

## Visual History: The Past in Pictures

### Introduction

IN 1770, A PAINTING RECORDED history and in doing so made history (fig. 1). *The Death of General Wolfe*, by the Anglo-American artist Benjamin West (1738–1820), portrayed events that had taken place eleven years earlier: Major-General James Wolfe’s death in September 1759 after having led the British forces to victory over the French at the Battle of Quebec. By the time West created his painting, the events and the man were well known to publics on both sides of the Atlantic. Wolfe had become a hero whose military victory and tragic demise had been copiously commemorated through poems, songs, painted and sculpted portraits, memorial monuments, numerous prints, and paintings. Though West’s painting did not tell a new story—the anecdote’s very familiarity was what drove him to portray the subject—it did tell that story in a new way.<sup>1</sup>

West’s large canvas outdid previous representations of the event and became a sensation, largely for something that would today be utterly unremarkable: it depicted the military hero in contemporary dress rather than in the classicizing garb then considered appropriate for the portrayal of great men and great deeds. While West adhered to many of the conventions of history painting—the large format, the battle condensed into symbols of its start and finish, the improbably melodramatic scene of the senior officers gathered around Wolfe positioned as if he were a Christ in lamentation—the depiction also departed from tradition in showing Wolfe as a contemporary man dressed in a recognizable scarlet military uniform, his red hair tousled. Such elements provided an eyewitness and reportorial dimension to the depiction, with explicit details of time and place, as did the inclusion of a Native American man kneeling in the foreground gazing at the dying general. West declared that his intention had been to act as a “historian,” recording “the facts of the transaction” and marking “the date, the place,

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**ABSTRACT** This essay defines the category of “visual history” and introduces its operations across the essays included in this special issue. It proposes that such narratives accelerated time in cultures where it became increasingly common to traverse spatial distances. In this way, visual histories are not simply guides to the times, but guides to time itself. REPRESENTATIONS 145. Winter 2019 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 1–31. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/REP.2019.145.1.1>.



FIGURE 1. Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 × 214.5 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. National Trust Photo Library/Art Resource, New York.

and the parties engaged in the event.”<sup>2</sup> To the annoyance of his colleagues, West would come to believe that “it was he who had immortalized Wolfe, not Wolfe who had immortalized him.”<sup>3</sup>

*The Death of General Wolfe* stirred some controversy and provoked great admiration at the time, proving to be a major coup for the artist. The painting’s success, based on both its subject matter and its innovative approach, spurred further reproduction, multiplication, and circulation in several media. West received commissions for other painted versions of the original canvas, including one for the king himself. The artist personally oversaw the creation of a reproductive engraving by the renowned printer William Woollett, which has been described as “one of the most commercially successful prints ever published.”<sup>4</sup> The engraving’s popularity led enterprising printers in Britain and across Europe to create pirated editions, the sure mark of success at the time. Versions of West’s painting also appeared on a wide range of consumer goods, among them textiles, a Wedgwood ceramic jug, a porcelain figurine, and a cup made from the same

material. The reproduction of West's *Wolfe* in such a variety of formats suggests both the growing desire for images of the past and the adaptability of a picture such as West's in a particular and burgeoning commercial culture. Perhaps most significantly, such variety may have contributed to producing new forms of historical consciousness rather than merely embodying or representing ones that already existed in the broader culture at large. West's depiction became a media sensation not simply for its content but also because it gave shape to a new vision of history.

The impact of West's depiction of the past had long reverberations. Seeing the painting upon its completion, Sir Joshua Reynolds reportedly declared that it would "occasion a revolution in art."<sup>5</sup> This idea was revived and amplified in the 1930s by the art historian Edgar Wind, who suggested that West had launched a "revolution in history painting" by transforming not only the representation of the protagonists and events of history but also the very way in which the past could be conceptualized, thus marking a momentous shift in historical consciousness. Furthermore, Wind considered that the painting's handling of time related to its treatment of place: it connected the "when" and "where" of history. Whereas previous works had depicted and understood historical events as temporally distant, the painting collapsed time and extended geographical space by setting history far away rather than by setting it in a moment that appeared to be long ago.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, we would add, the painting elevated the recent past into "instant history," blurring distinctions between eyewitnessing, news, and the past. Whether or not this was the first painting to visualize history in a contemporary manner, Wind's larger point is the one we seek to stress.<sup>7</sup> The painting is not only a historical artifact and a depiction of historical events; it is also an articulation of ideas about the past and notions of time as well as an agent for transmitting that particular concept of history. In other words, it is a source for the study of the history of representation, of the past more generally, and of conceptions of historicity (pastness) and temporality. As we discuss later in this essay, such methodological and historiographical insights have been developed by other scholars, including Reinhart Koselleck, who also turned to the eighteenth century as a pivotal moment in the history of historical consciousness and found paintings remarkably useful artifacts for understanding such consciousness, but who envisioned such depictions as ways of containing and reflecting meaning rather than sites for generating it.

West's canvas belongs to an established artistic genre, history painting. We suggest that it also is part of an established, though little-recognized, genre we term "visual history": a pictorial account of the past. Visual histories can take many forms: they can be paintings, tapestries, prints, comics, photographs, films, documentaries, docudramas, and so on. They often

exist in multiple incarnations, circulating across media. They can be figurative or abstract, as is the case, for instance, with the timeline, a type of visual history fruitfully investigated by Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton.<sup>8</sup> Visual histories expand our source base, contributing new data regarding the past as well as advancing complex interpretations of a given event or person.<sup>9</sup> They open up methodological possibilities such as what Hayden White termed “historiophoty,” the scholarly investigation that uses images as historical sources and also serves as the form of historical interpretation and narration. And they illuminate how image-based history shaped notions of the past and temporal consciousness among both historical subjects and scholars. Beginning with the notion that, as art historian Horst Bredekamp put it, “images do not derive from reality” but rather “are a form of its condition,” the essays in this issue analyze the particular epistemological, ontological, and phenomenological characteristics of visual history as a genre in order to consider the way temporal consciousness has been made in and by images.<sup>10</sup>

This essay and the ones that follow focus on the production and reception of visual histories in the Western tradition since 1450, in part because we believe they played an important role in its history in connection with major transformations such as geographic and economic expansion, imperialism, capitalism, and the global circulation of information through reproducible media from the printing press to photography, film, and digital media. As such, the rise and spread of visual history has an important legacy for contemporary culture. We see the news more than we read it; historical fictions and documentaries play on screens small and large to enormous audiences; new museums dedicated to national and world heritage exhibit the past and visualize historical narratives primarily through combinations of objects and images. The essays here, taken together, also offer a centuries-long trajectory of visual history; one that has been variously embraced, ignored, and challenged by different audiences. There is little doubt that the contemporary digital-image revolution makes us now, more than ever, both able to see the long life of visual history and curious about its workings.

