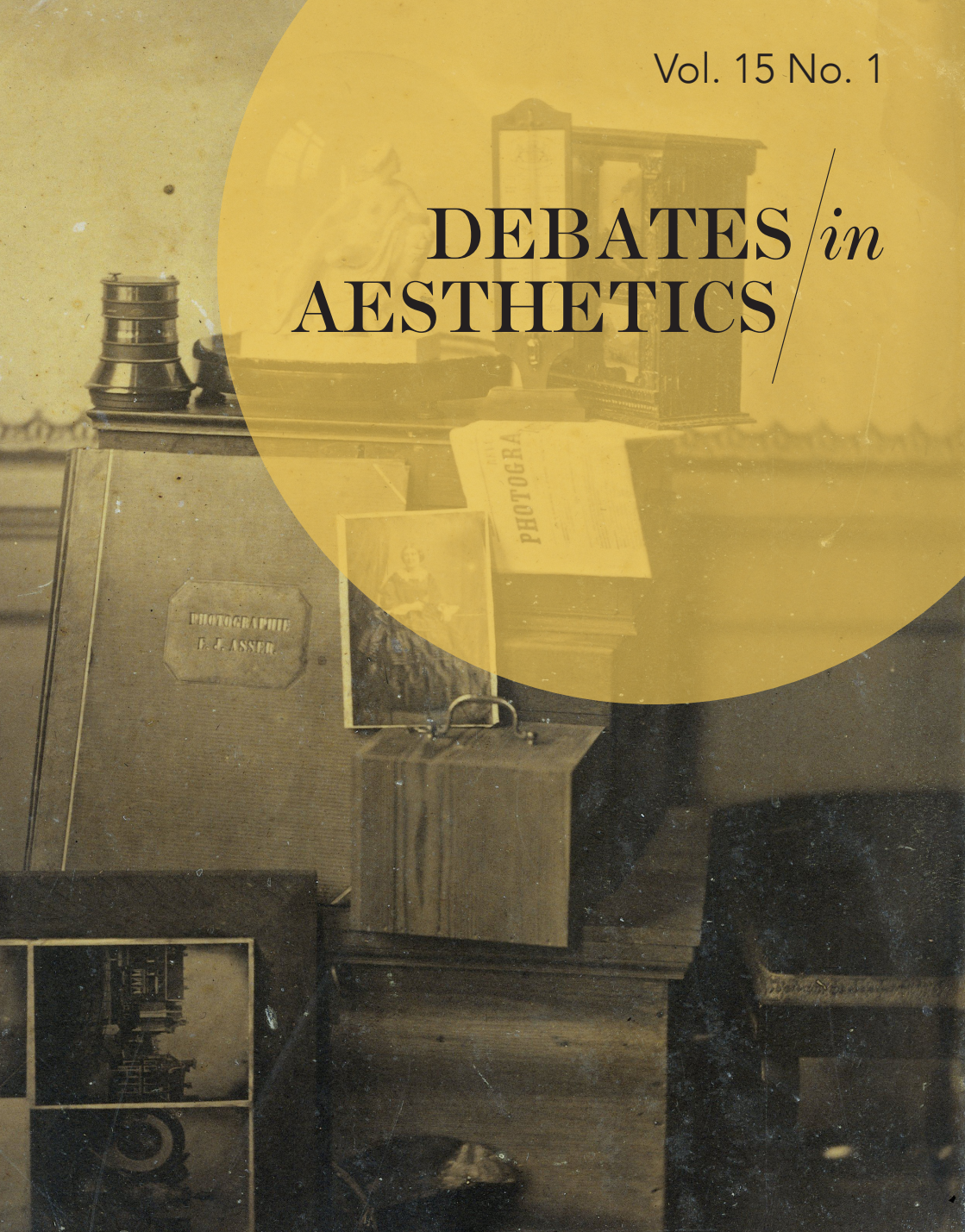


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ORIGINALISM AND ANTI-ORIGINALISM STYLE AND AUTHENTICITY IN AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

