**Narrative Painting in France - Abstracts**

**Etienne Jollet: 'Figurative Poetics and Narration in Painting: some Propositions'**

The numerous publications in art history on the social aspects of production and reception that have appeared over the past years have shown how important knowledge of the circumstances of creation is for understanding of works of art. It now seems necessary to deal with its inner complexity, which is only a way of questioning the exterior causality even more fully. This is particularly the case for narrative painting, which plays such an important role in the history of western art: the importance attached to the principle of ut pictura poesis led to a valuation of complex forms of narrativity, about which, because of the difference of medium, we cannot use what scholars achieved in the field of literature almost half a century ago: the elaboration of a canon of notions which permits a rich and subtle approach to texts. Art historians have to create their own descriptive notions to speak about spatiality, temporality, and the characteristics of the figure or action. I would like to propose some views about the possibility of articulating the latter elements in what I would like to call 'figurative poetics'.

**Alyce Jordan: 'Rhetorics of Sanctity and Subversion: The St. Thomas Becket Windows of Medieval France'**

Four stained glass windows devoted to the life of St. Thomas Becket, all dating from the first half of the thirteenth century, survive in France. These windows, located in the cathedrals of Sens, Chartres, Angers, and Coutances, constitute the earliest surviving visual narrative accounts of Thomas' life in public art outside of Canterbury. In terms of both the quantity of scenes they contain and their iconographic scope, the windows constitute a notable expansion of imagery devoted to Thomas Becket, which had hitherto focused almost exclusively on the archbishop's murder in 1170.

The visual narratives of Sens and Chartres craft Becket's life as a visual articulation of ecclesiastical authority, particularly in relation to medieval constructions of Church and State and the monarchic obligation to the Church. Though widely divergent in their narrative scope, both windows, one focusing on Becket's pastoral activities, the other on his interactions with Henry II and Louis VII, invoke the archbishop's ecclesiastical position, and particularly his status as contemporary martyr and saint, to promote complementary ideological programs, which find conceptual counterparts in the ecclesiastical reform agenda of Stephen Langton and the political theory of John of Salisbury respectively. These ideological programs are, in each case, interwoven with details of Becket's exile in France that tangibly connect the saint to the two cathedrals in which the windows are located. The Becket windows of Sens and Chartres thus establish a counterpoint between the historical events of Becket's life, and the mythology to which those events gave rise, to construct a compelling visual discourse of ecclesiastical power.

The windows of Angers and Coutances, by contrast, proffer narratives which omit any reference to Louis VII or to Thomas' exile in French royal territory. Rather, these windows share a common emphasis on Thomas' ties to the Angevin Empire, his relationship with Henry II, and various events that transpired within the Anglo-Norman court prior to the archbishop's death. Postcolonial understandings of subversion and hybridity offer a vehicle for investigating the unusual narrative trajectories of these windows, which, I propose, are tied to their occurrence in cathedrals whose episcopal sees, while under French control when the windows were produced, both comprised part of the continental territories ruled by Henry II at the time of Becket's death. In addition, the patrons of these windows, Guillaume de Beaumont, bishop of Angers and Hugh de Morville, bishop of Coutances, both belonged to once-prominent Anglo-Norman families. These connections suggest that the Angers and Coutances Becket windows may have functioned not only as visual documents of religious devotion to St. Thomas' cult, but also as sites of contested political loyalties and conflicted regional identities.

Incorporating these four windows as a comparative case study, this paper explores the ways in which iconographic and rhetorical choices recraft a single narrative subject into four diverse -- even contradictory --stories.

**Valérie Auclair : 'Les transformations narratives de la matière troyenne dans le cycle des peintures murales de la galerie du château d'Oiron. Leurs enjeux esthétiques et politiques'**

Ma communication porte sur le programme iconographique et politique des peintures murales de la galerie du château d'Oiron (près de Poitiers), commandées par Claude Gouffier dans les années 1540. Ces Suvres retracent l'histoire de la guerre de Troie à travers un choix de 13 épisodes dû au concepteur de l'ensemble et à leur commanditaire. La matière troyenne offre une grande variété de combinaisons narratives virtuelles. La trame retenue à Oiron met en valeur certains traits esthétiques et politiques propres au commanditaire Cl. Gouffier.