In proposing and exploring the notion of visual history, we contribute to what Bredekamp has called the “neglected tradition” of *Bildwissenschaft*: the study of images in the broadest sense, addressing all pictures and formats across categories such as fine art, popular or folk art, and nonart.<sup>11</sup> Thus we use the terms *picture* and *image* interchangeably and consider “visual” in as comprehensive a way as possible. What is central to our approach is the belief that images not only reflect or provide access to a period’s views but also actively participate in creating those views in the first place—that, as W. J. T. Mitchell puts it, quoting the philosopher Nelson Goodman, pictures are “‘ways of worldmaking,’ not just world mirroring.”<sup>12</sup> As the essays here

suggest, the history of images has an impact on the making of other images, which itself constitutes a valuable record of people's past actions in the world. Additionally, the essays investigate how images shape meaningful change rather than embodying, containing, or reflecting changes that happen elsewhere—in politics and economics, for example. Other scholars who have embraced the idea that images make history have studied such subjects as iconoclasm or the uses of images in revolutionary politics, as these seemed like clear and stark examples of the power of images.<sup>13</sup> But, as in the case of West's painting, if we consider that canvas as a form of visual history, we can see it simultaneously as an instance of past visual evidence and as an active creator of the terms by which viewers came to understand pastness.<sup>14</sup> Visual history is thus particularly important because it suggests that images have shaped how people lived in earlier times as much as they can be used to address other issues that concern students of the past, among them evidence and truth claims, the organization and presentation of knowledge and information, and—our focus here—temporality and the experience of spatial and temporal distance.<sup>15</sup>

In this essay we trace the development of visual history since the advent of print, relating it to the rise of European expansion and early global interaction, noting that these key developments were part of what gave greater epistemological force to the relation between pictures and knowledge. We define the category of “visual history” and its operations, identifying its narrative forms and genres to suggest that they shaped collective social action and consciousness regarding what people in the past thought images could do and especially how images produced changing experiences of time. We also ask whether the production of visual histories contributed to speeding up the pace of lived experience as well as whether the pictorial depiction of such “true events” collapsed the temporal distance between the past and the present on which certain “modern” ideas of history have come to rely. We propose that one of the impacts of visual history is that such narratives appeared to use images to accelerate time in cultures where it became increasingly common to traverse spatial distances. In this way, visual histories are not simply guides to the times, but guides to time. They also worked as key means through which audiences could create and sustain new social relations, which included new ideas regarding time and space. Visual histories are important because they are some of the most potent records and expressions of time and temporal consciousness we have, as well as some of the least analyzed. Whether in timelines or in wax tableaux, in lithographs or magic-lantern shows, visual histories allow us to investigate what the past looked like at various points, how picturing the past has shaped us, how these visions will guide us into the future, or whether such temporal distinctions are still useful and operative.

## Images and Their Historians

In many ways, our project returns to the long tradition of visual scholarship investigated by the British scholar Francis Haskell, recast through the lens of *Bildwissenschaft*. Haskell took up the question of the past in images in an enormous and magisterial study, *History and Its Images* (1993). He turned to earlier times, motivated in part by the changes wrought by modern media in his own era, especially the notion that photography naturalized the idea that images served documentary purposes (now a dated way of thinking about photography). Inspired by Arnaldo Momigliano's work on early modern antiquarians and their use of images and objects as historical sources, Haskell showed that, from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, scholars routinely turned to sources such as coins, portraits, medals, busts, frescoes on church walls, illuminated manuscripts, and prints to investigate the past.<sup>16</sup> Haskell concluded his study with an analysis of the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga's methods and his monumental work, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919), demonstrating the robustness of the practice of visual history into the early twentieth century. But Haskell also noted the method's limitations and remained ambivalent, if not downright skeptical, regarding the use of images as historical sources based on a position that suspected the image of always being tarred by a point of view, rather than capturing the past as it "actually happened," to paraphrase Leopold von Ranke. Writing at a time when the historical profession had for the most part ceased to focus on visual materials because historians and art historians had divided their labors, Haskell suggested that scholars of the past had always turned to images to determine general patterns of culture, looking for such things as the character of an age, signs of decline, or evidence of change. Among those historians Haskell considered foundational, such giants as both Jacob Burckhardt and Huizinga famously singled out the influence of the visual arts (especially architecture, painting, and sculpture) as extremely meaningful manifestations of societies past. They understood the visual arts as representing especially sensitive probes by which those interested in the past might not only gauge the "timeliness" of a moment (its *Zeitgeist*) but also point to the human creations that achieved immortality and, in so doing, transcended their own moment by saying something relevant for all time.<sup>17</sup>

The distinctions between general history and the history of art were especially irrelevant to Burckhardt and Huizinga. When Ranke, "the founder of modern history" and Burckhardt's teacher, recommended Burckhardt for a university position in Munich, he emphasized that his student was as much a historian of art as a historian.<sup>18</sup> Burckhardt knew the Renaissance by its images as well as its statecraft, and described the latter rather

famously as “a work of art.” He even envisioned the historical enterprise in pictorial terms: “To each eye, perhaps, the outlines of a given civilization present a different picture.”<sup>19</sup> Burkhardt’s versatility was not simply proof of his many talents. He was a historian of the image rather than a historian of art and adopted this position (if not the locution) before Aby Warburg labeled himself as such in the midst of World War I, a generation after the fields of history and art history had begun to diverge in the German context.<sup>20</sup> Warburg declared that pictures were the “nervous organs of perception of the contemporary internal and external life.”<sup>21</sup> While Burkhardt’s “picturing” was primarily metaphoric, Warburg attempted to transition from a textual to a visual method of both knowing and narrating the past in his famous and ill-fated *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a massive collection of reproductions of images and objects from the past which he arranged according to patterns he considered laden with meaning (fig. 2). Warburg was unable to fully realize his method, which, as developed in a radically modified way by Ernst Gombrich, became iconology—for decades a dominant art historical methodology.<sup>22</sup>

It is surely time to revisit and extend the visual investigation of the past, whose history and methods Haskell took up. Like so many others who have considered historians and their methods, Haskell avoided the sticky business of looking at recent historians and recent media forms. Bredekamp, in his formulation of art history’s conscious amnesia regarding “picture studies” (*Bildwissenschaft*) and “picture history” (*Bildgeschichte*), identified the field’s failure to incorporate the history of modern media such as photography and film, despite the fact that the development of the history of art had relied on using them to advance knowledge about painting, sculpture, and architecture. This is certainly an important observation, and Haskell’s study exemplifies the problem. But, as William Ivens showed in *Prints and Visual Communication* (1953), many of the issues that scholars have linked to photographic reproducibility emerged with the introduction of print in Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, issues often considered specific to photography and film were already at work in other media, such as painting—for instance, the semblance of existing in an endless now that can only witness the present but not transmit the past. The key issue concerning *Bildwissenschaft* for our study, then, is neither medium nor mode of representation, but rather the circulation of multiple copies of ostensibly identical reproductions of an image. It is to this circulation of images as much as their indexicality (despite the seeming importance of clues) that historians interested in documenting truth and evidence from the past must attend. Every picture made is a truth that acts in and on the world, and thus its status as an indexical form of representation is not more significant than the fact that a copy (exact or inexact) circulates.



FIGURE 2. a–c. Photographs of panels 19, 45, and 46, respectively, from Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*. © The Warburg Institute, London.

At the time he was writing, Ivins, a generation older than Haskell, was driven to lay down a genealogy for the development of photography because he believed that what it shared with print was the capacity to transmit the same information in many copies. We are less interested in a progressive history of the development of media than he was. Instead, we are interested in what unites Ivins and Haskell, their engagement with figurative representation and the fact that, whatever their medium and mode, the images with which they were preoccupied functioned primarily as forms of visual information, whether they were elaborate allegories or simple photographs. Both men were engaged in writing a sort of picture history that begins with the



idea that images are informational and communicative, whether they are news, scientific, or fine art images.

