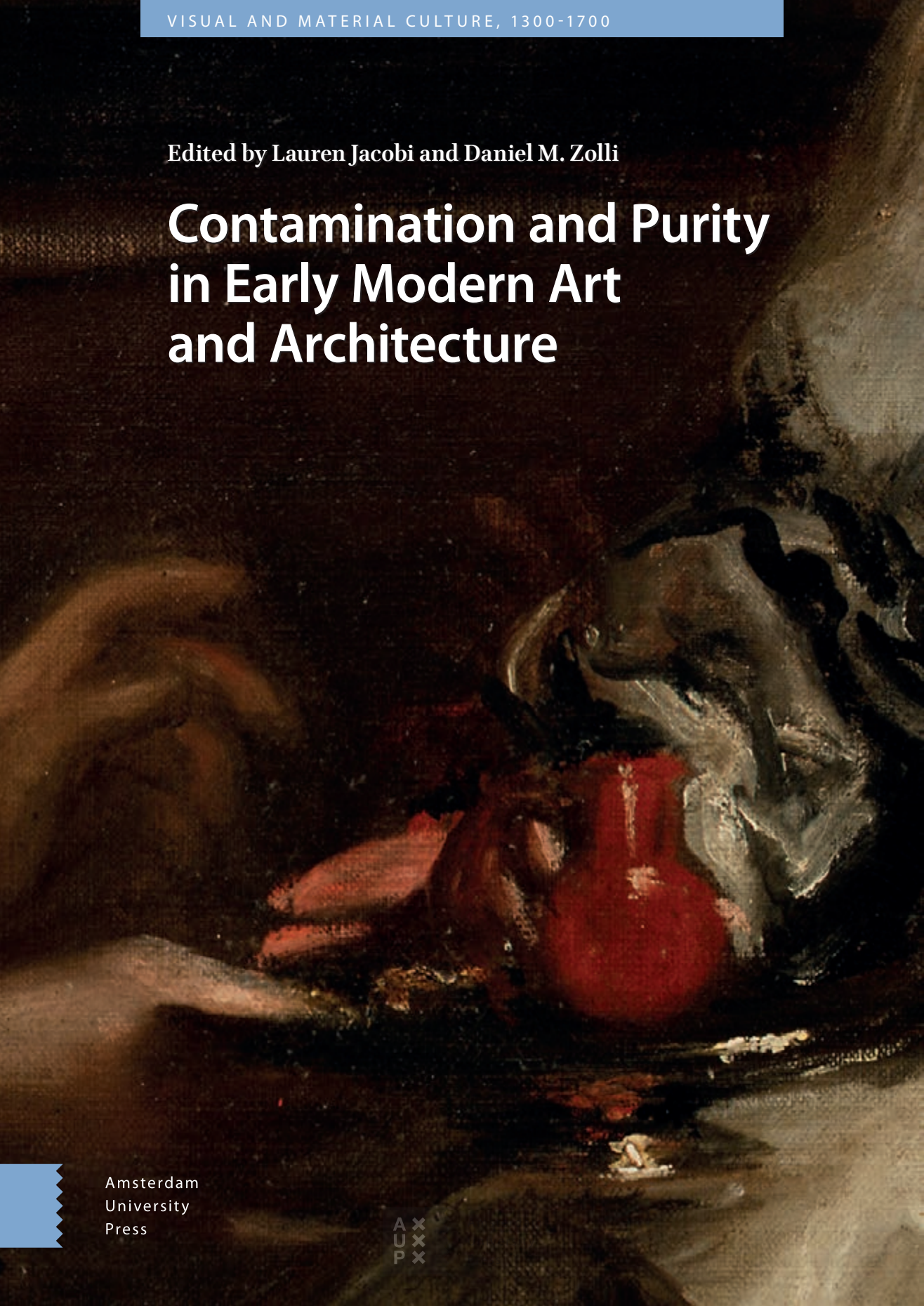
VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE, 1300-1700

Edited by Lauren Jacobi and Daniel M. Zolli

Contamination and Purity in Early Modern Art and Architecture



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Visual and Material Culture, 1300-1700

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Introduction: Contamination and Purity in Early Modern Art and Architecture

Lauren Jacobi and Daniel M. Zolli

'Dirt offends against order.' With this assertion, appearing on the first page of her now-classic study on pollution, the British social anthropologist Mary Douglas announced her conviction that attending to dirt – or, more precisely, the aversion to it – could afford uncommon insight into how societies understood, assembled, and produced order. Published in 1966, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* offered a potent structural analysis of cultural notions of cleanliness.[1] Those empowered to define dirt not only determined social norms, Douglas argued, but they distinguished what (or who) fell within those norms from what did not. To create rules about 'dirt' then – an elastic metaphor, in Douglas's schema, referring to 'all the rejected elements of ordered systems' – was to define order, a categorization dependent, necessarily, on the transgressive status of dirt: deemed restless, volatile, ready to chip away at order's defenses.[2] Like binary stars locked in a gravitational orbit, contamination and purity were, for Douglas, always inseparably dependent.