J'envisage de travailler à partir des deux questions suivantes:

1. Comment le décor de la galerie conditionne-t-il la structure narrative?

L'espace architectural de la galerie et la « lecture » des peintures (ordre du récit/support des images). Le rôle des cadres, de l'emblématique et des cartouches. Les sources iconographiques, le style et les éléments d'homogénéité visuelle.

2. Comment la fonction sociale de la galerie conditionne-t-elle le choix des épisodes?

Exaltation du statut social du commanditaire (par exemple, de nombreuses scènes de batailles à cheval renvoient au fait que Gouffier était grand écuyer). Célébration dynastique à travers l'ajout des aventures d'Enée en conclusion. Analyse conjointe des scènes narratives et de l'emblématique, qui suggère des passages, des échos, entre histoire antique et actualité.

**Claudine Mitchell: 'Units of vision and narrative structures: upon reading Poussin's Manna'**

What is the subject of Poussin's Manna? Is it the narrative of a miracle or rather that of an ordeal? Does it purport to represent the crucial moment when the Israelites recognised the leadership of Moses or the stages that led them to understand the Law of God? As they puzzled over the discrepancies that could be observed between Poussin's representation and established textual sources such as Exodus 16, Poussin's first published critics, Charles Lebrun and the members of the Académie royale de sculpture et peinture in 1667, came to re-think the prevailing notions of time in painting. The conditions of verisimilitude, as much as those of unity in art, seem to require that the events depicted in the painting appear to occur in one moment in time. Yet, as Lebrun came to think, it is not possible to make sense of any action outside a temporal sequence that explains the causes that have brought the event about and intimates its future consequences. Temporality has to be inscribed in the depicted space for the visual narrative to become meaningful.

My paper is concerned with the ways in which the processes of signification in visual narrative operate modalities fundamentally different from those of verbal narrative. Working on the terms of the seventeenth-century debate and its analysis of the relation between meaning and the method of pictorial composition in Poussin's Manna, I shall propose a more general notion. I argue that the intelligibility of the pictorial narrative rests with the capacity units of visual perception have to both define semantic units and embed their syntactic relations in the pictorial space.

**Marianne Cojannot-Le Blanc: 'L'invention du Passage du Rhin. La narration de la guerre de Hollande dans le régime discursif de la Grande Galerie de Versailles'**

La dilution du récit historique en un traitement épique est toujours soulignée à propos du Passage du Rhin de Le Brun dans la Grande galerie de Versailles, par opposition aux traitements précédents du même objet (sur les arcs de Paris, dans l'escalier des ambassadeurs). Elle serait liée à la nécessité d'inventer désormais, pour le plus grand des rois, un langage apologétique inédit. Toutefois, le fonctionnement de ce nouveau langage et le sort réservé à la traditionnelle narration picturale d'un événement historique, encore frais dans les mémoires, méritent d'être étudiés plus attentivement : il s'agira d'analyser la rencontre, à propos de la guerre de Hollande, entre l'insuffisance du modèle d'écriture qu'est l'histoire et l'insuffisance de la temporalité de la peinture d'histoire. J'aimerais m'attarder sur le noeud particulier que constitue, à cet égard, le Passage du Rhin dans l'économie discursive de la Grande Galerie de Versailles, avec la tension tissée au sein de celle-ci entre deux types de temporalité : la première, qui épouse l'ordre du récit de la guerre de Hollande et, de manière très concrète, l'ordre des pas du spectateur, la seconde, qui est censée être, selon les exégètes du Grand Siècle, l'ordre réel de la galerie, celui de son dessein général, qui ne se comprend qu'à partir de la peinture du milieu et rend la narration linéaire et la disposition spatiale caduques.

**Pierre Wachenheim: 'Récit pictural ou « gazette d'une catastrophe » : la peinture d'histoire témoignage de l'événement et de l'accident au XVIIIe siècle'**

Au sein de la critique d'art qui naît en France, autour du Salon de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, à partir de 1747 (La Font de Saint-Yenne, Réflexions sur quelques causes de l'état présent de la peinture en France), se développe un débat particulier concernant la peinture d'histoire. Au-delà de la notion de l'ut pictura poesis, théoriciens, salonniers - dont le plus célèbre, Diderot - et artistes s'interrogent sur les fins du Grand genre, quand des catégories « inférieures » dans la hiérarchie picturale définie au XVIIe siècle - portrait ou scène de genre - rencontrent un important succès public. Alors que le recours à l'allégorie dans la peinture d'histoire est presque unanimement décrié, les artistes, dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle, mettent en scène de nouveaux sujets dans lesquels l'actualité et la narration événementielle prennent une place centrale (citons parmi ces thèmes ceux de l'accident ou de la bienfaisance).