To insist on visual history as we do here is not simply a methodological proposition, as Haskell posed it. Without needlessly isolating images, we ask whether there is something about pastness and our notions of temporality that only images construct. Although we examine visual history in the West since 1450, we expect there are and have been established practices of visual history in other periods and traditions and aim to spur specialists to investigate visual history in other regions and times to develop the promise of this approach more fully. We do not look at images for evidence of something else; nor do we consider them within the history of art for changes in form over time in order to either match them against a more general historical framework or to a more tightly drawn internal narrative of art making. Instead, we believe that images are historical actors and agents that make history. As key elements in systems of human communication, they have helped constitute such systems across human societies. The *transcription* and translation of the present into an eventual visual record of the past and the depiction of the past and pictorialization of pastness, we suggest, are among the most powerful legacies of the human enterprise.

### **What Is Visual History and How Does it Work?**

While all images at some point become remnants of the past, we use the phrase “visual history” to name those images that were consciously created or repurposed with an eye to capturing the past, which may involve an event or, more broadly, a given culture’s sense of time, of heritage, or of something in the present or near past that is expected to become of historical significance at some point in the future.<sup>24</sup> This broad definition of the past encompasses but also goes beyond what is normally meant by history. Visual history can be constituted through a single image or by multiple images in a series working together. There are varieties of visual history—illustrated history, history painting, the epic film, to name a few—all of which are defined simultaneously by the medium in which they are transmitted as well as by the notion of history they convey.

A visual history can capture the past with greater or lesser fidelity, as is the case with verbal history. While one can evaluate a particular visual history, dwelling on the facticity of images as a category is not the key issue. The Native American included in West’s *Death of General Wolfe* probably did not actually attend to the dying general; a photograph can be altered to purge a person who was originally in the image but later deemed unacceptable;

a film character may be a composite based on multiple historical figures. In other words, visual histories may be more or less accurate; what they transmit may be more or less intelligible and appealing to viewers who are situated elsewhere temporally or chronologically; they may belong to different genres that have different conventions, strengths, and weaknesses. But they are still visual history, and their production and dissemination is a form of historical knowledge formation as is their study over time.

In his influential *Metahistory*, Hayden White identified the “employment” of the past, showing how central a role generic convention played in shaping historical narratives. White historicized the codes of historiography along the lines of literary genres. His position constituted a postmodern turn in historiography; it suggested that history would become a study of the construction of the rhetoric of the past about the past. Later, White raised the possibility of writing the past in and through images. He left open the question of what the generic and rhetorical equivalents regarding visual materials would be and whether they were necessarily narrative in the same way written verbal historiography had been.<sup>25</sup> Our project in some way takes up the challenge of considering White’s historiophoty with a divergent aim and several caveats. We diverge from his agenda because we believe that we can still “write” history in the process of gathering knowledge regarding its construction. Our goal is not to end in deconstruction or rhetoric (verbal or visual) but to see more clearly how images have acted on the world and shaped our past and our sense of it. In this sense, visual history is one approach to studying the agency and power of images and “image acts.”<sup>26</sup>

The concept of visual history opens up the question of whether history must necessarily structure the past as a narrative. Visual history genres have developed their own conventions, which evolve in relation to new technologies of representation as well as through such factors as new modes of transportation that facilitate the distribution of images and have a major impact on their reception. The essays here explore some of the ways in which visual histories have presented the past. One major mode is the collection. Images often travel in packs, as assemblages in which they echo and augment one another to produce coherent though nonlinear or non-narrative stories. Thus, in his essay in this volume, Aaron Rich describes Hollywood’s manner of accumulating vast collections composed of hundreds of images in different media that provide specific details about the ancient past. Randall Meissen shows how, in sixteenth-century Seville, local history was constructed by creating an album with portraits of individuals that, together, became the faces of the city’s past and present achievements and offered a view to the future. And Evonne Levy’s analysis of the transmedial sequence of images that allowed early modern viewers to virtually

witness a distilled, condensed experience of the Council of Trent suggests that visual history often operates serially and in multiples, even when not conceived as a collection. For Susan Siegfried, the massive numbers of prints amassed by eighteenth-century collectors spurred the development of visual histories as compilations, freeing images from their earlier subservience to written narratives and allowing them to become the historical content rather than its illustration. And, in his study of collections of “picturesque views,” Allan Doyle suggests that the very transportability of the lithographic medium worked to denote a form of temporal transportability, such that time moved outside the linear narrative of history that we associate with lithography’s emergence in the postrevolutionary era.

Visualization of the past takes on new forms with new tools. The mound or pile becomes an operative form as Billie Melman’s essay about the early twentieth-century excavation of Ur suggests. The layered strata of ancient ruins uncovered by Ur’s archaeologists provide a model of the past in which history accumulates, and is subsequently also unearthed, with tools dedicated to rendering visible that which is hidden from sight. Melman’s essay, which concerns the excavation of antiquities, posits the relation of visual culture to material culture, suggesting that, rather than constituting separate realms, they are two parts of a whole. Many visual histories combine two- and three-dimensional objects, especially in their exhibition; many physical sites that one could imagine as material culture also exist as visual histories.<sup>27</sup> Focusing on the image does not exclude the material dimension of the past, nor does it mean that visual history does not involve objects. The visual is embodied, whether in the mind or outside it, and thus is part of material culture. Put simply, images are things that take on different shapes—West’s *General Wolfe* existed as a painting, a print, a jug, and so on. While there certainly are distinctions between media, and dimensionality and scale are significant, it is not necessary to choose between the image and the object.

Several tentative generalizations regarding the operations of visual history from 1450 onwards in the West can guide further inquiry and also highlight why such visual histories matter. In the early modern West, the rise of eyewitnessing as a privileged form of knowledge, combined with the spread of print and increased geographic circulation, created new needs and, in turn, new opportunities for images to matter.<sup>28</sup> As embodiments of visual facts, images could be relayed; many eyes could look at the same thing. Photography came to play a pivotal role over the last two centuries because its indexicality stood as proof of the literal and on-the-spot presence of the photographer. Images allowed viewers to collapse geographical distance, to see with their own eyes what was far away; they also made it possible to travel in time, to experience visually and in a sense firsthand an event from the past.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the increasing centrality of images as forms of experience

also suggests that what could be known became stabilized and transmitted as a condition of past visibility as much as what was orally narrated and subsequently written. The more places one experienced, the more such images had a purpose. Reproduction through print did not just disseminate more of the same image, a key point often made regarding the standardization of knowledge, but also facilitated the creation of more images that were then distributed to many more people. It has been suggested that better roads enabled improved image distribution, but why not ask whether the opposite is true, whether roads and postal systems were built to deliver pictures?<sup>30</sup>

Visual histories tend to condense many moments into summary ones and to use mechanisms of graphic simplification as storytelling devices. These features derive from what images have the capacity to do more generally, but they have a particular impact on making meaning from the past. In the West painting, rather than witnessing the entire unfolding of the conflict, we see moments of smoky battle in the background and the dramatic highlight of Wolfe's death in the foreground. Visual histories have the power, on the one hand, to let potent and meaningful symbols that are charged with collective meaning speak figuratively and symbolically, such as the Native American in the West painting, who may not have been at the death but whose presence still has historical significance. On the other hand, depending on the medium in which they are conveyed, visual histories often create composite events and characters in order to fit into a format (two hours for a theatrical film, the space of a wall for a tapestry or a mural). Often, both the symbolic and the composite operate simultaneously. Image makers also engage in residual representational practices. For example, Wolfe may have been dressed in contemporary uniform, but his bodily position as a martyr is allegorically meaningful as a reference to a more than thousand-year-old practice of depictions of Jesus Christ. Such condensation and simplification have rhetorical power. It is as if the past becomes a reel of highlights, a series of crescendos. Rather than exhaust us with the interminable minutiae of what really happened, the blow-by-blow visual history selects captivating fragments and seems to externalize in a montage the sorts of images that come to us unconsciously in dreams.