The present volume partly grows from a belief that Douglas's insights can be productively extended into the study of early modern Europe. To be sure, early modern Europeans were not the first, nor the last, people for whom contamination and purity were preoccupations that structured culture. One of Douglas's points, in fact, is that pollution-consciousness is a hallmark of many societies seeking to

This project originated in a conference held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2016. The editors would like to thank that event's original participants, its generous and receptive audience, as well as MIT and the New England Renaissance Conference for their encouragement, in particular Arindam Dutta, Touba Ghadessi, and Gen Liang. In compiling this volume, we benefited from the unflagging interest, vision, and intelligence of Erika Gaffney and Allison Levy, and the constructive criticisms of two anonymous peer reviewers. For help editing the manuscript, thanks are due to Aidan Flynn and Kayla Kane. We also thank MIT's HASS Fund and the School of Architecture and Planning for supporting the production of this book.

1 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

2 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 44.

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construct social order: her own examples, from the Hebrews following Leviticus to the Lele people of sub-Saharan Africa to her own postwar Britain, capture this. Nevertheless, it is demonstrably the case that throughout the European subcontinent roughly between the years 1400 and 1750 CE questions surrounding what was pure and impure – distinctions between the clean and unclean, sameness and difference, self and other, organization and its absence – were of paramount concern.

The Latin word *contaminare* comes from *com-tangere* ('to touch or bring together'). The word suggests tactility, contact, and – etymologically at least – it excludes purity, depending on one entity's exposure to, its mixing with, outside or foreign influences. During this period, Europe saw vast numbers of bodies and things in motion. It witnessed not only increased trade, but European exploitation and exploration unfolded on a hitherto unimaginable scale, not to mention frequent irruptions of disease, as the very channels along which people, objects, and ideas circulated also carried dangerous pathogens. It was also a time when European Christians – aiming to expand or to protect their religious purity – forcibly expelled, enclosed, or converted vast swathes of people deemed religiously Other; and when they initiated an inquisition to combat heretical ideas, which occurred against a backdrop of fierce intra-European conflicts over religion. All of this was aided, of course, by the rise of print technology, which allowed ideas, some of which threatened existing power structures, to reach ever larger and geographically diverse audiences. Contamination and purity were, in short, everywhere in early modern European society, in countless guises, shaping the lives of Europeans – and those whose lives they touched – fundamentally.

These are hardly new ideas. Scholars, in the last few decades alone, have tracked the role that contamination and purity played in early modern debates ranging from godliness and sin, cleanliness, gender, and ethnicity, and in countless other domains. Less thoroughly studied, though, is how the intertwined categories informed European approaches to art and the built environment, both as they were created and experienced. It is precisely this lacuna that the present volume aims to address. Which individuals and institutions, it asks, determined what was pure or polluted? And what sorts of politics, ideologies, and expertise motivated and structured their choices? What kinds of interpretive slippages happened when objects or materials, pure or otherwise, insinuated themselves into different cultures and contexts? In what contexts did purity and contamination – in art and architecture – clash or coexist? And when did they hybridize?

Taking questions like these as its point of departure, this volume addresses many of the myriad ways in which concerns for purity and contamination shaped the artistic and architectural pursuits of early modern Europeans. Its aim is neither to treat these phenomena comprehensively nor to fit them within an all-encompassing framework. Given the sheer extent, variety, and particularity of examples the period

offers, such an endeavor would be neither productive nor possible. In assembling this volume, we have instead asked contributors to focus their essays around historical instances in which purity and contamination assumed particular salience: in the materials that early modern actors chose; in how they manipulated them; in the spatial practices they adopted; and in the responses – visual, verbal, textual, physiological – that such activities provoked.

To this end, the volume's ten essays present materials drawn from diverse periods and places in multiple practices, teasing out the contradictions and complexities inherent in early modern understandings of purity and contamination, and testing the methodological strengths and limitations of the two categories. While such an approach has ensured variety, above all else, things do emerge from a reading of the whole. What follows is an anatomy of several (though by no means all) of the volume's organizing ideas. Our objective in writing these remarks has not only been to provide context for individual chapters, but also to offer additional lines of argumentation that may allow for a more expanded understanding of the volume's theme. Just as the topics of the essays are diverse, so do the essays themselves encompass more than one idea.

Artistic and Architectural Practices, Clean and Unclean

One symptom of the transformations occurring throughout early modern Europe was society's acute preoccupation with cleanliness. In recent years, cultural historians like Douglas Biow and Dominique Laporte, many of them in dialogue with Mary Douglas's work, have mapped the changing attitudes in early modern society toward hygiene and public health, their sources, as well as the practical measures that Europe's citizens took to expel dirt and filth.[3] Some of these measures – like the retrofitting of palaces with plumbing and latrines, the increased manufacture of soap, or the development, also throughout the subcontinent, of efficient sewage systems – arose in response to the threat of disease, and particularly to (highly contagious) outbreaks of plague. Others – like the emphasis, in certain quarters, on wearing fresh clothes, using refined eating utensils and, more generally, on learning polished etiquette – reflect a belief that physical cleanliness brought order and dignity to civil society.[4]

3 Biow, *The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy*, esp. pp. 1–52. See also Stallybrass and White, *The Politics of Transgression*; Laporte, *A History of Shit*; Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*; Mucciarelli, 'Igiene, salute e pubblico decoro nel medioevo,' pp. 15–84.