Nous étudierons ainsi l'émergence de ce nouveau goût et nous nous demanderons comment l'artiste peut éviter les deux obstacles qui s'ouvraient à lui selon le peintre-écrivain Dandré-Bardon : « [...] le ridicule de faire sans verve, sans génie la gazette d'une catastrophe, & celui d'en faire le Roman sans vraisemblance, ou l'Histoire sans vérité [...] » (Traité de la Peinture, Paris, 1765).

**Susanna Caviglia : 'La crise de la narration dans la peinture d'histoire en France au XVIIIe siècle'**

Pendant les décennies 1730-1740, la pratique des arts et notamment de la peinture est animée par des grands débats, exacerbés par l'apparition d'une critique d'art au plein sens du terme, laudative mais aussi critique. La peinture d'histoire se trouve alors au centre d'une profonde interrogation de la part des artistes sur ses formes et ses finalités. On y repère un aspect fondamental, traduisant la crise qui affecte le « grand genre » et les remèdes que tentent d'y apporter les peintres : la mise en cause de la narration.

A travers des exemples datant de ces années, la présente communication vise d'abord à analyser les modalités à travers lesquelles celle-ci se manifeste : ainsi la prédilection pour des sujets ou pour une temporalité qui réduisent la part de l'action au sens stricte ; la mise en scène de solutions plastiques qui excluent le mouvement (attitudes de repos ou de présentation) et privilégient l'isolement des figures ; l'hybridation qui s'opère avec d'autres genres de peinture au point de rendre le sujet méconnaissable. On verra ensuite comment ces nouvelles modalités de représentation correspondent à l'affirmation d'un nouvel idéal artistique fondé sur le plaisir à la fois sensible et sensuel à l'Suvre.

**Thomas Baldwin: 'Diderot's Salons: Towards an Obtuseness of Meaning'**

This paper explores Diderot's attempts to hold the painted image within the theoretical limits of narrative unity, imitation, transparent immediacy and self-presence. He is, in fact, only able to do so in theory. In practice, Diderot's descriptions of painted images are not always submissive to these conventions. They do a great deal to disobey them. I enquire how far Diderot's articles on certain history paintings by Pierre and Deshays can be said to offer a conception of the picture as something that successfully reflects or reproduces the real.

In attempting to answer this question, I make use of Roland Barthes's seminal essay on the 'Rhétorique de l'image'. Subsequently, I examine the manner in which Diderot, in spite of his admiration for paintings that are successful in passing themselves off as 'la nature même', regularly undermines his own aesthetic stipulations. In this connection, I bring a further work by Barthes to bear upon Diderot's ekphrasis, namely 'Le troisième Sens', in order to show that while Diderot may celebrate the capacity of the image to produce both stable effects of the real and narrative unity, he nevertheless puts that capacity into question. He describes the image in terms of semantic incompleteness rather than plenitude. Diderot's ekphrasis in the Salons thus supplies a history not only of what Georges Didi-Huberman calls 'des objets réussis et possibles', but also of 'des objets impossibles et impensables'.

**Mark Ledbury: 'Obscurity and Eccentricity in Neo-classical Narrative Painting'**

We are used to the idea that the canonical epic and tragic narrative texts were the main source for painters of the neo-classical generation. But we often forget that these narratives were not handed down pristine but the subject of gloss, digest and revision in many forms by the time painters came to engage with the subjects. My particular interest in this paper will be in what and how painters of the 'Neo-classical generation' read, and by exploring some examples of less well known, even obscure subject matter providing imaginative stimulus for major paintings, I want to explore what we might call the 'interference' of the literary, theatrical and cultural present in the relations between painting and its 'ancient' source text.