The interpretation of visual history requires methods and practices analogous but not identical to those needed for textual analysis. Looking at and seeing an image is not the same as reading. It is an examination that happens through a kind of scanning rather than an act of sequenced, linear reading. Images can invite a variety of "looking times"—long, slow, quick, and so on. Learning the pace and cues of the time of past looking, as well as of a given format, is difficult and is as much of what it means to achieve a "period eye" as knowing what colors denoted an expensive or exotic material.<sup>31</sup> And, of course, many visual histories combine to form narratives

in words and images—think of text in paintings or prints, of comics, of murals—and this demands yet another variety of thick and engaged looking.

Media always inhabit two landscapes: one diachronic and the other synchronic. Aside from understanding the development of any particular form over time, it is essential to see how media work together. They can overlap, mixing in transmedial circuits. At times, one form or format emerges in peculiar or important ways. For example, technologies like film and the internet were clearly major watersheds in the history of images, which also realigned relations between media and integrated older media within them. Intermediality is not a modern condition, as we have seen with West's painting of General Wolfe.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, we believe that the format of images, and thus the context of their circulation and the material conditions of their production and display, shape genre and narrative capacity. Only the careful consideration of the multiple variables in play—what was history; how did images work; what were the technologies and the social, economic, and political stakes at any given moment—can determine which formats combine or do not combine to construct visual histories and whether such histories embed older narratives, adapting them in new formats.

Furthermore, media did not simply record past events; they intervened in shaping them as well. Among the essays that follow, for example, Susan Siegfried's points to the ways in which, in eighteenth-century France, private collections of prints depicting recent subjects not only reflected but also guided historical thought. These visual histories, Siegfried suggests, became the basis of a new kind of historical interpretation. Pictures not only showed what happened; they made things happen because the possibility of being pictured led people to behave in certain ways. Art historian Ulrich Keller has argued that, a century later, photography had trained "historical actors to produce visual drama."<sup>33</sup> At the same time, it would be a mistake to overstate the way life becomes contrived simply to be pictured for posterity. In fact, once people started staging events for the camera, the idea of capturing contingency became newly important. Amateur images, like the home movie by Abraham Zapruder that became the iconic visual record of the Kennedy assassination or, more recently, camera-phone images, become endowed with the mark of authenticity. In sum, media are not mere containers, pathways, or conduits; they also direct the content by the shape they take.

### Time and the Wandering Image

Visual history prompts us to consider how images *keep time* and how they have contributed to shaping temporality more generally, not just how time is or was perceived but also how images shape that perception.



FIGURE 3. Albrecht Altdorfer, *The Battle of Alexander at Issus*, 1529, limewood panel, 158.4 × 120.3 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

Indeed, we find the ways in which images bring up questions of history and time, including the pace and speed of experience, to be one of the most intriguing and productive aspects of our investigation of visual history, as well as one of the most complex. Pictures operate differently from words as vessels for capturing and communicating time; they keep time their own way. This unique operation of images merits scholarly attention, both to determine how to use images effectively as historical sources and to detect what new insights they can provide regarding the conceptualization and

operation of historical time at a given moment, in a given place. In what follows, we investigate some of the specific ways in which visual histories manifest notions of historicity and temporality. Images, we suggest, not only depict but also inform, concretize, and give shape to a period's sense of temporal specificity and differentiation. They indicate and mark how, at a given point in time, people understood temporality and historicity; they also contribute to changing that understanding and are central to how temporality and historicity are experienced by those people and subsequent interpreters.<sup>34</sup>

As we have noted, many scholars who have examined changing ideas about the past and studied periodization—the shift from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance or from early modernity to modernity—have repeatedly turned to pictorial sources to locate and map that shift. This is true of Burkhardt, Walter Benjamin, Huizinga, and many others. Koselleck argued in his influential “Modernity and the Planes of Historicity” that changing ideas of temporality played a central role in the emergence of modernity. He traced a shift from notions of history based on early modern Christian eschatology to a modern understanding of the relationship between the past, present, and future, with the upheaval of the French Revolution and its aftermath providing the rupture that marked the change.<sup>35</sup> It is no accident, we believe, that the essay opens with a detailed analysis of a painted history, Albrecht Altdorfer's *The Battle of Alexander at Issus* (1529), which depicts Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persian army in 333 BCE (fig. 3). Koselleck investigates this work as a source of evidence for how different periods saw and understood the pastness of different points in time in relation to their own. It is instructive to examine Koselleck's use of this painting in detail, as an instance of the potential interpretive richness that visual histories have for historians and of the need to approach them on their own terms, with both a theory of the image and an interpretive method so as not to miss the complex time-travel that pictures engage in.

Koselleck sees in Altdorfer's panel an expression of sixteenth-century ideas about temporality and history. He notes Altdorfer's commitment to what he terms “accuracy,” noting that the artist collaborated with a historian who had himself consulted an ancient source to establish the exact number of men engaged in the depicted battle. But, Koselleck believes, not all facts mattered equally to the painter. Koselleck detects two modes of what he terms “anachronism” at work in the painting. First, he tells us, Altdorfer compressed time, presenting in a single image events that took place over the course of hours or days—while aiming for exactitude in painting *what* happened, the artist created a fictional extended time in his presentation of *when* it happened. Koselleck relates this approach to the sixteenth-century understanding of the German word *Historie*, which

meant both “image” and “narrative [*Geschichte*].” In other words, the anachronism implied in the temporal compression arose from a period notion of both what a historical event or narrative involved and how an image would depict it. Koselleck also detects anachronism in Altdorfer’s choice to present ancient Persians dressed in the manner of modern Turks—a timely reference, Koselleck noted, as the Ottoman army had unsuccessfully laid siege to Vienna the same year in which Altdorfer created this work. For Koselleck, this cultural displacement is due to sixteenth-century ideas about time—and not, for instance, to ethnographic ignorance or to ideas about how painting operated. According to Koselleck, “The event that Altdorfer captured was for him at once historical and contemporary. . . . Temporal difference was not more or less arbitrarily eliminated; it was not, as such, at all apparent.” Koselleck points out that, although the artist took great care to investigate and record the exact number of combatants, portraying them in ten numbered columns, he did not indicate the year in which the battle took place. Nothing in the tableau’s careful and detailed representation of battle technology and armor relates specifically to those used or worn during antiquity, nor are there visual signs of the painting referring to a time remote from the painter’s experience. For Altdorfer, Koselleck claims, the battle “is not only contemporary; it simultaneously appears to be timeless.”<sup>36</sup>

Koselleck contrasts this sixteenth-century attitude to that of the Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schlegel, who came upon Altdorfer’s painting in the Louvre in 1804, a few years after Napoleon had looted it from Munich. A wonderstruck Schlegel pronounced the work a “marvel” that portrayed “the greatest feat in the age of chivalry.”<sup>37</sup> For Koselleck, this comment anchored the painting to a distant and bygone historical era, showing that Schlegel envisioned both Altdorfer and Alexander as inhabiting historical moments distinct from each other and from himself. Schlegel, Koselleck tells us, understood the fourth century BCE, the sixteenth century, and the nineteenth century as temporally separate: “There was for Schlegel, in the three hundred years separating him from Altdorfer, more time (or perhaps a different mode of time) than appeared to have passed for Altdorfer in the eighteen hundred years or so that lay between the Battle of Issus and his painting.” Koselleck calls that gap a “temporalization of history” and suggests that this sense of time constituted a peculiar form of acceleration and an “embrace” of time as distinct and developmental that characterized modernity.<sup>38</sup>

Altdorfer’s painting does an impressive amount of conceptual heavy lifting for Koselleck. Here, we are not concerned with whether Koselleck’s thesis about the acceleration of history is correct, but rather with his use of a painted history to unravel a complex story about changing ideas about



history and time, and their relationship to the pace of both. We believe that Koselleck found in the painting both a rich expression of complex ideas about temporality and historicity and also, rhetorically, a particularly effective and persuasive way to convey his own ideas about history. While over the course of his essays Koselleck deepened and extended his argument through numerous textual sources, he chose to begin with a visual history—by showing rather than telling.