4 The *locus classicus* on the civilizing process in early modern Europe remains Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. Of the many courtesy and etiquette treatises to emerge in the early modern period, the *Galateo*, by the Florentine humanist and cleric Giovanni della Casa, published posthumously in 1558, is perhaps

Such priorities are paralleled in humanist campaigns, particularly in Italy, to cleanse Latin of the barbarisms it had absorbed in the preceding centuries: of the 'barbaric speech,' as one Roman humanist put it, that had 'polluted' and 'dirtied' pure and ordered diction following the peninsula's invasion by the Goths and Vandals.[5] Such linguistic untaintedness endeavored, moreover, to counter the quests of Dante and others to write prose in a diction considered to be 'vulgar.'[6] Evangelists of linguistic purity – Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo Bruni, Pietro Bembo, and Poggio Bracciolini among them – saw themselves as providing a model of sanitized speech that would contribute to civic order in the present, and which could endure well into the future.

Crucially for this volume's purposes, hygiene and its social connotations were also matters of artistic and architectural concern. To cite just one example, they were fundamental to the visual arts' – and principally painting's – claim to belong among the liberal arts, which hinged, among other things, on what might be called manual hygiene: the idea that art was less manual labor – materially dirtying one's hands and body – than intellectual exercise. As late as 1591, the Genovese painter and nobleman Giovanni Battista Paggi would write that no artist should stain 'their hands [by touching] paint,' but that if they did, though disgraceful, the act was born from need, as when a doctor handled a sick patient.[7] Writing more than a century earlier, Leon Battista Alberti bemoaned the degradation of the architect's work as it passed from his mind to those who constructed the building. 'The brevity of human life and the scale of the work,' he opined, 'ensure that scarcely any large building is ever completed by the same man who begins it… something begun well by another [can be] perverted, or corrupted, and finished incorrectly.'[8]

most acutely focused on cleanliness. On della Casa's tract, and its hygienic investments, see Biow, *The Culture of Cleanliness*, esp. pp. 17–24.

5 Cited in Celenza, *The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 113.

6 Biow, *The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy*, p. 31.

7 'Dico che non è necessario toccare i colori con le mani, ma che quando vengano tocchi, più per disgrazia che per bisogno, pregiudica tanto alla nobilità delle leggi, se, mentre un dottore scrivegli vien tocco, o sia per caso, o per volontà.' In *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architetti*, I, p. 74. Cited in Sohm, 'Maniera and the Absent Hand,' 107. In a parallel vein, the Flemish anatomist Andreas Vesalius, in his tradition-breaking anatomical treatise *De humani corporis fabrica* (first published in Latin in Basel in 1543), famously advocated that physicians perform their own autopsies, in order to cleanse ancient texts of error by 'handling the [cadaver] with [their] own hands.' In the accompanying text, Vesalius complains of 'that detestable procedure by which [those physicians] aloft in their highchair [croak] things they have never investigated,' allowing that Vesalius defined his modernity and medical progress by a willingness to get his hands dirty. On Vesalius and hands-on dissection, see for example, Schultz, *Art and Anatomy in Renaissance Italy*; Ferrari, 'Public Anatomy Lessons and the Carnival'; Kusukawa, 'The Uses of Pictures in the Formation of Learned Knowledge.'

8 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, pp. 318–319. See also Trachtenberg, *Building in Time*, pp. 72–73.

Others took a less jaundiced view of craft, however, even embracing its dirtier dimensions. Fellow artists alleged, for example, that the Venetian painter Titian 'painted more with his fingers than with his brushes' when finishing a work.[9] And in one of his more memorable sonnets, Michelangelo Buonarroti cataloged, only partly in jest, the grotesque bodily contortions he endured to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling. He bent himself 'like a harpy's breast,' and, later in the poem, 'like a Syrian bow.' His brush, he added, 'with its nonstop dripping from above, [transformed his face into] a richly decorated pavement,' his messy countenance the very antithesis of the pure Edenic bodies he rendered.[10] In his early seventeenth-century treatise, meanwhile, the northern Italian architect Vincenzo Scamozzi (1548–1616) advised would-be practitioners to develop a sensory – indeed bodily – understanding of stones' properties: not only by seeing and touching them, but by learning their odor, and even their taste.[11] In the near-life-size self-portrait that he interpolated beneath his tabernacle for the church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg (1493–1496), moreover, the German sculptor Adam Kraft outfitted himself with a chisel and mallet, shop clothes, and a turban that protected his hair from dirt (Fig. 0.1).[12] Whereas earlier in the century, Leonardo da Vinci had adduced the 'sweat,' 'dust,' 'mud,' and 'bodily fatigue' accompanying stone carving as proof of sculpture's intellectual inferiority to painting, Kraft wore it as a badge of pride.[13] Nor was the sculptor unique in fashioning himself thus, as self-portraits of Lorenzo Ghiberti, Filarete, Michelangelo, and countless others attest.

