



# GILLES DELEUZE

## *Painting and the Question of Concepts*

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#### I

On the other hand, I'm in a tough spot because I'm of a mind to draw up some very basic color diagrams [*schémas*]—actually, that preempts what I'm about to say, but I'm thinking I won't have the courage to re-draw them next time, if you know what I mean.

So if you like, you'll recall that we were in the middle of our analysis of Egyptian space, but I'll make a brief aside on these color diagrams [*schémas*] which I will need next time, and that's it. Then I'll explain them; that way I won't have to draw them again. I was an idiot; I started my drawings and then thought, *no!* And now that will have to do, you know? At least I won't have to do them next time. No, I'll draw them for you now. That what you want, right? Right away. So I'm gonna go through with it, just to do it all over again (*laughs*)—great! (*Noise*) I'm not really leaving, but it's true that... (*inaudible*)

As a starting point, you have... and you'll see it in these two figures: one is an equilateral triangle, the other is a circle... the former is Goethe's color triangle, the other is the so-called color wheel. I'll try to work through Goethe's propositions to make sure you can follow some of it. Apologies to those who already know all this...

The first proposition: Goethe starts with a very important theme—I mean, if you understand this, you might understand the whole thing and how it all develops... he puts a lot of emphasis on it and the problems tied to color—he emphasizes the dark side of color. Color is dark—what does it mean to say that color is dark? It doesn't mean that he privileges dark colors; that would miss the point [...], there are dark colors, but when he talks about the dark side of color, he clearly has something else in mind. “Color” can be said to have a dark side, since it is the darkening of light. No doubt it's also the illumination of black. It is the darkening of white as well as the illumination of black—and how does it darken white? Darkened white is yellow. And illuminated black is blue.

Then we have our two so-called primitive or primary colors, yellow and blue. See, here are yellow and blue in the color triangle—an equilateral triangle which itself breaks down into equilateral triangles. So if I sit down and make a color triangle made up of equilateral triangles, if I put them in order, I'd have my two equilateral triangles (*sound of chalk*) at the base...yellow and blue.

Due to the dark aspect of color, darkened light, color is inseparable from movement. You can sense that this is all really very, very rudimentary but it's so Goethe, it's not surprising that this book was still uh... you didn't treat it [...] color is inseparable from a movement yet



to be determined. You see what he did, it's already extraordinary, he started with white and black, but he cuts from white and black, he sort of changes direction, if you take a ray of light in depth and if you take white and black in depth, you find the whole range of colors sort of spread out, made distinct; that's how—I think that Goethe's deep concern is how color spreads out and becomes distinct from light, from [...] and black.

However, it's from this dark stage—darkened light, which implies an illuminated black—that all color unfurls. Initially in the form of yellow and blue, but I think there's movement that's already dynamic. Yellow as darkened light, blue as illuminated black—there's already a whole dynamic. What do we call this nascent dynamism? At the point now where—not in terms of white and black, since there we already have two colors, but in terms of yellow and blue—where the dynamism of color actually emerges.

Goethe has several names for the dynamism of color: intensification, saturation, darkening. Why darkening? In light of the dark side of color. The intensification of yellow, or its darkening, into red. It's a simple experiment: you stack up several layers of yellow. In overlaying color on color, you have, you can discern, yellow's dynamic tendency toward red. Thus, you darken yellow.

However—I think there's something important going on here in Goethe's work—however, you also move into red when you soften blue. What do I mean by softening blue? Blue is illuminated black. If you say that I'm softening blue, you mean that I'm softening the illumination. In other words, blue softened into black is the same tendency toward red. See how—I mean what's really important is how he doesn't view darkening and illuminating as contradictory. Color has a dark side. Color's dark side is at work when you darken yellow no less than when you illuminate blue, since you're illuminating an illumination when you illuminate blue. Thus the yellow tends toward red as it intensifies; blue tends toward red as it intensifies. What is pure red (what we would call magenta)?<sup>1</sup> It's—and pay close attention to Goethe's terminology here—it's “fusion,” the point of fusion between yellow and blue. The point of fusion between yellow and blue at maximum intensification. Which leads us to say that magenta or red—pure red—is the ideal satisfaction, the fusion, of both colors, yellow and blue, at the point of ideal satisfaction.

So that's still... when I made my triangle I could have said: 1, 1' (*one prime*) yellow-blue, starting from light; blue-red as the maximum point of intensification; 3, I mix yellow and blue. See where red and green aren't symmetrical. Goethe says that green is the point of real satisfaction.

Red is the point of ideal satisfaction, or the point of fusion; green is the point of real satisfaction, or mixture. So I can make my little triangle up-top red, as the point of maximum intensification, and I can make my little triangle in the middle green, between yellow and blue.

Green starts it over again. It's a sort of—the triangle is genetic: that's the main thing. There's a genesis of color in Goethe's triangle. Green gives us the idea. Green emerged as the combination of yellow and blue. Now I just have to mix yellow and red, which gives me orange. Then I just have to mix red and blue, which makes purple. And there, I've generated my six basic colors—I'm highlighting this because often, when you read Goethe, they're listed as part of [...] of the color triangle. It's not just that there are colors: so-called secondary color blends and primary colors—three primary colors: yellow, blue, red; and three secondary colors:

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<sup>1</sup> Goethe's *Purpur* (which Deleuze calls here *pourpre*) predates the introduction of the word “magenta.” There's precedent for retrofitting Goethe's color wheel to include magenta instead of “pure red.” In my case, I'm putting words in both Goethe's and Deleuze's mouths, making them say “magenta” and “red” for *Purpur/pourpre* and “purple” for *violet*, simply to be as clear as possible for the reader in English.



orange, purple, green—that's not it. I felt like the genesis in Goethe's text is really [...] and that the color triangle expresses this genesis.

In order, you have: the emergence of yellow, the emergence of blue, the twofold emergence of red via the intensification of both yellow and blue, the emergence of green via mixing, carrying on mixing through [...] Imagine if I put the colors' lines in color—that'd be lovely—so, what's left? I still have combinations—what combinations? ... the color wheel earlier.

The combination, yellow – green, here.

The combination, green – blue.

The combination, orange – purple.

And so the color triangle is [...] it's simple but elegant [...] because again, I think it's obvious that if you treat it like a genetic triangle (and moreover, you can't build it up gradually)—I think you're led to construct it in order—1, 1'[,] 2, 3, 4, 4', 5, 5'... That's what the color triangle is [...] You could add to that: Color's light-dark, white-black exterior—you can see how powerful, now, how color blooms out of its exterior. That's the origin of the different colors' independence; it's a genesis. The triangle is genetic. So far, so good? Any issues? As for the color wheel, it is structural [...] I'll start with yellow—there's a reason I'm starting with yellow—I'll put it at the top of my circle and from there I'll establish the first diametric opposition. What is the diametric opposite of yellow? Yellow is one of the three primitive or primary colors: yellow, blue, red.<sup>2</sup> The opposite of yellow is the combination of the two other primitive colors. Once I have my three primitive colors—yellow, blue, and red—a diametric opposition would be between one of these primitive colors and the combination of the other two. This diametric opposition is often known as the relationship between complementary colors. What are two complementary colors?

Two complementary colors are such that one is a primitive color and the other is made by combining the other two. So yellow is diametrically opposed to the combination of blue and red, or purple. Consequently, if I started to draw my circle—notice that this circle is not at all genetic. It begins, starting with the problem of diametric opposition; it begins with drawing a structure.