It is thus almost surprising that, in his effective use of the painting, Koselleck misreads certain elements in the work and their implications for thinking about time and history. He seems to have looked *through* the painting rather than *at* the painting. For Koselleck, clothing ancient Persian soldiers in contemporary Turkish-style dress is an “anachronism,” an error in computing time that he finds in jarring opposition to what he describes as the painter’s interest in what he terms “accuracy,” evidenced by the consultation of ancient texts. But Altdorfer’s sartorial choice was not a result of the artist’s inability to differentiate two separate periods in time but a feature of his use of allegory, a standard artistic mode in sixteenth-century painting (and other arts). The painting would have communicated to its patron, Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria, and to the courtly audience who viewed it in his Munich residence the reassuring connection between the ancient past and their modern day. Just as Alexander the Great defeated the Persians, the canvas suggested, Christian princes in the sixteenth century would defeat the Ottomans. The painting was intended to represent both ancient and modern conflicts at once, to link past and present, just as it linked textual and pictorial accounts in an intermedial, mutually reinforcing embrace that would have been noticed and appreciated by its viewers.<sup>39</sup> It was not anachronistic—mistaken about time—but rather what we might term polychronic, capable of containing various temporalities at once. Koselleck used Altdorfer’s painting as a vehicle to diagnose the transition between historical periods, an idea based on an understanding of time as linear and regular, like a metronome. But this particular sense of time—linear, homogeneous, moving in one direction only—is simply one of the many ways in which humans have conceived of temporality.<sup>40</sup> The canvas functions according to a different understanding of time schemes, which are at once distinct and connected. Time bends. It telescopes rather than marches forward at an even pace.

Indeed, as Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have suggested, late medieval and early modern European art was profoundly concerned with questions of time and history and developed sophisticated techniques for addressing them, embracing “plural temporalities” that the authors characterize not as “anachronistic” (“a judgmental term that carries with it the historicist assumption that every event and every object has its proper

location within objective and linear time”) but rather as “anachronic,” engaging with “the power of the image, or the work of art, to fold time.”<sup>41</sup> Nagel, Wood, and Amy Powell have shown that art and artists have repeatedly twisted and bent time to suit their purposes, creating connections that circumvent or defy periodization, and that art—we would extend this to images more generally—possesses its own temporality.<sup>42</sup> According to Nagel and Wood,

No device more effectively generates the effect of a doubling or bending of time than the work of art, a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural. The artwork is made or designed by an individual or by a group of individuals at some moment, but it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior artifact, or to its origin outside of time, in divinity. At the same time it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event. The work of art is a message whose sender and destination are constantly shifting.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, a visual history’s plural temporalities include not only the multiple times within the work—for example, the *mêlée* of ancient and sixteenth-century elements in Altdorfer’s canvas—but also the different times of its making and viewings. The durability of images and objects, and especially their repurposing and recontextualization, allows them to simultaneously breach and emphasize distance: they can “take you there” while highlighting that “the past is a foreign country.”<sup>44</sup> But they do more than that. As Keith Moxey has suggested, visual objects are possessed of the kind of agency that has led scholars back to discussions of the phenomenological encounter between a present beholder and a time-traveling artifact.<sup>45</sup>

If art historians have been open to the idea that the image’s multiple temporalities present a rich site for considering the experiences of temporality and historicity themselves, and also of how images work, for others this quality simply reads as the descent into the abyss of presentism. A review of the second volume of Simon Schama’s *The Story of the Jews* (2017), for instance, found the publication irredeemably derailed by the influence of images that hover over the author’s text because the book grew out of a television program. For the review’s author, historian Mark Mazower, visual history destroyed both narrative and temporal distance:

The small screen . . . has a personality of its own. Disliking numbers, statistics, or the abstract, it prizes the episodic and the anecdotal and whatever can be packed into it. The modern camera lingers lovingly over the materiality of place, landscape, food, and dress, and these get doled out in abundance on the page here. . . . [It] can easily make the past seem too much like the present. A lip-smacking world, one that tastes like our world so long as we get the right mix of the ingredients, is a world in which some of the essential differences of the past have vanished beneath the frosting. What it gives is not immediacy but the illusion of it.<sup>46</sup>

Picturing itself or anything that seems too vivid and still with us is criticized as a form of falsification because it disrupts the kind of time historians have come to count on.

What would it mean to consider the interaction that Moxey invoked between a present beholder and a time-traveling artifact as a defining feature of history rather than to depend on the notion that we produce detached observation via the passage of time? To work with, not against, such difference may be merely to perceive pastness rather than to understand temporal difference, in effect producing a proximity that we can think of as a telescoping of the past and the present. Perhaps that is a fundamental operation or distinction of visual history, not one of the many temporal sins it commits against what we have come to accept as linear notions of an unfolding chronology since the nineteenth century as practiced by most historians, wherever they dwell on the spectrum from Rankean positivism to skeptical Foucaultian constructivism.

Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer both elevated questions regarding the effects that media had on temporality to the center of their inquiries regarding a new historical methodology. For both, images shaped time by extending it across space. As Benjamin explained: “History decays into images, not into stories. . . . The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history.”<sup>47</sup> Benjamin found in Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* a way to visualize “the angel of history,” describing, in his unfinished “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” a connection between the pictorial, the spatial, and notions of historicity:

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. The storm is what we call progress.<sup>48</sup>

Whether through the juxtaposition of montage or the angel’s ability to reconfigure history by arresting the “chain of events” across time and instead mapping the directions of an approaching storm, Benjamin’s visualization of history lays out a geography of time.

In an unfinished book written in the 1960s and published five decades later, *History, the Last Things Before the Last* (2016), Kracauer envisioned history not as an angel but rather as “the Wandering Jew,” roaming both through physical place and across all time—“eternally extraterritorial,” in Martin Jay’s formulation.<sup>49</sup> Thus temporality becomes spatialized. As part of this project, Kracauer also turned to the image, stating that “history

resembles photography.”<sup>50</sup> He incorporated in the book much historiographic thought from the 1960s, including a reading of art historian George Kubler’s *The Shape of Time* (1962). Kubler offered an anthropologically inspired and relativist notion of time in which objects occupy multiple temporalities, existing both in standard chronological time and also as part of a sequence of other objects to which they relate. As a result, history is discontinuous, and the most pertinent and important temporality may well not be chronological.<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, Benjamin’s and Kracauer’s revisions of history’s temporality emphasize both the production and reception of images. For visual history, the time when an image is made and the time when it is seen are equally relevant. This was powerfully suggested by Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*, which Georges Didi-Huberman has called not a history but a story of the survival of images across time and space. There are many complexities to Warburg’s project, which several scholars, most notably Didi-Huberman, have recently sought to rescue from obscurity.<sup>52</sup> Warburg’s spatial mode of history employed the juxtaposition of images based in part on the principle of montage—image next to image. Warburg approached time as an experience of both movement and migration. What may be most critical about Warburg’s method was that he sought to develop a general “doctrine of man in motion.”<sup>53</sup> Time becomes a story of movement, but the past is not merely spatialized; its form is an atlas or web. This web is, in fact, a network, which is part of why Warburg appears so relevant today.