Also noteworthy is that the most consistent physical contexts in which making occurred – workshops – were often contaminated, socially and intellectually, by those outside the ranks of professional artists and architects. As Pamela Long has argued, the very development of architectural and engineering practices in the early modern period may have occurred precisely because these sites acted as 'trading zones,' places where meaningful communication and debate happened between

9 'Ed il Palma [i.e., Palma il Giovane] mi attestava, per verità, che nei finimenti [Tiziano] dipingeva più con le dita che co' pennelli.' In Boschini, *Le Ricche minere della pittura venziana*, p. 712. Cited in Sohm, 'Maniera and the Absent Hand,' 107.

10 'I bend my breast like a harpy's, and, with its nonstop dripping from above, my brush makes my face a richly decorated floor' (*e 'l petto fo d'arpia, e 'l pennel sopra 'l viso tuttavia mel fa, gocciando, un ricco pavimento*). We derive our translation, with minor alterations in syntax, from Barkan, *Michelangelo*, p. 87.

11 Scamozzi, *L'idea dell'architettura universale*, II, pp. 194–195. Full citation appears in Payne, 'Materiality, Crafting, and Scale in Renaissance Architecture,' 385. Scamozzi's opinions have a long prehistory dating to well before the early modern period, on which see, for example, Smith, *The Body of the Artisan*.

12 Schlief, 'Nicodemus and Sculptors.'

13 For Leonardo's remarks, part of his well-known *paragone*, or comparison, of the sister arts of painting and sculpture, see Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, esp. pp. 256–257.

Figure 0.1. Adam Kraft, Life-size self-portrait on the Eucharistic tabernacle, 1493–1496, sandstone with partial polychromy, St. Lorenz, Nuremberg. Photo: Uoeai1, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

university-educated people and those hailing from practical or technical vocations.[14] That the Venetian government routinely hosted visiting dignitaries at its foundries at the Arsenal, and at its glassmaking facilities on Murano, moreover, suggests an inclination, even among the noble classes for whom hygiene was a way of life, to valorize artisanal labor – here enfolded into the image of the state.[15] Echoes of this idea are also found in the Paduan humanist Pomponius Gauricus's tract *De sculptura* (*c.* 1504). While he preferred not to discuss the 'dirty and smoky' aspects of bronze casting, Gauricus wrote, this owed less to his disdain for 'clay, manure, coal, and bellows' than to his certainty that his readers – humanists themselves – would already have known about them from their own visits to shops.[16] Where artistic and architectural labor and know-how were concerned, then, opinions about purity and contamination – the clean and unclean – were a matter of perspective.

Concerns about appropriate practice are likewise the subject of the volume's opening essay, in which Carolina Mangone considers the corpus of sculptures that Michelangelo left unfinished – known to his peers, and to us today, as *non-finiti*. Against a triumphant reading of these works, one that sees their abstract and indeterminate surfaces as precursors of modernism, Mangone trains her attention on the interpretive challenges that these works posed for contemporaries accustomed to seeing finish – clean facture – as the benchmark for aesthetic perfection. Later collectors of these *non-finiti*, Mangone shows, sought to underplay – and even to normalize – Michelangelo's chisel-marked surfaces through their display. If prevailing expectations for finish deemed such imperfection inappropriate for interior display, a species of contamination, the decisions about how and where owners exhibited the sculptures in gardens, grottoes, courtyards, workshops – all liminal contexts – rendered the lack of finish more logical: aligning their imperfect state with the generative processes of nature and the reality of the ruination of time.

Matter, Pure and Impure

Another guiding thought throughout this volume's essays is that early modern actors saw materials, too, in terms of purity and contamination. Often with pride, the pure stuff of art and architecture could be yoked national or local identities: limewood in southern Germany; alabaster in Spain; Istrian limestone in Venice and along

14 Long, *Engineering the Eternal City*, p. 4. Long derives her concept of the 'trading zone' from Peter Gallison. See Gallison, 'The Trading Zone,' pp. 781–844.

15 On official visits to Murano and the Arsenale, see Fulin, 'Saggio del catalogo dei codici di Emmanuele A. Cicogna,' esp. 95; Zecchin, *Vetro e vetrai di Murano*, II, pp. 233–234; and, most recently, Neilson, 'Demonstrating Ingenuity,' esp. 65.