That's why I think that it's obvious that the color wheel is lifeless if you haven't first worked through the color triangle. (*Noise*) think I'm rather bias [sic]... (*laughter*).<sup>3</sup> You've got your first diametric opposition, purple as the combination of blue and red forces us to put in our circle [...] blue and red, six sections for the three primary colors; purple is a combination of blue and red (*noise*). It's no longer a genesis; it's a deduction of structure, it's a structural deduction whereby you put down your two other sections along the periphery: blue/yellow with green as the intermediary, yellow/red with orange. And you have, you can read from there, your diametric opposition: just as yellow is diametrically opposed to purple according to the law of complementary colors, red is diametrically opposed to green, since red is a primitive color diametrically opposed to the combination of the other two: the combination of the other two is that between yellow and blue, and yellow-and-blue is green.

So the diametric opposition between red and green, the diametric opposition between blue and orange, since orange is yellow-and-red diametrically opposed with the third primitive color... I'm almost done.

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<sup>2</sup> I translate *primitive* as “primary” when it appears alone; here, however, I've kept “primitive” because it appears alongside *primaire*. I'm worried about misleading the reader into thinking Deleuze has special plans for this term or is drawing a meaningful distinction between the two terms.

<sup>3</sup> My guess is that *prérence* should be *préférence*. I tried my best to reflect it in the translation, by putting “biased” as “bias.”



One kind of relationship between colors comes about via diametric oppositions along the color wheel. It's the theme of complementary colors. Goethe's dotted line<sup>4</sup> suggest that there are other relationships. The other relationships are when the relations between colors follow along chords and no longer across the diameter. Diametric oppositions, in Goethe's terminology, are harmonious combinations. Harmonious combinations between yellow and purple, orange and blue, red and green. They're the complementary relationships. We leave diameters behind and consider chords. Two types of chords. You select two colors by passing over an intermediary. Those are the big chords. What Goethe will call characteristic combinations.<sup>5</sup> The list of characteristic combinations is what I've written in dashes: green – orange, orange – purple. You see you've jumped over yellow. You've drawn a chord in the circle such that you've brought together green and orange by skipping yellow. That's the big chord.

Move onto the second characteristic combination: orange – purple, skipping over red. Third combination: purple and green, skipping blue. In the other direction: combining blue – red, skipping purple; red – yellow, skipping orange; blue – yellow, skipping green. And you have your network of so-called “characteristic” combinations.

And lastly, what I didn't include [on our circle] to keep it from getting too complicated—but Goethe does include it—are non-characteristic combinations.<sup>6</sup> These are the small chords. Where you don't skip colors; you just move from one color to the next. And the non-characteristic combinations include: yellow – orange, orange – red, red – purple, purple – blue, blue – green [...] You have your structural set-up. What I find interesting is that your [...]. I mean the triangle says genetically what the circle says structurally. In my view, the circle is dead [...] Which is important because... It's not just the theory, it's the basis for the whole theory [...] In a sense it wasn't until Goethe that... we'll see... why it happened at that point in time... and why it happened at that point in time.

Delacroix made his palette into a real timer. A chromatic timer, that is, a clock—you might say that he wanted to assign hours to the color wheel.

So what Delacroix was doing... He placed his colors (*noise*), and then he surrounded... in a big pile, and then he surrounded that with derived or blended colors and then that made a timer [...] That's an anecdote... it'd be like an exercise. If I were a painter I'm sure that I'd be really into that, in how to transform...

According to these schemas, how does a painter arrange colors on the palette? That's the first practical problem.

Second practical problem: what does it mean when a painter hates a color? For example: Mondrian and green (*inaudible*) (*laughter*) abomination, New York is the only city in the world...

[*We can't hear Gilles*]

It's true, how do you [?] since...

*Claire Parnet*: I'd like [to know] why Mondrian left for New York? Because he didn't like green.

*Claire Parnet*: Why New York? It's the only city without any trees!<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze is working through an illustration. I do not see a dotted line in any of my sources, but presumably the color wheel he's drawn or is looking at has dotted lines running along the different chords (as Deleuze describes them below).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Goethe sections 816-817.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 826-829.

<sup>7</sup> I'm not sure how to parse these lines. My guess is that the second line attributed to Parnet is Deleuze's response—Parnet asks why Mondrian went to New York, and then Deleuze's response follows. To be safe, I've stuck to the transcript.



There are colors missing from the palette. It's also interesting to wonder, asking the painter, questioning the painter about the colors they use. Well, so, you could have all sorts of practical exercises. When a color is named after a painter. Based on that, I don't think it's about laws or norms. Especially with the genetic element of colors—that's how basic decisions are made, and what's more, it's so genetic that it has depth. But what is its depth?

First, it has strata. It's completely stratified; you have to read it perpendicularly. If the genetic color triangle had a structure, it'd be a perpendicular structure—why?

The first stratum: it casts light and darkness. That's the theme with color's dark side. And what proves that color has a dark side? You'll find it at the level... where this kind of emergence from white and from black, if you rotate the color wheel, you get gray from white and black, and that is the deepest stratum—color is emerging from light and darkness. Then what we should note is that [...] it isn't the same space. The space of light and the space of color. Color will be [...] there isn't any color [...] that's what one means by "chromatic color." The principle of the relativity of colors. Color is created in this way, this first stratum casts darkness and light, casts gray, gray being understood as white and black.

The second stratum. It breaks off; it starts to break off from this foundation. Light and dark are color's foundation. White and black are the foundation of color, it emerges from this base. It emerges from this base in the form of yellow, blue, and their shared intensification: red.

At this point relationships between colors are formed, irreducible to the light-dark relationship. The light-dark relationship still affects color nevertheless, in the form of light and dark colors. The light-dark relationship in color will determine the relationship between light and dark colors, and by no means does it exhaust color relations. It's what is called "value." It's precisely in the relationship between light and dark colors. Color only exists through independent relationships, not between values but between hues. Between colors with the same level of saturation. A perfect example is the relationship between complements.

There are so many strata that uh... actually, let's go over a brief history of colorism. What is colorism? [...] And I've come right back to Riegl. Riegl proposed a distinction between polychromy and colorism. Polychromy refers to any detail or any use of color—extraordinarily complex and extraordinarily rich—where color is still subordinate to something else. What do I mean? It can be subordinate to form Form [sic]. You arrange your colors organically according to the lines of the form. Then you'd have polychromy. Egyptian art and Greek art are classic examples of polychromy. Color can also be subordinate to light. With painting you actually had to distinguish, if only vaguely, between a luminist tendency and a colorist tendency.

Luminists are those who achieve color through light, and colorists are those who achieve light through color, through a treatment of color. Rembrandt is rightly hailed as among the greatest luminists.

So, there isn't just one possible subordination, bit [sic] that's still more like polychromy; you see, it's something else. But it isn't colorism either, because it isn't color for its own sake [...] it can realize any value relationship, [but] it can't fully develop all of its relationships in tonality or hue.

Yet with the color wheel it's precisely Goethe who strongly emphasizes the following theme: based on the color wheel, each color—this accounts for why there's a movement, a dynamism to color—each color tends to evoke the tonality of the color wheel; basically, then, you'd have coefficients of speed or slowness. Every color suggests the entire color wheel, often via its diametric opposition in particular. Red will suggest green, and it's only in your eye that one complement suggests the other. That famous experiment in every introduction to



color: you stare at a color and then, once the color is taken away, your eye suggests the complementary color. Red suggests green.