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Since the mid-Sixties, philosophers have debated over the aesthetic relevance of authentic art-objects, perfect replicas, and restoration. In particular, a dispute has ensued concerning the cogency of our penchant for original artworks. Originalists argue that authenticity, the quality of an object being of undisputed origin or authorship, is a necessary condition for aesthetic experience, since the appreciation of an artwork presupposes its correct identification. Anti-originalists retort that we have no art-relevant reason to favour originals over visually-indistinguishable duplicates. To this extent, they claim, 'there is no identification without (prior) evaluation'. In this paper, I re-examine the underpinnings at the core of this discussion. I argue that aesthetic appreciation does not necessarily require judgement of authenticity. However, there are instances in which authenticity does intrude upon aesthetic evaluation, namely when style recognition is involved. In these cases, I propose that errors in historical attribution reduce the impact of the object and jeopardise aesthetic appreciation altogether.



Figure 1 Basilica Superiore di San Francesco d'Assisi (Assisi, Italy). The vault with Cimabue's frescos after the earthquake. (Sebasgs, 2007)

1 Introduction: The Assisi Fragments

On the morning of 26th September 1997, an earthquake shook the Italian regions of Umbria and Marche injuring several people and causing massive material damage. The 13th century Basilica of San Francesco of Assisi was damaged, its vault severely cracked [Fig 1]. Hundreds of conservators, guided by art-historian Giuseppe Basile, scoured the rubble for remnants of Cimabue's famous frescos. Their painstaking work of retrieval led to the recovery of thousands of tiny, almost unrecognisable fragments, many no bigger than one euro coins. Cataloguing the pieces and reconstructing the masterpiece took years. In 2006 the restoration was finally completed: "At the end of this difficult task", Basile proclaimed, "we can say that we have achieved our goal!" (Basile 2007).

This is not just a heartening anecdote. Why, I want to ask, did the restorers take on this project at all? Thanks to modern preservation technology, the work could be easily replicated as it looked before the event. Moreover, the frescoes are so high on the vault that they were difficult to

discern in detail before the earthquake even happened.¹ My suggestion is that the Assisi case provides a compelling example of one element that most of us find crucial when engaging with art-objects, namely, the significance of experiencing originals as opposed to reproductions. People are willing to travel distances to view authentic artworks, even if they would not be able to distinguish them from reproductions and even if reproductions could offer a more rewarding experience. The relevance we attribute to originals also justifies their monetary worth. A poster of Klimt's *The Kiss* at the *Galerie Belvedere*, Vienna, costs eight euros, yet the actual painting is worth millions.²

Why are originals so important to us? Is our preference reasonable at all? These questions have been at the core of a long-standing philosophical discussion centred on art and authenticity, a discussion often invoking the notion of an artwork and its perfect copy.³ Drawing from this debate, I argue that authenticity can be conceived as a 'derivative' rather than a primary source for aesthetic appreciation. Unlike standard aesthetic properties, authenticity cannot be immediately grasped from an object's surface appearance; it can, however, be appreciated derivatively through identification of the object's relevant style features – something requiring at least some knowledge of art history. Stylistic

1 Michael Leech goes a little too far, I think, in saying that, since the frescoes are twenty meters above the floor, even before 1997 "merely a blur of colour" could be seen by the many churchgoers and art-lovers who visited the basilica (Leech, 1999). As evidence, consider that Cimabue explicitly designed the frescoes to be appreciated from a certain distance. Thus, although not all the work details were visible to the naked eye, the essential configuration of lines, shapes and colours were in fact always discernible.

2 *The Kiss* is regarded as a national treasure in Austria, so it is unlikely that it will ever be sold. If such a transaction were to happen, however, it is predictable that the painting would break sales records. Indeed, Klimt's far less renowned *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer* was sold for \$135 million in 2006, "the highest sum ever paid for a painting" according to the New York Times (Vogel 2006). For an inspiring discussion on artworks' economic value see Sagoff (1981).

