in his lifetime, as he is still today, celebrated as “father” or “founder” of the American school of landscape painting. Yet national identity is not a matter of essences (“Americanness,” “Englishness”), nor is it a static or fixed ideological category. While catering to his public's prejudices, Cole was in private ambivalent about an American as opposed to an English career. More important, his art is unimaginable outside of its transatlantic context. Indeed, as I shall argue in this paper, Cole's career can be seen in terms of an adaptation of English aesthetic traditions to American artistic and social circumstances.

Since 1989, **Alan Wallach** has been the Ralph H. Wark Professor of Art and Art History and Professor of American Studies at the College of William and Mary. He was co-curator of *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (National Museum of American Art, 1994) and writes frequently on Cole, American art, and the history of American art institutions. He is currently working on a project tentatively titled ‘Rethinking Luminism: Aestheticizing Tendencies in Mid-Nineteenth Century American Landscape Painting.’