**Richard Wrigley: 'Leopold Robert's L'Arrivee des moissonneurs dans la campagne romaine and narratives of displacement and dislocation'**

The paper will locate Robert's painting within narratives of time and place as they are projected onto the historical and imaginative space of the Roman campagna. While Stephen Bann has recently shown how the picture articulates an idea of continuity between contemporary rural society and Antiquity, thereby endowing it with the status of history painting, here the emphasis will be on the relation of the image to the problematic physical condition of the campagna more generally, and how this relates to its historical-symbolic status. In a sense, this is a way of asking what we take narrative to mean when analysing a particular artwork. In this case, we need to acknowledge multiple narratives. Firstly, considering this picture and how its subject should be understood is, of course, a way of reflecting on changes and inclinations in art-historical narrative habits.Secondly, a narrative of quest: Robert claimed that had sought to seek out and celebrate the pristine culture of native Romans as it was to be found in remote sites. Thirdly, what we might call a narrative of representation: how to depict Romans as at once typical and recognisable, within an engaging pictorial narrative, and to do so in a way which, moreover, successfully articulated the artist's identity as author of a 'composition poétique'. Fourthly, how do narratives of historical and seasonal time interact? Finally, how does Robert situate L'Arrivee as part of a suite of images, embracing an overview of Italian life.

**Beth S. Wright: 'Delacroix and 'The Work of the Reader': Pictorial and Graphic Narrative Translation'**

A voracious and insightful reader and an adept author in many genres as well as a brilliant visual artist, Eug»ne Delacroix sought to achieve the full translation of a literary narrative into a visual work. He was fully aware of the challenges that this posed for readers and spectators as well as artists. In his journal entries in 1850 and 1857 he described 'the work of the reader' as a 'pleasant labour' which would be 'fruitful' if the reader could appreciate the author's construction of a narrative arc as well as respond to incidents extrapolated from it. 'I should like to contribute to the teaching of a better way to read great books' Eugène Delacroix wrote in his journal on February 4th 1857, a few weeks after hearing of his election to the Académie on January 10th. By 'reading' Delacroix meant active imaginative participation: not only within an episode but across a narrative. He had noted on January 13th 1857 that, just as 'rivers are moving roads':

Books are portions of moving pictures following one after the other, so that it is impossible to take them all in at once. To grasp the thread that binds them together the reader needs almost as much intelligence as the author.

Thus Delacroix dedicated himself to producing a truly literary art: one which captured the full richness of the narrative's expository arc, its development of character, its foreshadowing of incident as well as extrapolated actions and objects. In my presentation, I shall examine both paintings and graphic works which demonstrate how Delacroix made it possible for reader-spectators to 'grasp the thread that binds & together' more than one episode.

**Peter Cooke: 'Temporality, Reading, and Specificity: French History Painting before and after Lessing's Laokoön'**

Through the analysis of a number of examples, beginning with Nicolas Poussin and ending with Eugène Delacroix, this paper will examine the changing relationships between temporality, the role of the viewer and the specificity of art forms in the theory and practice of French history painting. Using Lessing's Laokoön (1766) as the emblematic and pivotal moment, I will suggest that the key to these shifting relationships lies in the changing role ascribed to the viewer. For Poussin, the viewer was an educated reader who would decipher the textual painting's moral message with the aid of his knowledge and understanding of the biblical or classical story that lay behind its subject. By the time of Delacroix, in contrast, the viewer had become an active and creative participant who used his imagination to complete the narrative suggested by the painting.

Under the pressure of a new understanding of the specificity of the sister arts of painting and poetry, developed persuasively by Lessing, the action time of painting, abandoning the Poussinian system of peripéties, became restricted to the 'pregnant moment', in accordance with the 'spatial' nature of the visual arts. Yet, as action time contracted, the subjective temporality of painting expanded into the limitless space of the beholder's imagination. A new form of pictorial narrative was thereby developed, relying as much on what was unseen, on what lay beyond the boundaries of the visual image, as on what was depicted within them. At the same time, textual authority gave way to the interpretative freedom of the viewer.

**Scott S. Allan: '"Tyrannical Inopportunity": Anti-Narrative Strategies in the Art of Gustave Moreau'**

In his painting's fixation upon immobile, hieratic figure types, dense accretions of ornament, and free experimentation with colour and facture, Gustave Moreau elaborated a pictorialist poetics that was determinedly anti-theatrical and anti-narrative in focus and that anticipated certain key tenets of later Symbolist art and theory. As has become increasingly recognized, Moreau's eccentric pictorial strategies emerged from the mid-nineteenth-century crisis in history painting, a genre widely felt to be moribund, and, more specifically, from his frustration with the French academic model of the narrative tableau as he inherited it from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The paper will first detail and contextualize Moreau's passionate theoretical critique of the academic tableau, particularly its codified rhetoric of pose and expression and its dicta for a unified narrative and visual ensemble, and then look to the wide-ranging art-historical precedents that Moreau actively called upon to authorize his critique. Paradoxically, it was in Moreau's profoundly conservative, quasi-religious reverence for tradition, evident in the assiduous studies he made in Italy during the late 1850s, that he alighted upon the heterodox anti-narrative strategies that he would gradually pursue in his own art, outside the academic pale.