16 Gauricus, *De scultura*, p. 223; on Gauricus's remark, see Smith, *The Body of the Artisan*, p. 81.

Figure 0.2. Donatello, *Marzocco*, *c.* 1418–1420, *macigno*, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. Photo: Daniel M. Zolli

the Adriatic coast; travertine in Rome; marble from the Apuan Alps inland from Carrara; or the Tuscan *macigno* used by sculptors and architects for structural and decorative purposes. So tethered was this last substance to Florentine identity, in fact, that Dante invoked the bluish-gray sandstone to explain the character of the city's people: when their ancestors descended from the hills of Fiesole, he noted, they retained 'something of the mountains and the *macigno*' – they were, in other words, tough and unyielding.[17] It can be no coincidence, then, that several of the most prominent civic sculptures in Florence, including Donatello's *Marzocco* and his *Dovizia* – located at the town hall and marketplace, respectively – openly advertised the *macigno* from which they were made (Fig. 0.2). A similar logic obtained in Caravaggio's palette, predominated by earth pigments (red and yellow ochres, umber) and carbon blacks – many of which could be locally sourced, allowing that his pigments, like the locals he used as models in his paintings, were of a distinctly Roman provenance (Fig. 0.3).[18]

Worked immaculately, meanwhile, pure materials could connote physical hygiene, flawless genealogy, or spiritual piety. According to his biographer, the Castilian wood sculptor Gregorio Fernandez (1576–1636) even treated making itself as a pious act: praying, fasting, and taking the sacrament before commencing a work.[19] And in his *vita* of Fra Angelico (*c.* 1395–1455), Giorgio Vasari cited the popular belief that the Dominican friar and painter 'never touched his brushes without first praying.'[20] Analyses of Fra Angelico's palette have shown, moreover, that although the painter used lapis lazuli sparingly, he applied it copiously, in solid fields of color, when representing the Virgin Mary's robe – as though the costly and exotic pigment, enabled by his art, could convey her own pure state.[21] In still other contexts, immaculately worked materials could signal – quite simply – artistic excellence. When Michelangelo signed his early career tour de force, the *Pietà* (1498–1499), with the imperfect tense Latin verb *faciebat* ('in the process of being made'), for example, he carried this idea to prideful extremes:

17 Dante, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, II, p. 249. For this source, and for an excellent discussion of *macigno* and its local symbolism, see Harris, 'Donatello's Polychromed Sculpture,' pp. 67–77, with additional bibliography.

18 On Caravaggio's palette, see, for example, Cole, '*Arti povere*, 1300–1650,' esp. p. 259; Langdon, *Caravaggio: A Life*.

19 Palomino, *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors*, III, p. 70. Cited in Neilson, 'Carving Life,' 226.

20 'Dicono alcuni, che fra' Giovanni non harebbe messo mano ai penelli, se prima non havesse fatto orazione. Non fece mai Crocifisso che non si bagnasse le gote di lagrime.' Vasari, *Le vite*, I, p. 363.

21 See, for example, Cunha, *Le lapis lazuli*; Bucklow, 'Lapis lazuli,' pp. 468–471. Following a longstanding tradition, early modern actors also invoked pure materials, metaphorically, to signal virtues: one's intentions could be pellucid, if not literally translucent; one's skin as smooth as alabaster, or as white as ivory. See Jung, 'Crystalline Wombs and Pregnant Hearts.'

Figure 0.3. Caravaggio, *David with the Head of Goliath*, 1599, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid. Photo: © Museo Nacional del Prado / Art Resource, NY

reassuring beholders that, no matter how perfect his statue appeared, he could have made it better yet.[22]

Where pure materials might be associated with nature, their contaminated counterparts more often aligned with culture. Indeed, the human hand was sometimes viewed as a polluting agent capable of convoluting God's message. One motivation for the iconoclastic fury that erupted throughout Europe in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, after all, was the idea that artistic skill, carried to immoderate extremes, had become an idolatrous distraction from art's devotional purpose. Elsewhere, contaminated materials might be likened to witchcraft, foreignness, or social deviance. When Alberti lamented the practice of painting architectural models ('lewdly [dressed] with the allurement of painting'), for example, or when, a century later, Benvenuto Cellini ridiculed painted sculpture as a 'deception of farmers,' they aligned themselves with a view, prevalent among certain Florentines, that polychromy defiled the truth inherent to materials.[23] Yet, contemporaneously, in central Italy Guido Mazzoni produced celebrated, multi-figural sculptural groups in polychromy; and in Spain, too, life-sized painted sculptures in terracotta and wood (called *imaginería*) served the reverse purpose: articulating doctrinal truths as no unpainted work ever could.

In a slightly different vein, we might think of the many toxic materials and processes intrinsic to early modern art production, which always threatened to contaminate, and permanently alter, the bodies of practitioners. Bezoars from the gastrointestinal systems of various animals were employed as a perceived antidote to poison. Lung diseases and chronic illnesses were not uncommon in certain trades. The widespread practice among European miners, smelters, and casting technicians of consuming butter before work – to take a single example – aimed to protect them from pulmonary disease, counteracting the poisonous fumes of metals like mercury, which were cold according to prevailing medical theory, with a warm essence.[24] The use of the toxic substance intensified after the mid-sixteenth century discovery of the so-called patio process — a new way to use amalgamation to harvest silver form ore. At that point, the Spanish mining district Almadén and the town of Huancavelica in Peru were major sites supplying mercury for the world market.[25] More recognizable to us, perhaps, are the masks that metalworkers wore,

22 On the imperfect tense in signatures, see Jûren, 'Fecit-Faciebat,' 27–28. On Michelangelo's *Pietà*, in particular, see Pon, 'Michelangelo's First Signature,' 16–21; and Rubin, 'Signposts of Invention,' 563–599. For a near-contemporary comparison to Raphael, see Goffen, 'Raphael's Designer Labels,' 123–142.

