

science historique des jeunes de tout le pays en lui accolant les résultats d'une étude menée exclusivement à Montréal et à Toronto.

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DE BOLLA, Peter — *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Architecture and Landscape Gardening in Britain*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003. Pp. 274.

How does one look at a picture, a building, or a garden? How is the act of seeing informed by social, cultural, and political conditioning? These questions lie at the heart of Peter de Bolla's *The Education of the Eye*, in which he builds on the case made in the *Discourse of the Sublime* for the emergence of modern subjectivity in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. By this de Bolla means the rational, self-reflexive subject: here identified with an upwardly mobile bourgeoisie seeking to distinguish itself from the vulgar masses and the old elite through encounters and engagements with art, architecture, and gardens from about 1740 to 1780.

In his first book, de Bolla examined (among other things) a series of treatises on the science of sight to ascertain their contributions to eighteenth-century concepts of perception and, ultimately, to discourses of control surrounding the body. These are further articulated in *The Education of the Eye*: "If looking tells the subject how to be, the body inflects and interprets what looking tells it as it is presented to visuality, positioned in a landscape, and in general terms registers experience" (pp. 106–107). Here de Bolla moves from discursive practice to agency, identifying a tension in a range of printed sources — architectural drawings and texts, paintings, poetry, gardening manuals, tour guides, and aesthetic writings — between the prescriptive, learned, and exclusive perspective of the elite, here represented by Joshua Reynolds and Horace Walpole, and a more spontaneous, imaginative, and inclusive outlook of the ever-rising middling sort, of whom William Hogarth is cited as an example. While the regime of the eye, of "natural" and sympathetic sight, never sought to overturn the regime of the picture, that of informed and scripted vision, the two fused for an ephemeral moment in the 1760s to create the "sentimental look". Integral to this account is the claim for a contemporaneous emergence of modern visual culture.

In the conjunction of the terms *visual* and *culture*, I mean to signal that the latter, a domain of social and political interaction that can be described as a public form, takes on its peculiar modern dress (what Habermas identifies as "the public sphere") only in reference to and in the light of the visual (by which I do not mean those things within the domain of the visible but the grammars determining both how we see and what is seen. (pp. 4–5)

Here de Bolla follows John Brewer in identifying the first half of the eighteenth century as the formative period when culture in all its forms began to be produced,

retailed, and consumed on a wider social scale. One could arguably date the birth of a consumer society for the arts to the later seventeenth century and, indeed, identify “modern” notions of subjectivity through art in the Renaissance, but de Bolla is not interested in origins: this book is a snapshot of a moment in the emergence of self-love and possessive individualism.

To what extent the affective look of the bourgeoisie was (or is) democratic is a moot point, but de Bolla raises important questions about the phenomenology of sight and the methodology of historicizing it. *The Education of the Eye*, though based on what the author admits to be a narrow selection of objects and printed sources dealing with paintings, gardens, and architecture, purports to be the history of an activity — that of looking — which is poorly recorded. The book works as the history of an aesthetic discourse that still legislates, if not entirely governs, what we perceive as “good” art, taste, and culture. It is not surprising, therefore, that other artifacts that might illuminate the visual culture of subjectivity, most notably clothes, are excluded from de Bolla’s analysis on the grounds that they were not objects of contemporary aesthetic interest or, more importantly, commentary.

It is in the spontaneous glance, as opposed to the measured look or the contemplative stare, that the regime of the eye was situated in the eighteenth century. Instruction in these techniques, how to see and be seen, was to be derived from attending art exhibitions and other public amusements: pleasure garden walks, fireworks, and scientific demonstrations, for example. The apogee of bourgeois self-fashioning is to be found in the portrait. Its elite corollary exists in the landscape gardens and country houses of the period. In Vauxhall Gardens, de Bolla predictably finds a concatenation of devices and displays instructing the eye in the aesthetics of enfranchisement. The gardens at Hagley Park and the Leasowes represent exercises in Whig civic humanist social and cultural exclusion. Kedleston Hall, the only building discussed in the book, constitutes a fusion of noble ambitions and bourgeois capitalism visible in the contributions made to the project by the picture-collecting Lord Scarsdale and the architect-decorator Robert Adam. Insofar as the decorative arts (the ormolu, frescoes, statuary, and furniture that made up the “Adam style”) are discussed, they are treated as part of the building’s text, deconstruction of which “guide[s] the viewer in the movement away from the semiotic gaze via the superficial glance toward the sentimental look” (p. 194).

This marriage of consciousness and sensation, of the informed and informing eye, represents something approaching an ideal aesthetic experience. The triumph of the sentimental look was short-lived, however. Although it ran as an underground current through the aesthetic discourse of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by 1837 the specific social, cultural, and economic forces that contributed to its formation had dissolved or changed. De Bolla does not explain how this process took place, but fully expects this book to stimulate opposition, criticism, and debate. The bold claims he makes function as heuristic devices, stimulating the mind to reflect on the relationship(s) among art, nature, and life.

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