So, what am I saying? If I were to give a brief overview of the history of colorism: I think that the moment when the first colorism appears it's like at the border of luminism, light, color and the problem of mixing [...] and colors come up out from ground. And the ground becomes captivating; it's like overlaying two grays. Colors come up out from a ground, from a dark ground. It's the famous dark color [...] yet this dark color is now meant to manifest the dark side of color, and these emerging, dark colors are? Are ultimately gray on gray, since there is a luminous gray, a luminist gray from black – white, and a chromatic gray from green – red, complementary colors.

Thus the initial colorism is actually the basis, it's actually the basis for this dark ground that expresses the overlay of both grays, such that colors emerge or come out of the ground. And in fact, as vivid as they are, they demonstrate their dark nature. From there, all of colorism's progress, all the movement, all of colorism's dynamism will assert itself more and more—and what will that entail?

## II

How does one reach this vivacity, expressing the relationship between colors and light? How does one achieve bright hues, since only bright hues express the relationship between colors? It will be done in stages. Just looking at French painting, I'll use a sequence of three stages, three moments, in Delacroix. What do we see in Delacroix's technique? See, because it's a question of technique. We find something rather strange: the ground's dark color often lingers and for a long time, right, it's already fully color but dark color—only with Delacroix do we get bright colors. How do we move beyond this dark color, these dark colors—how do we draw out more vibrant hues? That's the crucial moment. It's always colorism that appears, that reappears; it's a problem—and Delacroix invents a process that will be recognized even while he was alive, whether people mocked him for it or instead used it themselves: it's the process of using what are called “crosshatching.” He will literally chop up [*hacher*] his dark color—there's no other word for it: green crosshatching, red crosshatching—and it's with crosshatching that color will realize its bright aspects, in bright hues.

One of Delacroix's greatest moments, “Give me a heap of purple and I will bring out an exquisite color,”<sup>8</sup> bring out an exquisite color. It's not like that, it's not a literal formula, it's what he does on the canvas (...) What becomes possible after Delacroix? The unfolding of relations, the unfolding of bright hues and the relationships between bright hues, in a way that no longer depends on color emerging from a dark ground.

It's as though Delacroix had kept—well, I'm going a little far, it didn't go down like this—it's as though Delacroix kept it only in order that he'd no longer need it. Which doesn't take away, which doesn't take anything away from his masterpieces built around dark color. Who's that? To isolate and heighten the relationship between bright hues without passing into dark color, dark color—of course, that is the impressionist.

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<sup>8</sup> I haven't been able yet to find this quote. The closest I can get is a line often featured in books on painting, color, and optics from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: “*Donnez-moi de la boue, j'en ferai la peau d'une Vénus*” Give me some mud and I'll make of it the skin of Venus. This may actually do a better job of serving Deleuze's point. While some painters despaired over gray, muddy colors (Delacroix calls gray the enemy of the painter), he boasts that he can bring out beautiful colors from even the muddiest gray. For what it's worth!



And that's perhaps the first time that colorism appears in its pure form: light, completely subordinate to color (...) Turner, with his yellows There's a really beautiful, remarkable painting by Turner called Homage to Goethe, an Homage to Goethe9 (...) for the impressionists, that's the problem. By that same token, Delacroix's crosshatching, which worked as crosshatching since it was used to chop up [hacher] the base color, the dark color (...) became the well-known impressionist comma-stroke, the juxtaposition of commas—no longer crosshatching chopping up the dark color but little commas on their own.

And well, throughout impressionism there are various style when it comes to commas; Monet's commas—that's not how an expert recognizes an artist; sometimes you're hard-pressed to distinguish a Pissarro from a Monet, a Renoir [? at least the] Main thing: With the comma, it's not about that, that there's a link (*inaudible*) When the comma starts cracking and becomes Van Gogh's [?] Note that it doesn't have to be colorist [.] colorism and the development of colors and the vivacity of of [sic] colors ( ) it's like the basic unit of painting Delacroix's Crosshatching turns into the impressionist comma; the impressionist comma turns into Cézanne's little dabs, which turn into, lastly—it's not a clear transformation (*inaudible*) the colorist relationships. And after that...

There, that explains everything, right! We'll let that marinate for now. For now—did I just go off on a long tangent? What we still need to look at now, regarding color, and I didn't get to it yet, but there's just one thing I'll come back to (...) that's fine. that's what I'd need.

[*After the pause*]

You see, the colors aren't good. It's a very nice triangle.

Okay, well, see: that's a parenthesis we could put before or after everything else; it's something to keep in your pocket, okay? You can read more about this in Goethe, right? I'd rather you read it, but if you don't read it...fine, fine, that's... Well, are there any comments, remarks?

*Student 1:* White and black. I read Goethe, and it's very complicated, because on the one hand, they are color[s]—white is the first, the first genesis of darkness, and black is the essence of darkness, so they are colors—but [on the other hand] when it comes to the color wheel he says no, not at all, White cannot be generated from the color wheel; that's gray.

*Deleuze:* Absolutely.

*Student 1:* And this ambiguity that—

*Deleuze:* Personally, I think that the ambiguity is easily accounted for; it's what I was getting at when I said that the triangle should be interpreted genetically. Then color doesn't actually have an absolute beginning—rather, at the same time, white and black are both the milieu for the exteriority of color, the form of color's exteriority, which doesn't yet have any color inside, and the emergence of the inside. Especially since if we disagree with Newton et al then it'd get complicated; we would have to, if we really focused on color, we would have to pit indeed everything in Goethe against Newton.

*Anne Querrien:* Newton and I... I feel like he was using the laws of optics, decomposing light through the prism and... And I mean, on that alone, you'll find some pop science books on color, the idea that the eye's three primary colors [are]—and it's what was used in television—red, green, and blue and as for television, I have the equation here for its wavelengths: it's just about 51% red, 39% green, and 10% blue, and so according to the color triangle, that puts television over completely on the black side.

*Deleuze:* Yes, yes, it gets pushed over.

*Anne Querrien:* ... pushed over to black, and on the other hand, a big article in the Sunday *Le Monde*—a fascinating article on how color images in television are coded to ensure that color broadcasts are compatible with black-and-white receivers, and well, they subtract color



instead of adding it—and so pull it even further towards black, so that black-and-white receivers can pick up color broadcasts.

*Deleuze:* Yes, yes, yes.

*Anne Querrien:* We should draw a comparison with technology since they appear at the same time: printing—color printing—and the additive composition of colors in printing by Delacroix and company are completely parallel to the research on half-toning.

*Deleuze:* Or Saurat’s method, right, in pointillism, would be another technical comparison to draw with punctual coding...

*Anne Querrien:* Relatively fast photography.

*Deleuze:* Yes, yes, yes. Well, okay, let’s keep going.

Yes, another comment.

*Student 1:* Another thing, about the nine (*inaudible*) traumatic cycle [??]?

*Deleuze:* A numerical correspondence.

*Student 1:* Except for nine, okay, we have three for the three colors, we have six, and now we can’t have nine and go on, and if we keep on separating them—

*Deleuze:* Let’s see.

*Student 1:* Whereas in the other—

*Deleuze:* We have three in the other.

*Student 1:* In the other, we have nine.

*Deleuze:* Oh, you mean in the triangle! Yeah, that’s interesting.

*Student 1:* Yes, it’s important that we get nine

*Deleuze:* It’s important!

*Student 1:* —that we get nine, yes.

*Deleuze:* Well aren’t you an abstract mystic!

Yes, it’s important, but we should... I can’t keep up because I’m totally distracted.

We only get *S* with the wheel; we don’t get... Then three, three Think how we might get nine with the color wheel. Yes, even though it’s clear in the triangle—oh! Maybe, you could maybe untangle a great mystery. Look! Well, we’ll set that aside for now, but again: we’re going to need it soon.