23 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, p. 34; Varchi, *Due lezzioni*, p. 152 ('inganna contadini').

24 See, especially, Smith, 'Making as Knowing,' esp. pp. 17–23; though see also Smith, 'The Matter of Ideas in the Working of Metals in Early Modern Europe,' pp. 42–65.

25 Asmussen and Long, 'Introduction: The Cultural and Material Worlds of Mining in Early Modern Europe,' 16.

which prevented contamination by binding up the mouth and nose (Fig. 0.4). At the same time, dangerous processes had natural economic value. This was undeniably the case with 'practical alchemy' – chemical processes like the production of metals, patinas, glass, tin glazes, and pigments such as vermilion – where the quasi-magical ability to transform contaminated, base materials into something more lucrative, more pure, could vastly enrich their maker.[26] Such discourses – indeed the very idea of what impure materials were – differed dramatically from one place, group, or institutional context to another.

If ostensibly impure artistic processes were sometimes invested with positive connotations, Grace Harpster's essay reveals how real dirt, too, could be enlisted strategically to an object's advantage. Focusing on the cult statue of the Black Madonna at the Holy House in Loreto, on Italy's Adriatic coast, Harpster traces how early modern authors sought to rationalize the artifact's notably dark complexion – and its uneasy entanglements with race – by attributing its painted hue to candle smoke. Such rhetorical tactics, Harpster argues, depended – paradoxically – on the Counter-Reformation stance that ritual images should routinely be cleaned. Whereas soot, in this view, signaled negligence – the contamination of sacred space – here it became a marker of miraculous agency, the statue's resistance to flames, and custodial care, confirming its unnatural status, while also sanctioning its associations with ethnic otherness.

Equally rich in paradox was the early modern phenomenon of painting on stone, the subject of Christopher Nygren's essay. Since at least the early sixteenth century, painters had worked on semi-precious stone supports, utilizing their (sometimes) striated surfaces as compositional inspiration. In the seventeenth century, however, artists introduced a new, and far less noble, type of material to their repertoire: *pietra d'Arno*, a kind of sedimented Tuscan mud. Arguing that painting on this comparatively base material should be framed in the context of spiritual salvation, Nygren outlines the principles of what he terms 'sedimentary aesthetics,' which turned on the capacity of human creativity to transform – and to redeem – its impure, corrupt, and fallen inheritance.

Of course, this preoccupation with matter, pure or contaminated, ramified in more than artistic directions. Another development in the period was the rise of a mercantile economy, grounded in the increased import and export of commodities. Riddled with tensions and anxieties about duplicity, economic transactions always operated with a heightened state of alertness to material purity and contamination. Within the marketplace, pure matter mattered. This

26 We derive this point from Cole, 'The Technical Turn,' p. 111. On 'practical alchemy' in early modern Europe, see Smith, *The Body of the Artisan*, esp. pp. 129–151; but also, Smith, 'Alchemy as the Imitator of Nature,' pp. 22–33.

Figure 0.4. Georgius Agricola, Woodcut depicting iron smelting process, from *De re metallica* (1556), Book IX, p. 341. Photo: Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection

is apparent, on the one hand, from the phrases typically used in guild statutes to affirm the type of exchanges that should take place between manufacturer and client: 'good faith and without fraud' (*bona fide sine fraude*) for example.[27] It emerges, on the other hand, from how tirelessly guilds and merchants labored to root out unruly pursuits like adulteration and counterfeiting – contamination's offspring – that had the potential to disrupt the seemingly uncomplicated exchange of goods. It was not uncommon, for example, for city guilds to impose fines for using unapproved combinations of materials; or to mandate that artisans manufacture, and merchants sell, their products in ground-floor, open-air stalls, where their activity could be more easily surveilled.[28]

Efforts to broker trust also extended to the activity of affixing authenticating seals to objects at the time of sale. In one surviving matrix for producing wool seals, this guarantee of quality is corroborated iconographically with a lamb (which, being an avatar for Christ, had wool that was 'immaculate,' literally without stain; Fig. 0.5). A desire for trust also shaped mercantile conduct abroad. Witness the Tuscan merchant Francesco Datini's habit, adopted around 1400, of stitching cloth samples into his commercial correspondence (Fig. 0.6). While merchants traditionally invoked their word, or their honor, to kindle interpersonal trust, Datini's swatches betray a belief that offering his clients a physical relic of material for forensic scrutiny carried greater persuasive force.