**Nina Lübbren: 'Eloquent objects: Gérôme and the art of inanimate narration'**

Inanimate objects are mute but they become eloquent when they are made to tell stories. Non-sentient things that tell stories are clues. A clue is in effect an object that generates narrative. The object does so in concert with other clues; it needs to be set in a relationship with other signifying objects to become part of a cohesive narrative pattern.

Drawing on narratology, 'thing theory', and the history and theory of detective fiction, this paper uses Gérôme's Death of Caesar (1867) as a paradigmatic representative of what I argue was a new, peculiarly nineteenth-century artistic mode: the mode of inanimate narration. Gérôme was one of this mode's principal exponents, alongside contemporaries like Laurens and Piloty. In these artists' paintings, objects are transformed from elements of still-life into clues, and this is how these pictures differ fundamentally in their narrative strategies from works done within the earlier, academic tradition of telling stories exclusively through human figures and their codified poses, gestures and facial expressions.

Paintings using objects for narrative purposes address their viewers as detectives. Spectators are asked to be active participants in the story-telling process by piecing together the fabula (what happened here?) from the syuzhet (the visible clues dispersed across the canvas). Narrative painting parallels a more general fascination with the role of clues in the detection of crime. Contemporary developments in forensic investigation shifted from a practice dependent on confession to one focused on clues and circumstantial evidence. Popular interest in this shift is expressed in the emergent genre of detective fiction. Indeed, painting does more than parallel this interest: the pictures by Gérôme and others pioneered story-telling strategies that were not exploited in text-based fiction until the era of classic detective stories in the 1920s.

**John House: 'Reading Fashionable Genre Paintings'**

This talk will examine the various narrative devices used by the painters of fashionable genre scenes during the 1860s (especially Alfred Stevens and Auguste Toulmouche), focusing on the differing ways in which their paintings were interpreted by critics and the different types of value attributed to them. A brief comparison with the work of Manet and his circle will place these issues in a wider context.

**Pierre Sérié : 'Vers une « mise en scène » du tableau d'histoire, le grand genre hypnotisé par le drame (1860-1900)'**

Un questionnement semble coaliser les peintres d'histoire de la génération 1825 : le sentiment d'avoir atteint un point de rupture entre dramatique (la narration) et plastique (l'arabesque). Qu'ils tâchent de canaliser ce débordement du sujet sur la perfection formelle -- Cabanel -- feignent de l'ignorer -- Bouguereau -- ou s'engagent dans un processus de délégitimation de la narration -- Moreau --, tous répondent à leur manière au tour théâtral donné au grand genre par Gérôme. En partant d'exemples précis de tableaux exposés au Salon entre 1860 et 1900, notre propos visera à analyser les ressorts de cette conception nouvelle de la peinture à histoire d'un point de vue formel (accélération de la lecture de l'image qui peut désormais être perçue instantanément par le spectateur ; neutralisation du drame, en sorte que cette « théâtralité » ne soit précisément pas reçue par le spectateur comme telle, mais que, tout au contraire, elle lui semble naturelle), mais aussi quant au fond (décentrement de l'action en amont ou en aval, définissant des spatialités ou des temporalités nouvelles : soit le récit est suspendu et le drame se joue hors du champ du tableau dilatant son espace visuel par la sollicitation de l'imaginaire du spectateur, soit il est terminé, mais alors c'est le temps lui-même qui est dilaté). Rappelons que c'est en regard de cette peinture d'histoire-là (celle de Gérôme, Laurens, Rochegrosse) que la critique a forgé l'épithète de « pompier », tournant en dérision tous ceux qui -- Moreau excepté -- ne souscrivaient pas à cette nouvelle manière. La force de persuasion des tableaux ainsi produits était seule de nature à rivaliser avec les autres formes de production visuelle de leur temps (spectacles de l'Opéra, des théâtres du boulevard, panoramas).

**Belinda Thomson: 'Narrative and Non-narrative in the Art of Paul Gauguin'**

Approaching this paper from the context of preparations for an exhibition exploring Gauguin's narrative strategies (Gauguin: Maker of Myth, Tate Modern, London, Sept. 30 2010 - Jan. 16 2011; National Gallery of Art, Washington, Feb. 21 - May 30 2011), I will take the opportunity to look at some specific ways in which the work of art's potential for telling a story was both exploited and blocked by Gauguin.