Do you remember where we were? We had just defined our first signal-space, the Egyptian. Egyptian space. But at the same time, this Egyptian signal-space wasn’t made for painting, or at any rate, it certainly wasn’t exclusive to painting. It’s even expressed formally, infinitely more clearly, in Egyptian bas-relief. And my first question along these lines is: Won’t this establish something long-term, something essential about painting? Won’t it establish something long-term that’s essential about painting, namely, the idea of flatness?<sup>10</sup> Because, look, many critiques have specifically defined painting in two ways—take Greenberg for example, a contemporary critic I’ve already talked about. He says that painting consists in two things: flatness and the determination of flatness. That itself is interesting because what does that mean—the determination of flatness as distinct from flatness. Flatness and the

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<sup>9</sup> I’m sticking to the transcription, but *cercle traumatique* is almost certainly a mistake, since it rhymes with *cercle chromatique*, “color wheel.” I tried my best to give the benefit of doubt and search for a reference to a *cercle traumatique* in Goethe’s work on color, but I haven’t yet found anything.

<sup>10</sup> “Flatness” is far and away the most common translation for *planéité*. “Planarity” is much less common and a bit clunkier in English. My only argument for planarity would that it preserves “plan,” for the sake of readers tracking plan/plane in Deleuze’s career. Be that as it may, I’ve chosen “flatness” because it is Greenberg’s term: “The irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness.” Clement Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism,” *Art International* 6.8 (October 1962), 30.



determination of flatness. Okay, maybe, maybe but it's not so self-evident that painting is defined by flatness.

I mean, isn't there a depth to the canvas? why some—and not all—there are some painters who even revolve around there being depth to the canvas. Wouldn't this idea of painting as flatness and the determination of flatness in part come from outside of painting, from a very old horizon, the Egyptian horizon, an Egyptian achievement? Why? Because we saw if we try to define Egypt's signal-space, according to Riegl, we more or less get the following formula: Form and ground are taken on the same plane, flatness—i.e., an equal flatness of form and ground. Form and ground are taken on the same plane, both equally close to each other and equally close to ourselves. That's Egyptian bas-relief, and we saw how it could be equally true for pyramids, in a more complicated way—and that's Egyptian painting.

Yes, we'll have to hang onto this idea of "flatness." Perhaps it's Egypt that realized painting as flatness. And then the theme developed from there, but it didn't have any of the same urgency. Again, it doesn't go without saying that a canvas is flat. After all, there are some, there are some painters who paint backwards; many painters today paint backwards. What does painting backwards mean, if not that the canvas has depth? There are painters who problematize the idea of surface. There's a group—there's a very important group, the Supports/Surfaces group, and then still other groups—many Americans haven't stopped problematizing it. But all that aside.

Flatness won't so much be the necessary outcome of painting as it will be painting's Egyptian horizon, painting's external Egyptian horizon. And indeed, that is what Egyptian space is. It's this expression of a will to art, as Riegl puts it, where it's tied to—and then it's all fair game, we can always dream—it's tied to certain conditions of both civilization and nature, right? The desert, bas-relief's relationship to the desert, the pyramid's relationship to the desert, the eye's relationship to the desert. Doesn't this relationship specifically imply of *planning* of space?<sup>11</sup> Because actually I'm hitting on something I didn't get to say last time, when Riegl tries to say what sort of vision corresponds to Egyptian space. See the side of the object—I'm just summarizing here—the object side there's an operation of *planning* the relationships in space are transformed into planimetric relationships. Well, form and ground are on the same plane, it's linearity and like [Greenberg] says, [the determination]<sup>12</sup> of linearity. That is, what determination of linearity will result from the fact that form and ground are taken on the same plane?

Coming back to what we covered last time: The determination of linearity that follows involves three elements of painting, the three laws of painting. It's precisely because form and ground are taken on the same plane, inhabit the same plane, that painting will have three elements: ground, form, and what relates ground to form and form to ground, namely the geometrical crystalline contour. The geometrical crystalline laws.

And I said that when we look, when we happen to look at a modern canvas, and are in a situation such that we—it's like we're forced, subjected, led to distinguish three elements: form, ground, and contour—then we can say, "An Egyptian's been here!"

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<sup>11</sup> For consistency: "flattening" of space, if *planéité* is "flatness." "Planification" is an option, though I think its only justification would be that it highlights the *plan* common to *planéité* and *planification*. I've tried to do the same by italicizing the word "planning." I'd argue that "planning" is the strongest choice. It clues the reader into the relationship between *plan* terms, and it also communicates something happening in the French: the simultaneous use of different meanings of *plan*—as both "plane" and "plan."

<sup>12</sup> Word missing in transcript.



I'm thinking of a painting, and maybe some of you know it off the top of your head, can see it in your mind—it's a beautiful painting, I think, really very beautiful! A painting by Gauguin: *La Belle Angèle*, *La Belle Angèle*. What a painting! It's a very fine example—and in my opinion, it might be one of the first examples in modern painting—of what's called—I tried to put it in broad strokes—shallow depth, limited depth. There is depth but it's very, very limited; form and ground are really close to the same plane. What is the form? It's the head of a Breton named Angèle—one Gauguin was fond of: a real Breton! She's depicted with her headdress. She's perfect. Okay. Anyway. What is the ground? It's—and this says it all—a field; it's a field.<sup>13</sup> With what we're given it's not clear who invented it; the letters are murky. Is it Van Gogh? Is it Gauguin? Well it doesn't really matter who. Or was it another third member of their group? They made fields, but still—to liven them up—they put bouquets of flowers, like on wallpaper. They put little bouquets of flowers. There's a... Van Gogh was close to a postman in Arles. And he made several portraits of this postman. There's one of those—very, very fine—where the ground comprises a field like wallpaper. It's green, if memory serves. Because he made several. There's a blue one—one with a blue field. There's a green one. And I think the green one has really charming little bouquets of flowers! Which weave a decorative motif onto the field. Anyway. There's the field, then. There's the form. What is it? The form is the head of the Breton. Yet that's clearly not done as a field.

There's still one problem. You'll notice that it runs throughout the history of painting. When it comes to colorism, what do you do about flesh? It's right here, bizarrely, that painting and phenomenologists come together, because both are so animated by the question of flesh, by embodiment. It was the problem of flesh that led Merleau-Ponty to painting.

What do you do about flesh? I tracked down a quote from Goethe, just to tie everything together...oh! Where is that quote? A very nice quote from Goethe—Here it is: "For flesh, the color should be totally liberated from its elementary state."<sup>14</sup> Flesh poses an odd problem for painting. How do you make flesh without winding up with gray? If there is a case—even in the case, even in the case of impressionism, flesh is even more of a problem. How do you depict flesh? Things are no big deal, but flesh doesn't exactly give off much light, you know! How do you prevent flesh from getting muddy? It's tough! You need to treat color in a particular way. So it's incredible in *La Belle Adèle*—no, Angèle—in *La Belle Angèle*. Yes, *La Belle Angèle*. *La Belle Angèle*, since you have two color treatments corresponding to your first two pictorial elements.

Naturally, it wasn't like that with the Egyptians; that's why it's a great modern painting. You have one way of treating flesh And I'm jumping to... I'm foreshadowing because... Finally, one major solution to treating flesh, to treating flesh pictorially, is using what's called broken color; it's by breaking the color. What is broken color? Well see later on, won't we! It doesn't matter, here we're situating a word, a new category in color; broken color is how Van Gogh and Gauguin, for example, treat flesh. Yet, alright. Alright. So you have the use of broken color, the form, the figure, the use of color fields, the ground's treatment, you have your two elements.