Naturally, material purity was also a central plank in early modern monetary platforms. So essential was public trust in currency to civic life, in fact, that coins themselves sometimes became the subject of juridical performances. It was not uncommon, for example, for tests on the purity of specie to occur publicly (or semi-publicly). In Perugia, assaying routines took place in front of an audience at the Collegio del Cambio, with senior money changers arrayed before a vast fresco cycle, by Pietro Perugino, that turned on themes of justice.[29] In the aftermath of a number of coinage revisions in the late thirteenth century, the Royal Mint in England implemented a more literal trial, with coins cast as quasi-defendants in a legal case to assess their purity. In lieu of an internal check on the quality of money, by 1248 the Crown designed the almost ritualized Trial of the Pyx, as it was known, to prove that the actual composition of various denominations met standards of fineness set by the Crown. England's sovereign authority mandated that

27 On these and other terms used in the late medieval and early modern marketplace to instill confidence in authorized materials or goods, see Romano, *Markets and Marketplaces in Medieval Italy*, esp. pp. 171–175.

28 In Florence, the building used for assaying coins was located in one of the city's main trading areas, the Mercato Nuovo, which, from the 1550s, included an open loggia, inspiring confidence in 'uncontaminated' exchanges; Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, IV, p. 517. See also Pagnini, 'Il Mercato Nuovo di Giovanni Battista del Tasso,' pp. 63–70.

29 For an analysis of the frescos, see Marchesi, *Il Cambio di Perugia*.

Figure 0.5. Seal of the Wool Guild, fourteenth or fifteenth century, stone, Museo di San Marco, Florence. Photo: Daniel M. Zolli

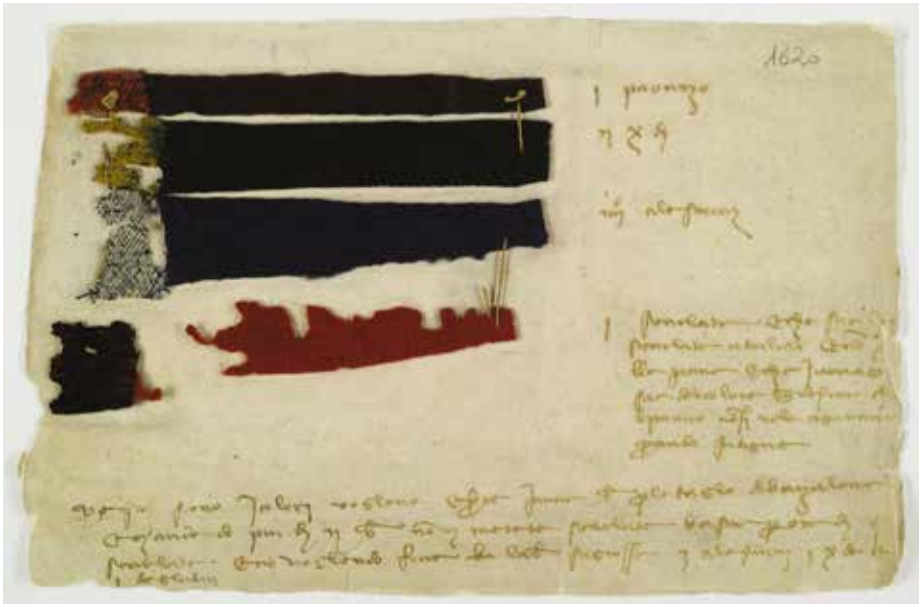

Figure 0.6. Letter with cloth swatches from the Datini Company of Barcelona sent in 1402 or 1403 to Prato (Italy), Archivio di Stato di Prato, Datini, busta 1173 codice 1620. Photo: Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica 'F. Datini,' Prato. Reproduced with the permission of MiBACT. Further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

moneyers in England place a silver coin, chosen at random from every 240 minted, in a wooden pyx container for testing. To ensure that no one tampered with the specimens, authorities outfitted pyx boxes with locks, then distributing two keys among officials. Several times a year, a jury of expert goldsmiths assayed – that is, melted down – coins from the pyx and assessed the amount of pure gold or silver present, finally delivering the verdict to Her Majesty's Treasury. When not actively used to quantify the presence of metal, the container was housed in the so-called Pyx Chapel in Westminster Abbey, conflating the pyx box used to house money with the more common practice that used pyxes: Eucharistic ceremony, during which pyxes stored consecrated communion hosts (Fig. 0.7).[30]

If such legal enactments constituted a top-down effort to instill public confidence in currency, there were also cases when trust in the purity of coin broke down. War was one of them. The common practice of minting emergency coins for temporary use during times of combat for example – to finance war infrastructure and personnel – often occasioned extreme anxiety. Allison Stielau grounds her essay in an infamous case of this practice: the minting that took place during the 1527 Sack of Rome, when, in order to pay the ransom for Pope Clement VII, who had been held captive by Protestant mercenary soldiers, his supporters melted down precious liturgical objects for use as money. The resulting coins, Stielau shows, raised suspicions about contamination, since their production, which occurred outside of strictly regulated minting practices, offered little assurance about their metallic purity, and hence value. Equally salient, she argues, were the symbolic connotations of these so-called 'Plagauner,' which came to embody spiritual purification and survival, respectively, for the Protestants and Catholics involved in the Sack.