3 See Goodman (1968), chapter 3: 'Art and Authenticity'. For an overview of the debate see also Goodman (1986); Dutton (1983); Elgin (1991); Morton and Foster (1991); Bowden (1999); Wreen (2002); Kulka (2005).

properties bring authenticity to the aesthetic frame by ‘exemplifying’ the historical meaning they convey. When an object is identified as an instance of a given artistic style, its being proved inauthentic reduces the aesthetic impact or even jeopardises the experience altogether.

2 One Problem, Two Solutions

Philosophers⁴ have long reflected on the role played in art experience by that set of contextually-dependent properties – historical, artistic, relational – that are not perceptible yet can be ascribed to an art-object. Those properties are responsible for what we call the object’s authenticity. Determining an artwork’s authenticity is equal to determining how the work came to be, how it is related to the context of production and to its creator’s intentions Dutton (2003). Within the fine arts, saying that something is authentic is saying that it is what it is reputed to be, in origin or authorship, with little room for uncertainty. Unquestionable provenance is fundamental for attribution of authenticity. This makes sense of a common way of thinking of the art critic as someone whose basic job is to pursue traces left on an artwork back to its historical origin, so as to ‘authenticate’ it. But to what extent should authenticity also affect our aesthetic appreciation of an artwork? To this question, two main solutions have been offered in the literature. While some⁵ theoreticians argue that our preference for originals is justified, others⁶ retort that it is just fetishism, sentimental attachment, or, at its worst, plain snobbery. Borrowing the terminology from Jaworski (2013), I refer to the first position as ‘originalism’, and to the second as ‘anti-originalism’.

4 See, among the many others: Goodman (1968); Walton (1970); Sagoff (1978, 2014); Danto (1981); Levinson (1989); Lamarque (2010); Korsmeyer (2008; 2012).

5 Sagoff (1978); Levinson (1989); Farrelly-Jackson (1997); Dutton (2003); Korsmeyer (2008).

6 Lessing (1965); Zemach (1989); Jaworski (2013).

2.1 *Originalism*

Originalists claim that authenticity – the quality of being of undisputed origin – is essential for an artwork's identity and a prerequisite for it to have aesthetic significance. Accordingly, it is necessary for an artwork's correct appraisal, for only insofar as an artwork is authenticated can it be properly appreciated as 'the product of an artistic process' (Sagoff 1978, 455). One reason for this is that we don't appreciate an object simply for the sake of its appearance or for the feelings it induces, but for what it is, and for its production history (Ibid., 453). Knowledge of the process by which a product was created determines the way it is to be evaluated (Ibid., 456). If an original is different from a forgery, thus, it is because it is the endpoint of a unique creative act, whereas the forgery is not (Dutton 2003, 258).⁷

Indeed, an object is identified as an artwork rather than an artefact of another kind, in virtue of its context of creation and its special relation to an artist – not in virtue of an intrinsic property it displays (Levinson 1989, 232). Events which occurred in the making of an artwork, comprising the intentionality of the creator, play a fundamental role in art evaluation.

Authentic artworks are special to us because they are 'internally related' to the individual who produced them (Farrelly-Jackson 1997, 144). Our appreciation of them depends on the 'close-relation' (Battin 1979, 155) between an artist and her work – a property 'the eye cannot see', yet it is somehow 'embodied' in the object. For example, we value Cimabue's frescos as the embodiment of his creative act – that is to say, as the actual site of his artistic achievement.⁸ This creative act is what we want

⁷ Forgery is, according to Sagoff, the result of a process that is "the reverse of creative" (Sagoff 1978, 454).