And Gauguin uses a method that a guy, unfortunately a minor—well, not unfortunately!—a minor painter in Gauguin's day tried to bring back, and this painter called it

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<sup>13</sup> I'm using "field" for *aplat*, for lack of a better term. As above, an ideal translation would communicate the "flat" in *à plat* / *aplat*, in association with *planéité* and *planification*. "Flat area of color," "flattened color," and other similar phrases are sometimes used for *aplat*, but all of these weigh Deleuze's analysis down in other parts of the seminar.

<sup>14</sup> While I found several references to flesh and skin in Goethe's text, I cannot yet find a clear match for Deleuze's quote.



“*cloisonné*.”<sup>15</sup> You’ll find it in *La Belle Angèle*: the figure is surrounded by a sort of yellow circle that’ll be very important—for starters, this yellow circle unquestionably has a comic effect. Gauguin had a real sense of humor, visually; he’s one of the most lighthearted painters, the most... yes, painting’s comic. And when it’s bracketed off in *cloisonné*, *La Belle Angèle* starts to look like a cheese tin, the side of a cheese tin; it’s cropped like she’s a Breton mascot for Camembert—that’s just Gauguin, instead of... Well. And this yellow, this yellow line, is great because, really, that’s what brings out the figure’s broken color and the ground’s color field [*ton apla*]. And there’s a kind of... And at the same time that’ll be a crucial component of shallow depth, that is, it’ll establish the form and ground “almost” at the same plane. So when you see a painting like this—or I mentioned Bacon which is actually very different—but when... when, in the large, large majority of Bacon’s paintings, you’ll find three elements that stand out. They aren’t all necessarily like this.

The three elements are: a field for the ground. Second, the figure is always done in broken colors. And the autonomous contour, or what refers the form to the ground and the ground to the form, which in Bacon is no longer mere *cloisonné* with its volume, its surface or volume—it’s kind of a rug—in the color-relationships with the grounding field, with the field of color. You might say there are three colors in Bacon that form a sort of rug or ring in the middle of which—or inside, at least—the figure is contained or propped up. Such that you get three regimes of color: a contour regime, secured by the rug or ring; the ground’s regime secured by the field; a figure regime secured by the broken colors—you can call it a tribute to Egypt.

But this kind of return to Egypt is clearly a return to Egypt via thoroughly non-Egyptian means, since now we find the three Egyptian elements again in different approaches to color. And maybe you see what he [Greenberg] meant by linearity and the determination of linearity:<sup>16</sup> the Egyptians provide for linearity, or the identical plane shared by both form and ground, and thereby determine this linearity with three elements: form, ground, and autonomous contour.

Well, if you’ve understood that, and that the Egyptians didn’t settle it, and that it can live on only if a modern painter can recover it and resurrect Egypt via non-Egyptian means—then you’ve understood generally what happens every time, what happens all the time in Art.

So much so that to wrap up our history of Egypt there’s just—there’s a lot we should, at the end, we should talk about still—but it’s fine, there’s one last thing to be done vis à vis the subject what’s going on? We defined objective elements: the same plane for the form and ground, the three elements constituting the determination of flatness: the ground field, the form, the bas-relief figure, and the contour—again—the geometrical crystalline contour, the geometrical crystalline equality [égalité]<sup>16</sup> that carries the form to the ground...

So what stays in your eye, your Egyptian eye—it goes without saying that Egyptians have lost this eye and that today’s Egyptians are halfway... yeah. Very well, yes, the eye... That’s how Riegl defines the Egyptian eye, but you’ll see that the Egyptian eye can only be defined according to its correlate, according to Egypt’s signal-space. What is the Egyptian eye?

And so in the first edition of Riegl’s crucial text, *Art Industry—Late Roman Art Industry*—we find something difficult, something very simple but which comes across as difficult. The first edition tells us, sure! Yeah, this Egyptian space is a closed-in space; it invites a close-up

<sup>15</sup> The French is often preserved in English. “Partitioning” might also work.

<sup>16</sup> This might be a transcription error—or it might be a slip of the tongue. The reference earlier was to “flatness [*planéité*] and the determination of flatness,” but here he says “linearity.” I have further doubt in light of the context here: if we’re talking about how, for the Egyptians, form and ground occupy the same plane, that seems to be a question of “flatness” rather than “linearity.” As elsewhere, though, I’m submitting to the transcript as it appears.



view. No, that's not shocking. You might think that's not really artistically motivated: it's because of the desert and light that one's view is fundamentally drawn in; in Egypt, you look up close.

*Student from outside:* Excuse me (*inaudible*)

*Deleuze:* Where do we drop them off?

*Student:* C 196.

*Deleuze:* So fill them out at the end, okay?

*Student:*

*Deleuze:* What's that? Oh! Yes, yes—

*Student:*

*Deleuze:* It's alright; the meetings are everyone's concern. You don't know about the meetings? Oh! That's my fault; I should have told you. Yes, yes, you know the dates? Oh dear.

*Student:* There's a committee room.

*Deleuze:* ... And that we've yet to see, in teaching, it's true, I'd like a newsletter with updates on late-stage proposals for everyone in their respective fields to up-to-speed with proposals that are already far along—for example, the university project was catastrophic. It's not hard to understand. The university project consisted in bypassing university councils.<sup>17</sup> Well, our knee-jerk reaction is always that no one gives a shit about the university council! But hold on, what will you replace it with? And what about contacting the EBU—I mean, credits would have been distributed directly to the EBU. Which, clearly, hands regional unions—who are also complacent—absolutely put them in the ministry's hands, because there was no longer any university structure. Now that was a terrible proposal. So any time I talk to somebody in a given field, oddly enough, they confirm it. Not long ago I saw—they didn't tell me any secrets—I saw a banker and he said, you know, there was a plan to blow up banks' collective bargaining agreements—a very late-stage proposal.

*Deleuze:* But that can happen.... Particularly in banks, in a particular way. It'd be interesting to get a rundown so that we know advanced proposals that'd go into effect one or two years from now. But for me, that's what elections are for. What were they plotting? I'm not kidding!

*Student from outside:* General Assembly—you have the floor.

*Deleuze:* That's true; that's why I'm thinking if these meetings...

*Student from outside:* ...that's how we found out about it, at 10 pm... that's why we've decided to take action... so if you want to respond... Good bye.

*Deleuze:* Okay, then. Good bye. To reiterate: Yes, it won't do if only professors show up to these meetings. Everyone who is able to go has to... You should look into it. Personally, I think it's Friday or Saturday, but you—you think it's, uh, Thursday... At any rate, you all have to go, have to show up with numbers. Because it's important: to redirect—at present there is still a small chance to salvage something from everything that's... yes, so normally, as I see it, it's Friday and Saturday. Look! I'll stop there, alright, and we'll take a break since we've had enough!

[*Back to class:*]

He's trying to say what sort of eye corresponds to Egyptian space. And I told you that in the first edition, he says, well! It's very strange: it's a near-sighted vision, then, it's near-sighted vision but how does the near-sighted eye behave? Well! He says, it's bizarre, but literally, see, form and ground both occupy the same plane, and I—the viewer, with my eye—I'm just as close. It's an eye that literally acts like touch. It's a tactile eye. It's a tactile eye. And here Riegl—it's a little—anyway, what we need to see, what we get from this passage in Riegl, is that it's

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<sup>17</sup> I cannot yet find the context for any of this discussion, so much of my translation here is uninformed.



not a metaphor, that moreover, Riegl is pointing out two of the eye's functions: you have optical vision, and you have tactile vision. The eye as an eye is not—see, the tactile eye isn't an eye that's supplemented with touch, like when I use my hands to confirm something I've seen, when I touch a face, for example—that's not what it is. It's the eye as such that acts like touch, so this passage from Riegl is still ambiguous, and it's just—it's bizarre. It's in the second edition that he comes out and says that we should distinguish—indeed, he has to coin a complicated word to avoid equivocating—and he says there are like two visions: there's optical vision and there's vision that he calls “haptic,” haptic vision. He borrows the word from the Greeks: *hapto*, which means to touch, the eye's touch, a haptic sense of sight.