Finally, if visual history provokes the idea of multiple temporalities, it also raises questions about pace and speed. Did time move faster at different points in the past, and how did visual history play a role? Many historians have argued that industrialization produced a speed revolution, releasing people and goods from the pace at which so many had existed for more than a millennium. If this speed-up meant that pictures, like everything else, moved at a faster pace, did that fact change how quickly time in those images could pass as well? Institutions such as the stock market and the press also changed the rhythm of life by changing expectations of how events would unfold, creating new daily rhythms on which such things as “news” had to be updated. If today we might take an ever-quicken news cycle for granted, that very pace has also been defined and redefined by media technologies whose forms and formats themselves set the limits for timeliness.

Early in the last century, while Warburg was busy collecting images in London, the French banker Albert Kahn spent a significant portion of his vast fortune sending cameramen around the globe to capture its goings on in still and moving images. Kahn wanted to use modern media to create an “archive of the planet” in order to apprehend what he believed were

eternal customs that were about to disappear in the swirl of fast-paced change and keep them as a record once they finally did recede from current practice and living memory. Even if the world was changing fast, it could still be preserved or captured by photographic images.<sup>54</sup> Such photos “kept time” by being the medium that would archive how slow time had once seemed to be.

There are many kinds of informational images, as we have seen, and yet, in the nineteenth century, the press image was frequently invoked as an “inexhaustible storehouse for the historian.”<sup>55</sup> Keller has suggested just how important the material conditions of picture acquisition could be.<sup>56</sup> As the press became increasingly engaged in escalating the speed with which it could deliver a picture through infrastructures of transport and new image production technologies that included everything from new faster-drying inks to the delivery of photos by wire, and eventually to live television, the pace at which history seemed to unfold appeared to accelerate as well. Picturing the news as it happened became part of what made an event “historic.” Eventually, what was not already captured as part of a pictorial record as it unfolded would be literally and figuratively “invisible” to posterity.

### Conclusion

The acceleration of the pace of the past in relation to the present and the uneven time of history is exemplified by the spectacle of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of England on June 2, 1953. The event, like West’s *Death of General Wolfe*, functioned initially as news; shortly thereafter it became an “instant history” that depicted the present as the future’s past. The coronation also existed in multiple versions, suggesting how an intermedial system of visualization worked. Together, multiple media outlets authorized the same images, created compelling narratives about the complexity of obtaining images in the first place, produced the perception of stretching and shortening time, and linked the pace and appearance of the past to material and technological infrastructures. The televised broadcast of the event—the first flawlessly executed spectacle of such an ancient ritual televised for a mass audience of twenty million people in Britain alone—is not a simple tale of modernizing an ancient institution by broadcasting it on television, although it was that too. Once the decision to televise the event had been made, a great dispute erupted over the idea of the event’s sacred nature and the populism entailed in disseminating it via the television camera. The court decided that the new queen’s anointment with the holy oils was too private a moment to be televised and thus would be performed

under a canopy to shield her from the public's view. This privacy requirement introduced a new element to the ceremony: a golden canopy made specially to block the cameras from picturing that portion of the event. In addition, what had been a ceremony lasting less than two hours became an eight-hour television transmission. Viewers watched at home, in black and white. This meant that only those hundreds of thousands of dedicated onlookers who lined the coronation path could take in its colorful spectacle in real time, giving the print media, whose members were among the throngs, a special opportunity. Television might have offered speed and access to real-time events; print provided color and timelessness. Magazines had long specialized in distributing high-quality images, especially in relation to the images in daily newspapers; once television came on the scene, magazines continued to mark their comparative advantage and distinction in terms of high visual quality, especially by adding color to the mix. The movies had also entered the media competition, real or imagined, by embracing Technicolor and a host of widescreen formats that distinguished the movies from the fuzzy little box in people's living rooms. A Technicolor documentary film of the coronation, *A Queen Is Crowned* (1953), played for a full year in theaters around the world and provided what both television and magazines lacked: moving pictures in color. The film's aesthetic is not that of a newsreel but of a historical documentary—it avoids the fast pace of the news camera; it inserts prerecorded footage of the crown jewels and, like the staged event itself, presents something that had happened in the very recent past not as news but as history.

Magazines, on the other hand, worked both quickly and slowly. The French weekly *Paris Match*, for example, printed news of the coronation twice: first in an article accompanied by black-and-white photographs that reported, in a sort of reportorial *mise en abyme*, that the event had been televised and then, two weeks later, in a second article illustrated with color photographs (figs. 4 and 5). The French periodical's initial rush exploited its advantage over the American press, with which they regularly competed for photo scoops: their sheer distance from England meant the Americans had to fly the film across the Atlantic; the French had only to ship it across the channel.

*Life* magazine decided that it would turn these production challenges into a news story itself.<sup>57</sup> The magazine's editors engaged readers in a drama about whether they would be able to break *Life*'s own speed records by using the power of air transport to produce color images faster than they had ever done before. The June 8, 1953, issue inserted a rather hastily pasted together announcement promising an attempt for the next week's issue with a graphic of a map route from London to various air stops (Gander, Newfoundland, for refueling, and then Boston, the closest point in the



United States, followed by New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles), showing the places the pieces of the magazine would be flown to construct the fastest color news story ever delivered by *Life*. After explaining the complex variables and factors that might affect the photographic film's progress, the note from publisher Andrew Heiskell warned, "At this point, your guess is as good as ours as to what kind of coronation story you will see in LIFE next week."<sup>58</sup> By using airplanes, the magazine reduced what normally took seven weeks to ten days in its postcoronation black-and-white printing schedule. The magazine accomplished this shortened schedule by shooting exclusively in Ektachrome rather than in the more common 35mm color film stock of the day, which would have taken longer to develop, and also by taking advantage of the record-breaking speed of the transfer to metal engraving and printing process in Chicago. A story later published about the exceptional timeliness of the production pointed out that the two key moments of shooting and transfer had hinged on the overnight plane transport of the Ektachrome rolls and their delivery to the *Life* offices at 7:00 am the day after the coronation. The speedy delivery made it possible to develop the transparencies and immediately lay out the images at *Life*, and then quickly transfer the layouts to Chicago for printing. Finally, the article detailed the unprecedented airlift of the color photo sections of the magazine from the plant in Chicago; they were usually sent by rail to be joined to the black-and-white sections printed in Los Angeles and Philadelphia. Instead, with the help of three airlines (TWA, United, and American), the



FIGURE 6. Still from *A Queen Is Crowned*, directed by Castleton Knight (1953, n.p., 2007), DVD.





FIGURE 7. Still from Philip Martin, director, *The Crown*. Season 1, episode 5, “Smoke and Mirrors,” Aired November 6, 2018, on Netflix.

color-photo sections were transported over three days and on ninety-one flights to those cities so that the magazine could be assembled and distributed as “fast news.” *Life* printed reader appreciation two weeks later: “After reading, June 8, about all the odds against the color pictures into the next issue, I could not help but cross my fingers. . . . They just had to come through. It wouldn’t have been *Life* if they hadn’t.” Another reader’s letter emphasized the value of color and thus the magazine’s advantage over other media: “No stretch of the imagination could color the radio or television portrayals as do these clear and brilliant pictures of such an inspiring and heart-warming occasion.”<sup>59</sup> The time and look of the ancient spectacle was redefined by a current-day multimedia context that was itself shaped by the very complex challenges and possibilities involved in the production and circulation of images. Finally, when Netflix chose in 2018 to dramatize the life and times of the longest reigning monarch, not only was an entire episode of their miniseries *The Crown* dedicated to the decision to televise the coronation, but the series also clearly consulted and faithfully recreated *A Queen Is Crowned*, making it present once again (figs. 6 and 7).