⁸ However, this creates a further issue: How can viewers perceive the artist's activity as 'embodied' in authentic objects if it is not directly appreciable? For space reasons it will not be possible to address this question here, but see, on this point, Origgi (2004).

to be ‘in touch’ (Korsmeyer 2012, 371) with and it is what the duplicate lacks, though a duplicate may represent or betoken it (Levinson 2004, 15). Of course, reproductions and replicas can ‘perform immense service in apprising us of the look’ of many artworks and ‘allowing us to renew or deepen our acquaintance with them’. But this is ‘hardly reason’ to think that such replicas ‘could ever *displace*’ (Levinson 1987, 281) the authentic objects they derived from: after all no one considers a visit to Little Venice the same as a visit to the true, historical Venice.

2.2 *Anti-originalism*

According to anti-originalists, authenticity is only essential to an artwork’s identity and aesthetic appreciation when it is so recognised by ‘well-trained art critics’ (Zemach 1986, 239; 1989, 67). Original artworks do not possess any art-relevant quality that perfect copies do not have (Jaworski 2013, 2): there is indeed no significant feature⁹ that ‘*all* originals have in common, that make *every* original better than a duplicate, a copy’ (Ibid., 13). Therefore, when it comes to appreciating ‘a work of art as a work of art’, an exact duplicate may be in principle ‘just as good as the original’ (Ibid., 2).

It is important to distinguish anti-originalism from aesthetic empiricism. Aesthetic empiricism says: since an original and the duplicate strike the senses in the same way, they deliver the same aesthetic experience, so why care about the difference?¹⁰ The discovery that a work is forged does not alter its perceivable qualities – hence this discovery shouldn’t bear any aesthetic significance. Note that this argument implies an understanding of ‘aesthetic experience’ as a peculiar state

9 Among the features that might significantly alter our aesthetic appreciation of an artwork, and that seem to nod in the direction of originalism, Jaworski (2013) lists: the influence that an original artwork, yet not its replica, may have had on subsequent art; the difference in meaning between the original and the duplicate; the idea that the original, but not the duplicate, is an instantiation of an original creative concept. None of these aspects is, he argues, sufficient to justify our preference for originals.

10 See Bell (1949); Lessing (1965); Battin (1979).

of excitement or thrill, equally elicitable both by the original and by its identical copy. This is, of course, the stimulus-response theory of aesthetic appreciation that Goodman mockingly attributes to ‘Immanuel Tingle and Joseph Immersion (ca.1800)’ (Goodman 1972, 94). Anti-originalism, however, does not contend that an object’s status as original is *always* aesthetically irrelevant, but that it takes an art expert to discern in which case it is relevant and in which it isn’t. In the case of a stolen altarpiece, for instance, it is the curator who decides whether the lost work can be replaced with a replica without detriment to the overall aesthetic effect of the site.¹¹ The aesthetic relevance of authenticity is a matter of case-by-case evaluation.

Indeed, the special significance we attach to originals, so anti-originalists believe, has nothing to do with aesthetics per se (i.e., with contemplation of an object for its own sake), but with something else – rarity, emotional attachment, faith. We cherish the original object because it is *that* object (Zemach 1989, 67). If it seems hard to discard the thought that something about originals makes them more valuable than any copy, it is because we consider them blessed with ‘the Midas Touch’ of the artist (Jaworski 2013, 14). An original Klimt is valuable because Klimt touched it, and Klimt is an important artist. What binds us to authenticity, thus, is a form of fetishism rooted in what anthropologists call the *law of contagion*, the belief that through physical contact objects acquire special qualities (Newman & Bloom 2012). Advances in replication technique, however, may require that we abandon these creeds. If, for example, a molecule-by molecule 3D-print could ever be invented in the future, anyone might have a Cimabue decorating their ceilings – eventually, we might come to accept this as normal.

11 An example here is Caravaggio’s *La Natività* in the Oratory of San Lorenzo in Palermo (Sicily). The original altarpiece was stolen in 1969 by the Mafia, and has never been retrieved. Later on, it was decided to replace the work with a perfect replica, so as not to jeopardize the overall aesthetic appearance of the chapel. Indeed, the splendid stuccoes by Giacomo Serpotta which adorn the walls of the oratory were explicitly designed as a complement to Caravaggio’s painting.