So we'll define the haptic sense of sight, if we want to give it a real sense, the haptic sense of sight would be a use of sight that's no longer optical—no longer vision from a distance. See, optical sight is from a distance, relatively speaking; however, the haptic use of vision, or haptic sight, is a close-up sight that grasps form and ground on the same equally-close plane. Well let's suppose, then, before you we take a break, I'm thinking—there are a lot of problems here!

We'll keep this word, haptic; after all, these categories, these categories, it might be really interesting because painting is intended for the eye, right, it's intended for the eye! But which eye? I might suggest that painting perhaps gives rise to an eye within the eye—that painting, okay, might literally have something to do with the so-called third eye. Would we have two optical eyes, two eyes for optical vision, and then a third eye? A third haptic eye? As a result, is it painting that produces the haptic eye? Is there a haptic eye outside of painting? I'm jumping ahead, that's no longer the Egyptians. See, it's knowing whether this talk of “the haptic” will do anything for us. And what would this haptic eye be?

Anyway! Let's wrap up what we've covered today. Look. Light—light is the optical eye; light solicits an optical eye, perhaps. I don't know. Maybe we could say that. But doesn't color belong to a whole other eye? Isn't it a whole other eye? Doesn't color solicit a haptic eye? Wasn't all that earlier about how a haptic eye is reconstituted out of the optical eyes?

In a spirited letter, Gauguin says, “The painter's eye is in heat”—I don't remember what page, but it when it comes up it's pretty funny. What is the painter's eye? This eye, which Cézanne himself claims turns all red, so red, so red—I come back home and my eyes are red, so red that I can't see anymore. Eyes so red they can't see anything: the painter's eye, Gauguin's eye in heat—it's really bizarre. Isn't this a really very strange kind of vision—isn't it the reconstitution of a haptic eye, the Egyptian eye, the third eye?

I say “third eye” not because it's in the brain. It isn't in the brain; it's in the nervous system, but only because, I mean, it's in the middle of the two other eyes. That's where the painter is. But then, is color—I don't know, let's take it as far as we can—Wouldn't color be a way of reconstituting haptic sight that's totally independent and original compared to how the Egyptians created haptic vision? The Egyptians created haptic vision by placing form and ground on the same plane and by producing three elements: form, ground, and geometrical crystalline contours [?].

But for us, hasn't an Egyptian eye been recovered through non-Egyptian means, namely, through colorism? Isn't the haptic eye the eye that draws on an optical external milieu, white and black—the eye that thereby draws the inherent relationships between colors?

Alright, we've wound up with all sorts of questions left hanging, because now we stumble upon the question: The Egyptian world appears to be dead; it can only be resurrected via totally different means. What made the Egyptian world die off? Ah! What brought it to an end?

I'm always bad about posing abstract questions, and well, I'll tell you what. Sure, you might say that. You might put it another way. Okay, go take a break. Take a break.



### III

A lot of you during... our break, a lot of you have been saying that you've been feeling sick and tired with this weather... I should just cave in and end class early (*cheers and applause*), there! Then I'd just like to try to determine—see, we're trying to find out what this spatial event is. Or rather this determination—I'll stick to the expression “linearity and the determination of linearity.” Again, we saw it for Egyptian space. “Linearity” is the plane. “Determination of linearity” is the plane's three elements: ground, form, and contour.

I mean, what's causing this space to be somehow overturned!? Once again, this space will be so overturned that you'll only be able to find traces of Egypt using means that are completely—it'll be a resurrected Egypt. So what could happen? If we stay there, we leave Riegl (or we'll come back to him, at least) but there we'll pose ourselves a question—and as always, like I'm always trying to show you, in a way, we don't have a choice—what might happen in this flat space where form and ground occur at the same plane as the three elements? What's the accident? Accidents are accidents. Events are events. But what is accident and what is event? The spatial determination of the accident or event is exactly this. You have your Egyptian space—well look! Bas-relief. However slight, it's like an earthquake. It causes an earthquake. That is, the plane splits up; imagine that the plane splits up—but the aftermath, it's insane!

The plane splits up, a foreground draws in, a background pulls back, even if only slightly. Disjunction of planes. Really, a disjunction of planes. From there—from there, anyway, it'll be fixed—there will be a foreground and there will be a background. And it's no big deal, as small as it is. The disjunction of planes; that'll be what brings us to other signal-spaces.

And after all, if I have a disjunction between planes, what does that give us—so we're really speeding through uh—what can come of it? A space where planes are disjointed and which is essentially organized around the foreground. That's the first possibility—I'm trying to think through the possibilities. This is the signature of this space: there's a distinction between planes, but it's determined by the foreground [*avant plan*]. I always come back to the concept of determination. So that's great, that'll be great! This foreground-determined space. Then why not the other way around? Let's think of a background-determined space. *Well that, you say, no—that's what we want whenever there's something new, that's what we want because that sounds great—a background-determined space.* Let's break it down literally—a background-determined space: everything emerges from the ground, comes from the ground. So much power compared to the foreground-space! Form *comes out* of the ground in the most energetic sense of the word, while on the flip-side, when the fore-ground is predominant, the form sinks into the ground and determines its own relation to the ground—while here, form literally stems from the ground when the background is determinant. Ah, that must be a beautiful space—before you know it I'm looking for logical positions for my spaces.

And what else can there be when the planes are disjointed?<sup>18</sup> There might be a third thing. It's funny—something very, very winding. As the planes are disjointed, you don't worry so much about the planes themselves, neither the foreground [*avant plan*] nor the background [*arrière plan*]. We'll generate everything between the two planes. But what's between the two, and what *can* be between them if it's not dependent on either the foreground or the background? I see three positions—logically, there are three.

But having said that, let's try to pin down some names. What about this artistic space where the foreground is determinant? So there's volume—volume, since the planes are disjointed. Anyway you see that it's the end of the Egyptian world since volumetric relations

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<sup>18</sup> The original has *les blancs se disjoignent*. I'm interpreting this as a typo.



have been liberated from planimetric relations. There is volume, but what's determinant is the foreground, because it's the foreground that contains the form, and the relationship to the background is determined by the form and by how the background takes shape in the foreground. We'll all recognize this as Greek art.

Take a Greek sculpture—it's a rare example; I'll still try to illustrate it clearly, but I like starting with a purely abstract schema. Not in order to apply it, but because I'd like to demonstrate something right away.<sup>19</sup> The highs and lows of Greek sculpture.

What are the highs—the reliefs, brilliant reliefs. The Greeks had words for a sculpture's highs and lows, and the lows are the hollows—the hollows and the waves and the whole sculpture has different levels, and that's how the art is evaluated: Greek harmony entails the variable distribution of highs and lows in equal measure. It's the highs that are determinant in Greek sculpture, that is, it's in the foreground where form is worked out, and working out the form determines the relationship with the background.