Despite emerging from within an artistic movement that generally sought to minimise art's anecdotal, literary and narrative aspects, Gauguin's refusal to entirely forego narrative content was one of his chief defining characteristics as an artist. His highly considered use of titles will be examined and, in particular, the ways in which he foregrounded words and made them play an active role in his imagery. The paper will explore Gauguin's use of enigmatic tags and questions, as well as his practice of inscribing onto a canvas Maori words that would clearly not be understood by his French audience. Was this just one instance of the various blocking tactics he deployed in order to deny his viewers an overly legible narrative? Some possible reasons will be offered for these intrusions of the 'literary' into Gauguin's evolving practice and their effects on his art's reception.

**Jean-Baptiste Chantoiseau: 'Vers un art épuisé ? De l'énervement figuratif (fin XIXe) au vide symbolique dans la peinture contemporaine (XXe)'**

Vidéos scandaleuses du groupe chinois Cadavre mettant en scène des fStus et des vieillards trépassés ; exposition « Our Body, A corps ouvert » interdite en France en 2009 pour son détournement, à des fins commerciales, de corps et d'organes humains conservés par imprégnation polymérique ; cadavres plastinés de Günther von Hagens : longue est la liste des transgressions cruelles et perverses de notre temps portant atteinte à la chair même. A tel point que pour Michel Thévoz, on assiste aujourd'hui à un fait inédit dans l'histoire de l'art : « la désactivation de la mort elle-même en tant que sanction symbolique ».

Comment en est-on arrivé là ? S'agit-il d'un point de non-retour ? Une enquête picturale s'impose. Elle commencera par l'étude d'Suvres de la fin du XIXe siècle témoignant d'une tentative d'épuisement narratif et figuratif, à l'instar des Enervés de Jumièges (1880) de Evariste Vital Luminais. Un tel désenchantement s'est vu relayé par un éclatement du cadre symbolique qui a structuré la représentation picturale pendant plusieurs siècles (Annonciations, Vierges à l'Enfant, Crucifixions...). Le Grand chambardement (1893) de Henry de Groux illustre de façon exemplaire ce changement de paradigme.

Le modèle aristotélicien sort bouleversé d'un tel traitement : cause finale agonisante, cause formelle attaquée : ne reste plus que la cause matérielle et la cause motrice ; d'où un art débordant de matériaux et de savoir-faire mais ayant perdu son signifiant et brouillé son signifié. Cette configuration nouvelle, mise en place à la fin du XIXe siècle, va hanter l'art du XXe siècle. Les Suvres fortes de ce temps semblent dès lors celles qui savent mettre en abyme un tel tragique contemporain pour mieux en jouer : ainsi, de manière non limitative et dans des registres fort distincts, Salvador Dali, Francis Bacon et Vassily Kandinski.

**Silvia Loreti: 'The Space of Time in Inter-War French Painting'**

In the history of modernism, narrative has been made to play the role of nemesis. Crossing boundaries between time and space and moving beyond medium specificity, narrative has been condemned as anti-modernist and traditionalist. In particular, neoclassical narrative figuration in the work of inter-war avant-garde artists has been considered as a reinforcement of conservative values supporting the nationalist politics of the period.

Narrative, however, has also proved to be a useful tool in deconstructing fixed notions of a transcendent classicism. To this effect, narrative has been used to lift the taint of political conservatism from the works of those artists for whom the return to figuration has been felt not as a break with but as a variation on their avant-garde activity. In this context, classical sources have been considered in terms of transient and lived experience, emphasising the passing of time and the changing of values. Picasso's neoclassical production is a case in point, his use of classical antiquity in the 1920s and 1930s having been read as the result of psychic reactions to his own life circumstances, and against claims of his involvement in the political appropriation of classical culture at the time.

Focusing on Picasso, this paper argues for a broader agenda of narrative figuration in the inter-war years. Considering neoclassical painting as a privileged site for the representation of diachronic time, I will argue that neoclassical and neo-traditionalist painting was for avant-garde artists a means of evasion from the restrictions imposed by 'transcendent' teleologies of modern art. As well as analysing neoclassical painting according to classical theories of painting, this paper will examine the notion of pastiche as the neoclassical equivalent of modernist collage.