3 Who is Right (If Anyone)?

Consider again the following: An earthquake occurs, reducing to fragments a treasured medieval fresco. Would a replication of the fresco, known to be such, be lacking something, sufficient to render it aesthetically worthless altogether? Originalism contends that it would, since the fresco's authenticity – its relation to the original artist's handwork – is essential to its aesthetic appreciation. Indeed, according to the originalists we don't appreciate the frescos aesthetically for their appearance or effect, but for what they are, and how could we appraise something and not care what it is? Anti-originalism, conversely, argues that no *a priori* reason prevents the replica from equalling the original, because authenticity is not *per se* a condition for aesthetic appreciation. The problem, in essence, is that it is unclear whether our aesthetic appreciation of artworks has to do with the fact that these have been created by a certain someone at a certain time. Can history, background, origins – in a word, authenticity – count as sources for aesthetic appreciation? Note that two different questions are implied here: 'What makes any artwork valuable?' and 'What makes one artwork better than another (supposedly identical) one?'¹² Whatever our response to the former question, an answer to the latter might prove the originalists right. In fact, one might think with the originalists that this amounts precisely to the role an artwork has in the history and world of art. Arguments in support of this answer to the question come from Korsmeyer.¹³ Identifying the authenticity of the experienced object, she argues, is not important for art appreciation only, but for our enjoyment in many other domains (Korsmeyer 1999, 91). Take food: part of the pleasure of eating is the sup-

12 Though the two questions are intimately related, my interest here is with the second (i.e., the value we attribute to original artworks as opposed to reproductions) rather than with the first (i.e., the value of art in general). I must thank an anonymous reviewer for this clarification.

13 See Korsmeyer (1999; 2008; 2012).

position that we are eating certain things.¹⁴ Art, like food, requires the identification of a relevant context to be brought into focus. Individuating the nature of things allows the emergence of their properties, just as food type affects taste qualities.

All this is plain enough, yet the anti-originalist may raise a further objection. It is one thing to say that identifying something as authentic *matters* to our appreciation and therefore authentic art-objects may have enhanced significance to us (for instance because of their so-called 'survival value').¹⁵ It is yet another thing to claim, as the originalists do, that being original is *prerequisite* for artworks to be properly appreciated, that is, to be appreciated *qua* artworks (Sagoff 1978; 2014). This last claim can be disputed. An artwork's aesthetic appraisal does not necessarily depend on the relation of that work to a given person. Of course, whether a work is original may be a relevant factor for its appreciation. It is not, however, the *primary* factor on which aesthetic appreciation is based. What makes the Assisi frescos treasured as an artwork is not their having been painted by Cimabue in the first place. Rather, Cimabue is famous because he painted the treasured frescos.¹⁶

The originalist may respond that our demand for authenticity is not directed toward a specific person, but toward whoever turns out to be the original creator of the work. Relevance is given to someone *for* the

14 See also Danto (1981, 14) on this.

15 See Meiland (1983). Survival value, he explains: "is simply a fact that we prize items from the past, and the longer they have survived, the greater value they have for us. This value [...] is independent of aesthetic value." (p. 116) In this sense, the original Cimabue, having greater 'survival value' than the copy, may have greater *overall* significance to us than the copy.

16 Of course, there exist artworks whose aesthetic significance essentially lies in their 'having being made by' someone, works which get their fame from the fame of their creator – take Rousseau and Nietzsche's musical compositions, for example. But these are pieces of no particular intrinsic worth; and furthermore, these are exceptions (see Battin 1979).

works s/he has produced, not because s/he is *that* specific someone.¹⁷

This, however, leaves unexplained our reaction to unveiled misattributions. The case is simply stated: an artwork attributed to an artist *A* has been admired by thousands of art-lovers over the years. One day it is revealed to be a misattribution, a work of one of *A*'s followers. Its fame dims, as its value on the art-market collapses.¹⁸ But why? The discovery that the work is misattributed does not alter it aesthetically. Were we really interested in the identity of its author only *qua* author of that artwork, we should now praise her, whomever she has turned out to be. Instead, we simply devalue the work. Once again, are we just being snobbish? Or are we confused?