It's an aesthetic space of the foreground where it's the form that's determinant. And Maldiney puts it well when discussing this in his book, *Gaze Speech Space*: "It's wrong—oh so wrong—wrong to say that the Greek world is the world of light." It's not the world of light because light is strictly subject to form's requirements. Sure, it's the world of light, but non-liberated light, light subject to form; light ought to reveal form and submit to the requirements of form. And all Greek sculpture is this way of handling light, this wonderful way of handling light in the service of form. No longer the haptic world of the Egyptians—it's an optical world, only an optical world where light's in the service of form; it's an optical world that still refers back to tactile form: it's a tactile-optical world.

And that's why Riegl defines Greek art as tactile-optical art with a space to match: the primacy of the foreground over the background. Which results in what's likely the most profound conception of art as rhythm or harmony. Rhythm and harmony in the Greek sense and not in the modern sense. But we'll get to that. From one revolution to the next, imagine the reverse: I hope you'll be convinced if you look at Greek sculpture, but the same holds for all of Greek art. Light—any light at all—light is subordinate to the cube's requirements, and the cube is the sort of environment particular to the foreground. It is form in two respects: there is a depth, there are shadows, there are lights, and all of that has to submit to the rhythm of the form, since the rhythm *is* form.

Well, so it's not at all a world of light—that'll have to wait; it's a serious problem because, see, it'll ultimately force us, next time it'll force us to really reconsider our conventional understanding of the Greek world.

Moving on to yet another revolution—what happened that could have reversed the Greek relationship such that the background becomes the determinant ground and that the form, the figure, springs from the ground. But it's a very different sort of figure when it springs out of the ground. It took what amounts to—look, we always talk about the Copernican revolution, and these revolutions are even more important, or at least just as important as the Copernican revolution. To say that Egyptian space gives way to a space determined by the foreground is just as consequential as saying whether the Earth revolves around the Sun or the Sun revolves around the Earth—it's about reversing the structure of space, let alone a second reversal where it's the ground, where everything comes from the ground. Yeah, everything comes from the ground; that's how it is. How do you expect form to have the same bearing when it's determined by the foreground (even if it's only responding to the

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<sup>19</sup> The original reads: *j'essaierai de le montrer comme même...* This is another instance in this particular transcript where I suspect a typo. I've decided to read *comme même* as *quand même*, as the latter is so commonly (and mistakenly) written as the former.



background) as when, on the other hand, it's literally projected by the background? By no means is it the same conception of form. When the background becomes determinant, where does the figure come from—it comes directly out of light and shadow.

In other words, the space of the background is a space where light and shadow are liberated from form. Now it's form that depends on the distribution of light and shadow. It's a radical reversal of Greek space. How did that happen? That's why it's so sad, because it seems that we no longer understand it—even books on this start off by associating this with Greek space, when it's the opposite of Greek space. So there are similarities—obviously, there are similarities—but it's *Byzantine* space. Byzantine art's great place in art history is by no means due to this alone, but its hallmark is having the figure emerge from the background instead of determining the figure as a form in the foreground. This time light *is* set loose—shadow even more so—the Byzantines are the first colorists, since liberating light from form isn't too far from liberating color. And the Byzantines are the first—I think the first in art to manipulate both color scales: the luminous scale, in value, and the chromatic scale, in color [*tons*].<sup>20</sup>

And the Byzantines even had three primary colors: gold, blue, red—the three well-known mosaic colors—with complex relationships to white (as in marble) and black (as so-called “smalt”), which grow and form a kind of framework through the relationships between colors, and the first luminists, just like the first colorists, i.e. giving up polychromy for colorism and luminism, will be Byzantine. That warranted persecution, as the emperor will end up persecuting these artists.

Well, this history—if you consider the opposition between Greek space and Byzantine space—this isn't a linear historical development. If I'm looking for another sequence (this time painting/painting), this is perfect. Just picture a Byzantine figure: everything has to emerge from the ground because the mosaic is in a niche. It's a far-sighted vision; it's far-sighted vision from the viewer's perspective. Far-sighted vision—mosaic is embedded in a niche, and you get these figures eaten up by eyes. It isn't form that defines the figure. What is it? Form answers to light; it answers to shadow and light. The eyes of a Byzantine figure are everywhere there—or the eyes spread to anywhere these gazes up from the ground do. It's the very antithesis to the Greek world. And it might be one of the most beautiful spaces—really there's no better or worse—but really, Byzantine space is... if you compare it to Greek space, it's the exact opposite of Greek space.

Alright. I'm looking for a sequence in painting—There's another guy, just like how I singled out Riegl, there's a major figure in the history of painting named Wölfflin. It's translated in French—a rather good book—on the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries. But he obviously read Riegl because among other things we find, moving from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century—his analyses are very thorough, very detailed—moving from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century we leave behind the 16<sup>th</sup> century's still tactile-optical vision. First, it was something else. First, I'm looking at the short transition between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We move away from tactile-optical vision—that of Durer, or Leonardo. So that already involves a lot of variation; I'm not saying that it's the same space, but in a way it all belongs to a tactile-optical space.

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<sup>20</sup> I've tried to avoid translating *ton* as “tone.” In most contexts in English, tone specifically refers to a shade of color—you obtain different tones by adding black to a color (as opposed to adding white in order to obtain different tints). So far, this sentence makes the best case against using “tone.” Doing so would render these two different scales/ranges synonymous: a range of different “tones” would be none other than a range of different “values” in color. In nearly all cases, I think “color” or “hue” is a better equivalent for Deleuze's *ton*.



And in the 17<sup>th</sup> century a kind of revolution starts to take shape, the key to which being the discovery of a purely optical space. The discovery of a pure space that culminates with Rembrandt, for example, but plenty of others beside. But with these two spaces—16<sup>th</sup> century space and 17<sup>th</sup> century space—what comes first, as the first determination? The primacy of the foreground... if you can think of something by Leonardo da Vinci or Raphael, you'll see it right away. Yet with one remarkable innovation—Raphael, for example—the foreground is curved. Wonderful curve, and a wonderful discovery only possible thanks to the primacy of the foreground. I think... let me clarify, since there are some things I'm taking from Wölfflin that are so great, and then there are some things that... well, this a bit of a tangent, but around the 16<sup>th</sup> century there's a wonderful discovery and it was the same, I think, as what the Greeks discovered. What discovery? Well, it's... I don't like it, but I don't have a better word: it's "the collective line." You can really see the contrast, with the Egyptian line. The Egyptian line is fundamentally individual; indeed, it's the contour of individual form.

That the collective is able to take on form is an idea that... that didn't occur to Egyptians. In other words, for an Egyptian, an individuality can get stronger and stronger but it's always structured as an individuality. Collectivity as such doesn't... that starts with the Greeks. But what do you find in Greek art? You get the invention of a line that no longer coincides with this-or-that individual, a line that encompasses several individuals. There aren't real lines anymore: it's the contour of the ensemble. The invention of the collective line means that the line becomes the contour of an ensemble. The Apostles, for example: of course they're still individualized, but that's not the point. What matters is the enveloping line that goes from the left-most Apostle to the right-most Apostle. I'm thinking of a famous painting, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, by Raphael. Well, in my opinion it seems obvious, but we're no longer there, think about how he collective line can be made specifically—it's the line of the foreground.

It's specifically—it can only be identified via the foreground, as if the fact that the foreground has become determinant allows us to overcome the individual limits of form. Whereby what takes on form—and that's insane from an Egyptian perspective—from a Greek perspective, what takes on form? In Greek statues it's an ensemble, even if it's only a couple. You know right away I can imagine the objection: *but there are plenty of solitary figures*—sure! We shall see. Well, no matter. Anyway, couples in Greek statues: great! The line is the contour shared by two individualities.