Visual histories rupture the metronomic pace of history. That moments can be compared on the same scale of time and that the past is distributed equally throughout time were the necessary fictions of a nineteenth-century mode of historical practice that always left those with an expertise and interest in images in a position to explain or defend their poor and

seemingly misinformed practice. Instead, we suggest that visual histories allow time to simultaneously compress and expand, to make some things more proximate and others more distant. In fascinating, unexpected, and at times unpredictable ways, images time-travel and take us with them. They also take up our time, the minutes and hours of looking and seeing. And they have their own kind of time, because the experience of seeing history is phenomenologically different from that of reading it in words.

Visual history has outpaced the written genre that professional historians developed in the nineteenth century. The time of visual history is now. Rather than participate in the battle over which is the better model for study of the past, we recognize these practices as forms of history that have shaped our own historical sensibility. If we want to understand how and why the past is increasingly depicted, we must also understand how media are part of a telescoping of space and time. Put otherwise: if once the “past was a foreign country,” in a flat world, where nothing is particularly foreign, the past is also present. As Erwin Panofsky put it, “The humanities are not faced by the task of arresting what would otherwise slip away, but of enlivening what otherwise would remain dead.”<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

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This essay develops ideas we initially explored with support from the Mellon Foundation through a Sawyer Seminar entitled “Visual History: The Past in Pictures” at the Visual Studies Research Institute of the University of Southern California (USC). Over the course of an academic year, the seminar convened six workshops and a two-day symposium with presentations by twenty-two scholars, invited the participation of twelve additional scholars as “core participants,” brought in graduate student participation through a cotaught seminar involving extensive readings, and funded the research of a postdoctoral fellow and two predoctoral fellows. The seminar is archived at <http://mellonsawyervisualhistory.vsri.org/>. We are grateful to the Mellon Foundation, USC Dornsife College, and the Academic Engagement Network for making this interdisciplinary project possible; to all those who contributed their research and ideas; and to David Henkin and Megan Luke for their feedback on an earlier draft of this essay.

1. Carole McNamara and Clayton A. Lewis, *Benjamin West: General Wolfe and the Art of Empire* (Ann Arbor, 2012), from which we draw our account of the paintings’ circulation; Loyd Grossman, *Benjamin West and the Struggle to Be Modern* (London, 2015).
2. West, cited in Leo Costello, *J. M. W. Turner and the Subject of History* (Burlington, VT, 2012), 32.
3. James Northcote, cited in *ibid.*, 37.
4. McNamara and Lewis, *Benjamin West: General Wolfe and the Art of Empire*, 19.
5. Joshua Reynolds, cited in Costello, *J.M.W. Turner and the Subject of History*, 30.

6. Edgar Wind, "The Revolution in History Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 2, no. 2 (1938): 116–27; see also Mark Salber Phillips, "History Painting Redistanced: From Benjamin West to David Wilkie," *Modern Intellectual History* 11, no. 3 (November 2014): 611–29. Other scholars have remarked on the connections between time and space; in relation to the visualization of history in particular, see Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton, *Cartographies of Time* (New York, 2010).
7. Precedents of a nonclassicizing approach to history painting include the dozen large canvases produced by artists including Diego Velázquez and Francisco de Zurbarán in the mid-1630s for Philip IV's *Salón de los Reinos*. See Richard L. Kagan, "Pictures, Politics, and Pictorialized History at the Court of Philip IV of Spain: Re-Thinking the Hall of Realms," in *Historiographie an Europäischen Höfen (16.–18. Jahrhundert): Studien Zum Hof Als Produktionsort von Geschichtsschreibung Und Historischer Repräsentation* (Berlin, 2009), 231–46.
8. Rosenberg and Grafton, *Cartographies of Time*.
9. Methodologies for using visual materials as historical sources are discussed in Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY, 2001); Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge, 2012); Theodore K. Rabb, *Why Does Michelangelo Matter? A Historian's Questions About the Visual Arts* (Palo Alto, CA, 2018).
10. Horst Bredekamp, *Image Acts: A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Clegg (Berlin/Boston, 2018), 283.
11. Horst Bredekamp, "A Neglected Tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft," *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 3 (2003): 418–28.
12. W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, 2005), xv.
13. See, for instance, David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989); Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 2004).
14. For other examples, see Catherine E. Clark, "Capturing the Moment, Picturing History: Photographs of the Liberation of Paris," *American Historical Review* 121, no. 3 (June 1, 2016): 824–60; Jason E. Hill and Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News* (London, 2015).
15. Much of our scholarship has investigated images as forms of evidence, knowledge, and communication as they circulate across space and time. See, for instance, Daniela Bleichmar, *Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2012); Daniela Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages: Images of Latin American Nature from Columbus to Darwin* (New Haven, 2017); Daniela Bleichmar, "The Imperial Visual Archive: Images, Evidence, and Knowledge in the Early Modern Hispanic World," *Colonial Latin American Review* 24, no. 2 (2015): 236–66; Daniela Bleichmar, "History in Pictures: Translating the Codex Mendoza," *Art History* 38, no. 4 (September 2015): 682–701; Lynn Hunt and Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Capturing the Moment: Images and Eyewitnessing in History," in "The History Issue," special issue, *Journal of Visual Culture* 9, no. 3 (December 2010): 259–71; Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Film and History," in *The SAGE Handbook of Film Studies*, ed. James Donald and Michael Renov (London, 2008), 199–215; Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture*; Vanessa Schwartz, *Jet Age Aesthetics: The Glamour of Media in Motion* (forthcoming).
16. Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 13 (1950): 285–315. See also Peter N. Miller,

- ed., *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences* (Toronto, 2007); Peter N. Miller, *History and Its Objects: Antiquarianism and Material Culture Since 1500* (Ithaca, NY, 2017).
17. Peter Burke, introduction to Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York, 1990), 1–14; Jörn Rüsen, “Jacob Burckhardt: Political Standpoint and Historical Insight on the Border of Post-Modernism,” *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 235–46; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 40th anniversary ed. (Baltimore, 2014), chap. 6.
  18. Burke, introduction to Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*; Rüsen, “Jacob Burckhardt”; White, *Metahistory*, chap. 6.
  19. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 19.
  20. See Bredekamp, “A Neglected Tradition?”; Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven, 1994).
  21. Aby Warburg, cited in Bredekamp, “A Neglected Tradition?,” 423.
  22. The reasons why Warburg’s method was not picked up by the next generation are only now coming to light; see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science* (Chicago, 2018). See also W. J. T. Mitchell, “Method, Madness, Montage: Aby Warburg to John Nash,” June 14, 2016, The Warburg Institute, London, YouTube video, 42:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eQzaENZoHo>.
  23. William Mills Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, MA, 1969).
  24. As those who have worked on the recent past or use oral testimonies or who have tried to parse the differences between history and memory have shown, such distinctions are themselves historical and institutional and have served particular ends. We insist on not making the metacritical and institutional critique the purpose of our inquiry and believe that we can still engage in historical work and maintain a metahistorical consciousness. See, for instance, Joyce Oldham Appleby, Lynn Avery Hunt, and Margaret C. Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York, 1994); Lynn Hunt, *History: Why It Matters* (Cambridge, 2018); Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996); Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988).
  25. Hayden White, “Historiography and Historiophoty,” *American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (1988): 1193–99.
  26. Freedberg, *The Power of Images*; Louis Marin, *Des pouvoirs de l’image* (Paris, 1993); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998); Bredekamp, *Image Acts*.
  27. This is the case with museums, tourism, and memorials; see, among others, Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge, 1984); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York, 1995); Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past, 1800–1953* (Oxford, 2006); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge, 1988); Nora, *Realms of Memory*; Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley, 1998).
  28. See, for instance, Rolena Adorno, “The Discursive Encounter of Spain and America: The Authority of Eyewitness Testimony in the Writing of History,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (April 1992): 210–28; Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages*; Michael Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization* (Minneapolis, 2008); Anthony Pagden, “*Ius et Factum*: Text and Experience in the Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas,” *Representations* 33