This clutter of considerations brings us back to our starting point: Should authenticity deserve to play any role when it comes to assessing the aesthetic valence of an art-object? To unravel the issue, we have to move forward in the discussion.

4 The Case of Style

At the turn of the twentieth century, the father of modern conservation theory, Alois Riegl distinguished two sorts of values possessed by artworks - past and present - according to whether the values pertain to the work as a historical monument or as artistic object (1982). Every artwork is always concurrently a product of history and an aesthetic object. As a result, it is difficult to decide if a property of the work is historical, aesthetic, or both: the historical features of an artwork can indeed *also* be aesthetically relevant (Riegl 1982, 21-51). This is particularly evident in the determination of style. Broadly understood, style indicates the distinctive visual appearance of an object, which is deter-

17 I'm grateful to an anonymous reviewer for having envisaged this objection.

18 It is also possible that a piece be sold as the work of an artist's pupil, only to be later attributed to the artist himself. In this case its market value increases exponentially (cf. the famous cases of Rembrandt's *The Unconscious Patient* (ca. 1624–25) or Caravaggio's *The Cardsharps* (1594)).

mined by the creative principles, inspiration and taste according to which something is designed.¹⁹ Wollheim identifies two senses in which the concept occurs: we can talk of *individual style* to refer to the style of a singular artist (i.e. 'the style of Cimabue') and of *general style* to refer to the style of a period or artists' group within a period (i.e. 'Gothic Art') (1979, 129-130). General style represents the 'common denominator' in the production of a time, something that is external to individuals and not a function of their own activities as artists.²⁰ To explain this idea, Riegl (1993) introduces the idealistic notion of *Kunstwollen*, 'artistic will' – a creative impulse to make art in a particular manner that drives the artistic production of one period and is nourished by the historical and cultural values of the epoch.²¹

Like Riegl's notion of *Kunstwollen*, general style can be used taxonomically as a mean of organising the variety of works and approaches that characterise the art of the past. It is, however, more than an instrument for the art historian – a device for sorting what is considered distinctive in a particular moment of art history. Indeed, general style itself can represent the intentional focus of aesthetic appreciation. As Riegl explains, what is noteworthy about style is that stylistic patterns are able to transpose a period's historical/cultural/artistic will into the artwork's perceptual characteristics: they translate this particular will into form, 'shape and colour in the plane or space'. To use current terminology, one could say that they *exemplify* it. For example, geometric patterns of ancient art exemplify much of the aesthetic feeling of the people who made it, and generally of how they framed their relation-

19 Compare with Ernst Gombrich's comprehensive definition of style (1968).

20 General style can be further divided in sub-classes (1) universal style; (2) historical or period style; and (3) school style Wollheim (1979, 129-130). See also Robinson (1984) on this.

21 Years after the formulation of the idea of *Kunstwollen*, the concept has been reassessed by a number of other art historians like Panofsky (1981), Wölfflin (1950) and Worringer (1953).

ship to the world.²² More importantly, they do so via aesthetically salient features – features that contribute to the object’s aesthetic appreciation. Style properties are contextually-dependent properties, yet they manifest perceptually, lending themselves to appreciation: they ‘show as well as say what they are about’ (Genova 1979, 323). Style is thus tied to history as well as to the aesthetic impact of an object: to paraphrase Danto, it brings artworks’ history on their surfaces (Danto 1981).