And what develops in 16<sup>th</sup> century painting? Leonardo da Vinci's collective line, or Raphael's collective line. They aren't the same. You can tell painters apart by their collective line, their style of collective line. Something remarkable emerges with 16<sup>th</sup> century painting: a tree has a collective line that doesn't depend on its leaves, and the painter has to render the collective line in the foreground. A flock of sheep has a collective line, both flocks of sheep and groups of Apostles; group-painting literally moves downstage, overwhelms the foreground. Yet that appears to be just as true for Greek art and for all other sorts of contexts as for 16<sup>th</sup> century art. On that note, there's something that stands out throughout—or very often—in Leonardo da Vinci's writings, where he says: "Form must not be surrounded by lines."<sup>21</sup> Read that way, we risk running into a contradiction because the sentence can be understood in two different ways, one of which Leonardo did not intend. You might think that it means that form should be free of lines. That's not what he means. Why not? Because the line's primacy is indisputable for him. Besides, what is a form free of lines? It's form

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<sup>21</sup> "The boundaries of bodies are the least of all things [...] Wherefore O painter! *do not surround your bodies with lines*, and above all when representing objects smaller than nature..." From *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Jean Paul Richter, vol 1 of 2 (New York: Dover, 2012), 49. Manuscript pagination. Emphasis mine.



subordinate to light and to color. Yet that's obviously not what da Vinci means. I think his writings and context make it clear that he means form shouldn't be contained by lines; it means that form exceeds the line of individuality. Form exceeds individual lines. But form will be determined by the line of the foreground.

Hence why it matters that Raphael starts to bend the foreground, like some kind of balcony, where the foreground itself is curved. That's one of the great achievements, the real achievements, of this period. But see, when it comes to space, I'd say the same thing goes for both 16<sup>th</sup> century art and Greek art; it's like they change signals.

The primacy of the foreground and the discovery of the collective line. Byzantium and the 17<sup>th</sup> century thus switch signals: the background has primacy, unleashing light and even color. But with the unleashing of light, everything comes from the ground [*fond*]. And that's what 17<sup>th</sup> century painting is all about. And it's so obvious, for example—I have something really simple in mind, a theme in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—it's well known, everyone's pointed it out—the 16<sup>th</sup> century theme: Adam and Eve. It's also one of Wölfflin's examples. Adam and Eve, standing side by side. It could be very complicated since this foreground is the foreground. It might be a curved space; it could be a curving foreground.

What perspective is famous in the 17<sup>th</sup> century? Diagonal. It's as if—if you will—there's no more foreground. Of course there *is* one, but it's not what counts. It's like the foreground was punched out; it was punched out by a depth that drags the left toward... drags it toward or pulls it from the ground [*fond*], pulls the right from the ground.

There's no more foreground [*avant plan*]; there's a differentiation based on the ground [*fond*]. It's clear, for example, in a great painting by Rubens that depicts the meeting of two people. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they'd meet in the foreground and their meeting would take place in the foreground. Not at all with Rubens. Between the two meeting, there's practically an alleyway between them, made up of other people on other planes. So that each of the two meeting in the foreground—both of them—comes from the ground by differentiating, highlighting the alleyway separating them. They meet in the foreground, but only inasmuch as they each come out of the ground.

It's no longer the foreground that determines things. Everything comes from the ground. It's the background that's determinant.

Anyway, in the end, then, there are two new spaces: Greek space or 16<sup>th</sup> century space, [and] Byzantine space or 17<sup>th</sup> century space, and then there's still one more—let's say we're no longer interested in planes, neither background nor foreground: what's between the two? What do you call what's neither ground nor form—what is it? For convenience, let's call it barbarian art. Maybe it's barbarian art. It has to be barbarian art—it should be, but who knows. And you see how we then come up with our three positions: primacy of the foreground; primacy of the background; between them? The barbarians arrive—they always arrive “in-between.”

What happened? What happened is that somehow the Egyptian way of achieving unity shifted. The foreground and the background shifted. What's going on?

I said that it's either an accident or it's an event. Accident or event. That's the formula for accidents or events. Because once the planes have shifted, once there's a disjunction between planes, what do you want form to do? There's only one thing form can do: fall. It falls between the two planes. Or if push comes to shove, if it's animated by some miraculous energy, it will rise. Now we really get into the history of Western art—one that all comes down to rise and fall. The figure is constantly falling and rising. Say what? It's always on the verge of disequilibrium. In other words, either accident or event—accident: the fall of the figure; event: the rise—the figure's ascension never stops. Fall and ascension are the two vertical movements perpendicular to the spreading of planes. They fall and rise again, you know, and what's the point? It's the aesthetic sensibility of, for example, it's the Christian aesthetic sensibility. The



figure affected by this rising, falling, Deposition of the Cross and the Ascension.<sup>22</sup> And I mean at this level, we're no longer talking about religious categories; these are aesthetic categories. The succession, the endless series of the Depositions of the Cross or the Ascensions of Christ. And it'll never end. The figure is surrounded. It's no longer determined as an "essence"; the figure becomes fundamentally swept up by accidents or events. The painter of "essences" was Egyptian. Now accidents and events take their place, artistically. Always something just a bit off balance.

In a great text, *The Eye Listens* by Claudel, specifically on Dutch painting, he analyzes in detail what he calls "a kind of imbalance." "There will be no curtain painted that doesn't seem to... just fall back down."<sup>23</sup> Or in Rembrandt, the peeled lemons which [?]25 or these greens that are on the brink of imbalance, so much so that Cézanne invents—this isn't what prompts him to invent, while he's also looking essentially for the point of imbalance of form. It couldn't be otherwise. And in a few great passages Claudel asks, "What is a composition?" What's composition? *The painter* becomes the composition! In what way—notoriously, in the form of the still-life, for example. And he says—he says it all in one beautiful sentence—he says, "Composition is organization in the process of coming undone." He doesn't say it like that, but almost.<sup>24</sup> It's organization in the process of coming undone. That is, it's an organization taken at the point of imbalance. And Claudel also talks about disintegration by light. Disintegration by light will be the motif running throughout his commentary on Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*. We'll see that. So, I'm just repeating what we've established, that's the only... you get into all kinds of adventure once you discern a disjunction between the two planes. I'm not at all saying that everything gets mixed up, only that all these adventures fall under the heading: the fall or rise of accidents. These accidents can be all sorts of things. The line might be the collective line of a temporary group. Flocks of sheep, leaves rustling on trees in the wind, etc. It might be light that no longer coincides with the form of the object. that might be the eruption of color's break—in other words, painting found its essence in what was an accident for an Egyptian context.

Alright, good so far? Well, so what we need to... that's what we still need to look at; you can see what's left for us to cover. We still have two more meetings: all of this and then color. All this business with space, if I have time, and then color. Anyway, there you go.

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<sup>22</sup> I've treated these terms in a more general way, but one could alternatively understand them as references to titles of paintings.

<sup>23</sup> It seems to me that this is less of a quote than it is Deleuze's attempt to roughly recall the thrust of Claudel's text. If not Deleuze's fault, there may be a problem with the transcription. There *is* a reference to a curtain "raised for an instant[,] ready to fall again" that makes its way into the book on Francis Bacon (Claudel, 42). However, I cannot find anything in Claudel that lines up with Deleuze's wording here.

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze may not be quoting Claudel *verbatim*, but here he comes closer. In *L'oeil écoute*, Claudel calls Dutch still-life *un arrangement en train de se défaire*. For reference, see the 1950 translation by Elsie Pell: "Dutch still-life is an arrangement in imminent danger of disintegration." Paul Claudel, *The Eye Listens*, trans. Elsie Pell (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 48.