- (Winter 1991): 147–62; Stephanie Leitch, *Mapping Ethnography in Early Modern Germany: New Worlds in Print Culture* (New York, 2010); Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, 1985).
29. Jeffrey Andrew Barash, *Collective Memory and the Historical Past* (Chicago, 2016); Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture*.
  30. On the standardization of knowledge via print, see Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication*; Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1979). The idea of print as fixed and unchanging has been critiqued; see Anthony Grafton, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, and Adrian Johns, “AHR Forum: How Revolutionary Was the Print Revolution?,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (2002): 84–128. On mobility, see among others Daniel Roche, *Humeurs Vagabondes* (Paris, 2003).
  31. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1972).
  32. We distinguish our approach, which suggests that all periods have specific intermedial landscapes, from a more evolutionary approach that flattens the distinctions between media in favor of “convergence culture.” See Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, 2006).
  33. Ulrich Keller, “Photography, History, (Dis)Belief,” *Visual Resources* 26, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 102.
  34. On historicity and temporality, see, among others, François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (New York, 2015); Siegfried Kracauer, *History, the Last Things before the Last* (New York, 2014); Mark Salber Phillips, *On Historical Distance* (New Haven, 2013).
  35. The essay was delivered in 1965 as Koselleck’s inaugural professorial lecture at the University of Heidelberg, published in German three years later, and then included in the collection Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt, 1979). It appeared in English initially as Reinhart Koselleck, “Modernity and the Planes of Historicity,” *Economy and Society* 10, no. 2 (1981): 166–83; and then as the first chapter in Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA, 1985). It has received considerable scholarly attention; see, in particular, Peter Geimer, “Photography as a ‘Space of Experience’: On the Retrospective Legibility of Historic Photographs,” *Getty Research Journal* 7 (2015): 97–108; Peter Dent, “Time and the Image: Art at an Epochal Threshold,” in *Medieval or Early Modern: The Value of a Traditional Historical Division*, ed. Ronald Hutton (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015), 146–74. On Koselleck more generally, see Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (Oxford, 2012). For scholarly responses to Koselleck’s theory of temporality and periodization, see Dent, “Time and the Image: Art at an Epochal Threshold,” 153n25.
  36. Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 4. On Altdorfer see Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (Chicago, 1993), esp. 19–22, on this painting and Friedrich Schlegel’s reaction to it. It is worth noting that Wood discusses this painting as part of his investigation of the invention of landscape painting; this suggests that the work combines approaches to time and to place, spatializing history as did Benjamin West’s *The Death of General Wolfe*.
  37. Friedrich von Schlegel, cited in Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 4.
  38. Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 5. We have taken great care to differentiate Koselleck’s ideas about Schlegel’s interpretation of the painting and understanding of the

- past from Schlegel's own. Although readers of Koselleck's complex essay routinely misinterpret the position as coming from Schlegel rather than from Koselleck, a misunderstanding that the text promotes (at least in its English translation), a careful parsing of the text reveals that these ideas are Koselleck's. Schlegel's 1804 letter describing his viewing of the painting at the Louvre is not visibly concerned with temporality or historicity. In the letter, Schlegel describes Aلدorfer's depiction of the battle as both "chivalry" and "a little Iliad on canvas," apparently feeling no discomfort at all in the chronological swerve implied in connecting such temporally disparate references. See Friedrich von Schlegel, *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Fredrick Von Schlegel*, trans. E. J. Millington (London, 1860), 113–14.
39. The painting also blurs the lines between genres: "I scarcely know," Schlegel noted, "whether to call it a landscape, a historical painting, or a battle-piece,—it is indeed all these combined, and much more"; Schlegel, *The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Fredrick Von Schlegel*, 113.
  40. See, for instance, Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983); Renato Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883–1974: A Study in Society and History* (Stanford, 1980); Marshall D. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor, 1981).
  41. Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York, 2010), 13.
  42. See for instance Alexander Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art out of Time* (New York, 2012); Amy Knight Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 2008).
  43. Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 9.
  44. The latter phrase is the opening line of L. P. Hartley's 1953 novel *The Go-Between*: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." It inspired, among others, David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985).
  45. Keith P. F. Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (Durham, 2013). See also Keith Moxey, "Material Time, Images and Art History," in *Theorizing Images*, ed. Žarko Pačić and Krešimir Purgar (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2016), 35–58; Keith Moxey, "What Time Is It in the History of Art," in *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony*, ed. Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey (New York, 2018).
  46. Mark Mazower, "Fizz and Crackle," *New York Review of Books*, March 22, 2018.
  47. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Convolute N11,4 and Convolute N2,6, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 476 and 461.
  48. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1986), 257–58.
  49. Kracauer, *History, the Last Things Before the Last*, 155. See Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York, 1986), 189.
  50. Kracauer, *History, the Last Things Before the Last*, 5. On Kracauer, see Johannes von Moltke, *The Curious Humanist: Siegfried Kracauer in America* (Berkeley, 2016).
  51. "Calendric time," Kracauer concluded, "is an empty vessel"; Kracauer, *History, the Last Things before the Last*, 149.
  52. Didi-Huberman's writings on Warburg are vast and to summarize them would be beyond the scope of this essay. He believes Warburg has been misunderstood because his vision was far too radical. Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving*

- Image. Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms: Aby Warburg's History of Art*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (University Park, PA, 2017).
53. Marie Anne Lescourret, *Aby Warburg ou la tentation du regard* (Paris, 2014), our translation.
  54. Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de La Planète* (New York, 2010).
  55. Mason Jackson, *The Pictorial Press: Its Origin and Progress* (London, 1855), 361.
  56. Keller, "Photography, History, (Dis)Belief"; Ulrich Keller, "Photojournalism Around 1900: The Institutionalization of a Mass Medium," in *Shadow and Substance: Essays in the History of Photography in Honor of Heinz K. Henisch*, ed. Kathleen Collins (Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1990), 283–303. See also Zeynep Gursel, *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of Digital Circulation* (Berkeley, 2016), and Jonathan Dentler, "Wire Service Photography and the Globalization of the Spectator, 1920–1955" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles, forthcoming 2020).
  57. See Hill and Schwartz, *Getting the Picture*. For the way publications engaged readers in matters of visual literacy in particular, see Jason E. Hill, *The Artist as Reporter: Weegee, Ad Reinhardt, and the PM News Picture* (Berkeley, 2018).
  58. "In Next Week's *Life*," *Life*, June 8, 1953, 118.
  59. Both letters from *Life*, July 6, 1953, 4.
  60. Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY, 1955), 24.