Goodman has famously emphasised style role in the process of both classifying and appreciating an artwork (1975; 1978). On the one hand, recognising style – an often-challenging endeavour requiring a ‘knowing eye or ear’ (Goodman 1975, 810) – allows us to attribute an artwork to one artist, period, region, etc. Style serves in this sense as ‘an individual or group signature’ which helps us place the work in the appropriate context by answering questions such as: Who? When? Where?. On the other hand, however, style identification is integral to the understanding of artworks and of ‘the worlds they present’ (Ibid., 807) – the world-view of which such works are expressive. Style has thus direct aesthetic significance insofar as it tells us ‘the way the work is to be looked at’ (Goodman 1978, 40). Knowing an artwork’s style is aesthetically relevant because stylistic properties provide us with information as to how the work is to be evaluated – thereby, style counts as an aesthetic property.

That style attribution can affect aesthetic appreciation is a well-known fact. The greater a viewer’s familiarity with recognising styles, the richer her experience. For a naïve viewer, Cimabue’s painting *Maestà di Assisi* (1285-1288) [Fig. 2] is just a depiction of a Madonna with the child Jesus. For an experienced viewer, it reveals a different meaning. She can

22 According to Riegl, because in ancient times people had a defensive relationship towards the hostilities of nature, they framed their relation to the world in a way so as to keep the represented objects within tightly controlled boundaries. For example, the *Kunstwollen* determining ancient Egyptian art (pyramids especially) is a will to create ‘absolute’ objects surrounded by space conceived as a void; objects whose pure abstractness isn’t subject to the distorting effects of visual perception (see Riegl 1993, 53-83).



Figure 2 Cimabue's Maestà di Assisi, Basilica Inferiore di San Francesco d'Assisi, Assisi, Italy. (Starlight, 2006)

classify the painting as a Gothic masterpiece with specific iconographic properties. She might notice the tapered hand shape, typical of the Middle Ages Tuscan pictorial style, or observe that the throne is depicted frontally, with both sides open like pages, as is usual in pre-perspective painting. To understand and appreciate this artwork, the viewer may profit from all these stylistic features – provided, of course, that she is acquainted with that particular style and the symbolic or iconographic code it entails. With increasing style expertise, appreciation shifts from mere description of 'what is depicted' to a classification in terms of complex art-specific properties.²³ Information about style is thus relevant for aesthetic experience as it offers an unlimited pool of knowl-

²³ This is confirmed by empirical studies. See Leder, Belke, Oeberst and Augustin (2004).

edge to improve our perceptive discrimination skills. But style recognition provides a further element to art appreciation: the capacity of generalisation and differentiation. Once the concept of an artistic style is learned, the viewer is able to classify new examples by acknowledging similarities and differences with known artworks. Aesthetic perception can be strengthened or refined by testing against further cases: interesting qualities are revealed through the juxtaposition of works in a comparison.

Though perhaps not sufficient by itself, attributing an artwork to the right stylistic period is therefore crucial for aesthetic appreciation, and impacts on the quality of the experience. But to be effective, identification in terms of style requires the object to be authentic – situated at the right place in the right event sequence. This might sound perplexing, for style properties can be imitated. A painter can represent a subject *à la manière de* Cimabue. A composer can write like Vivaldi²⁴, and a sculptor carve statues resembling Canova's in every respect. To be sure, imitation 'in the style of', or *pastiche*, has been common artistic practice for centuries.²⁵ So why is style tied to authenticity?

As noticed above, one important thing is that stylistic properties exemplify content through form. 'By wedding form to content' (Genova 1979, 322), style transposes the imperceptible properties of a work – its artistic meaning – into perceptible aesthetic patterns. Medieval artists' pious intent, for instance, is displayed in their works by means of

24 One example is the Austrian violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler, who wrote several musical pieces in Baroque's style and presented them as Vivaldi's originals. When truth came out in 1935, he responded to critics' complaints: "The name changes, the value remains".

25 However, it is almost impossible for a modern artist to dive himself completely into the stylistic conventions of a period. Even van Meegeren's paintings display elements of the style of his own time: for example, in his *Christ and the Disciples at Emmaeus* (1936) the characters' faces seem influenced by the photographic images of the Thirties. The man in profile, for instance, shows facial features that today, in retrospect, appear very modern. These stylistic aspects were much less obvious to the viewer of the 1930s, probably because they seemed just 'normal' at the time (see Dutton, 1993).



Figure 3 Cimabue's Maestà di Assisi, detail of the Virgin's hands. Basilica Inferiore di San Francesco d'Assisi, Assisi, Italy

stylistic devices; the Virgin's hands' style serves as a 'vehicle' to express her merciful royalty: it 'instances' this meaning. [Fig. 3] Similar examples abound in art history. The point is that while the formal patterns determining a style can be reproduced, what cannot be imitated is the original 'will' – Riegl's *Kunstwollen* – those patterns were meant to exemplify. In Sagoff's terms: 'No one – not even a great copyist – can paint in the style of Caravaggio today. The copyist can only mimic or imitate that style' (Sagoff 2014, 12). The style of a given period, meant as a codified set of signs, can be more or less satisfactorily re-evoked today for a variety of reasons – as a homage, a parody, a technical training etc. None of these, however, matches the *original* artistic reasons why a style was created. Imitations, however accurate they might be, can never keep the initial meaning associated with certain stylistic properties. Out of the artistic tradition of the period, thus, style's authenticity is simply impossible. A linguistic example might be convenient here. By using the same signifier – a given stylistic pattern – to refer to a different signification, copies produce a sort of perceptual 'false-friend'. Like pairs of words in two languages that look similar but have different

meanings, copies can mimic a style's formal features but end up conveying a whole other message. Hence the problem, for this might therefore be a prompter of aesthetic deception. Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1 Op. 25*, 'Classical', for example, owes much of its structure to the eighteenth century, but it is in fact emblematic of the neoclassical *Kunstwollen* of the interwar period: a 'call to order' after the experimental ferment of the avant-garde.²⁶ Interpreting this work as an authentic product of the Age of Enlightenment would be deceptive and prevent the work from being appreciated appropriately.

This helps explain why errors in style attribution reduce the aesthetic impact of the object or even threaten the experience altogether. Whenever we classify art-objects as 'gothic', 'baroque', 'neo-classic' we are *appreciating* their authenticity, that is, their connection with a given historical moment and its specific *Weltanschauung*. Visitors of Assisi presume that they are experiencing a masterpiece that has been there since Middle Ages – fragmented as it is – by *perceiving* its authenticity through its manifest stylistic features. Were they to discover that the frescos are just modern imitations, they would feel deceived, for, as Korsmeyer puts it, they would perceive the right stylistic property 'in the wrong frame' (Korsmeyer 2008, 121). If so, then stylistic features can *differentiate* the original from the replica, though always in a 'derivative' way – a way, that is, which requires a reasonable knowledge of art history, since styles are difficult to identify without explicit learning.²⁷ When we detect, recognise, and attribute style, the origins of the object

26 As the example suggests, one could also argue that each time a style is emulated, a new style is brought into being.

27 Although stylistic knowledge may also be acquired implicitly, e.g., via repeated exposure to works that have a certain style. Interestingly, empirical studies have shown that implicitly acquired style increases simple preferences among viewers (Gordon and Holyoak, 1983). However, the process of style-identification requires its outcome to be explained, and this involves the mastery of categories that can only be acquired via an explicit training in art history.

– whether or not it is authentic – make a crucial difference to our perception and counts as a genuine factor of aesthetic evaluation.

5 Conclusion

Originalists are wrong to think that the aesthetic merits of authentic artworks depend on placing them in relation to an appropriate person or context. This, however, does not make authenticity a feature for fetishists or snobs, as anti-originalists contend. Authenticity may well not be a primary condition for aesthetic appreciation, but it is surely a ‘derivative’ one, one that is mediated by style identification. By exemplifying via form and design the peculiar *Kunstwollen* of an epoch – its relevant historical/cultural/artistic features – style makes authenticity aesthetically appreciable.

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