Global Admixtures

Orchestrated by the Spanish Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and his German mercenaries against Italian forces, the Sack of Rome alerts us to another reality of early modern European society: the restless movement of bodies, and lives, across geographic boundaries. This took myriad forms, from religious or political exile, invasions, and inter-continental conflicts to colonialism. The introduction or imposition of one point of view into another context that accompanied Europe's

30 On the Trial of the Pyx, see Jacobi, *The Architecture of Banking in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 161–164; Rigold, *The Chapter House and the Pyx Chamber*, pp. 3–10; and Challis, *A New History of the Royal Mint*, pp. 107 and 701–721. An oak Trial of the Pyx chest (*c.* 1300) from Westminster Abbey is housed in the National Archives, London. Two others exist and, as of 1992, were still in Westminster Abbey; see Challis, *A New History of the Royal Mint*, p. 162n256. For the association between minting money and Eucharistic rituals, see Kumler, 'The Multiplication of the Species,' esp. 187–191.

Figure 0.7. Trial plate of Henry VIII, 1542 (one of a series received from the Pyx Chapel in 1837). Photo: The Royal Mint Museum, United Kingdom

expanding geographic horizons, real or imagined, often dramatically re-configured understandings of contamination and purity, sometimes confounding the distinction entirely.

The countless gold and silver artifacts that the *conquistadores* commandeered from indigenous peoples in the Americas for example – often by brutal means – were, from the Spanish Catholic perspective, at once materially pure and ideologically contaminated. It was only passage through the furnace, the Spanish logic went, that could purify these objects of their former impiety. Converted into Christian cult images – as occurred, for example, when Dominican missionaries in New Granada (Colombia) had 'Indian idols' re-cast into a statue of Saint James – these precious metals became active delegates in converting native peoples.[31] Along similar lines, local Roman tradition held that the architect Antonio da Sangallo had (piously) used spoils from the Americas to gild the coffered ceiling in the basilica of

31 'Fray Juan Martinez en Chipazaque, que de el oro que sacò de los Ydolos hizo una Ymagen de bulto del Apostol Santiago, y una corona para nuestra señora, y fue el artifice destas obras el mismo Yndio que hacia Ydolos.' This example appears in Melendez, *Tesoros Verdaderos de las Indias Historia*, p. 431. Cited in Cummins, 'The Golden Calf in America,' p. 90n32.

Santa Maria Maggiore (Fig. 0.8).[32] And in a different context entirely, the outsized equestrian monument of Ferdinando I (1608) in Florence announced, by way of an inscription spanning the horse's belly, that it had been made from 'metals taken from the fierce Thracians' (*Dei metalli rapiti al fero Trace*): an indication that the statue's alloy, made from the arms of defeated Turkish armies, as much as what it represented symbolized the triumph of peace (Fig. 0.9).[33] Melted down for bullion, meanwhile, metal could underwrite larger-scale religious wars. Emperor Charles V had partly financed the 1535 Christian 'liberation' of Tunis from Muslim rule, for instance, with the outsized trove of gold objects that his commander, Francisco Pizarro, had accepted, halfway across the world in Cuzco (Peru), the ancient capital of the Incan empire, for the release of the Incan emperor Atahualpa.[34]

Yet even this must be qualified. While Spanish Catholics may have described their liquidation of precious New World objects as motivated by religious purity, their Protestant rivals in northern Europe believed the reverse to be true. At the heart of 'the black legend,' or anti-Spanish propaganda that circulated beginning in the sixteenth century, was the Protestant conviction that it was the Spanish, and not their indigenous counterparts, who were idolatrous: driven by an unholy worship of gold.[35] For Protestants, the Spanish belief in their moral superiority was a self-serving fantasy, driven by avarice. In the set of engravings that he added to the *conquistador* Girolamo Benzoni's *Historia del mondo nuovo* (1594–1596), the Flemish Protestant printer Theodore de Bry (himself a victim of Spanish religious intolerance) gave this greed compelling visual form. De Bry's treatment of the ransom payment of the aforementioned Atahualpa – an episode which, in a further intricacy, is contaminated here by Flemish representational norms, and domesticated for European minds using a set of techniques and tools already familiar to European audiences – furnishes the impression that Spanish Catholic avarice and cruelty, and not indigenous beliefs, had tainted Andean gold (especially in view of the fact, well known to de Bry, that Pizarro, months after accepting the tribute, had the Incan emperor murdered) (Fig. 0.10).[36] Indeed, would the art and architecture of early modern Europe 'even be possible,' the scholar John

32 Coulombe, *A History of the Popes: Vicars of Christ*, p. 330.

33 On the Francesco I equestrian monument, see, for example, Cole, 'Under the Sign of Vulcan,' esp. p. 48.

34 On this event, see Cummins, 'The Golden Calf in America,' pp. 92–96. Conversion could also occur in a strictly European context, as in the widespread practice, for example, of converting pagan or Islamic objects, like columns or obelisks, by surmounting them with Christian sculptures. For a particularly compelling instance of this practice in the Rome of Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585–1590), see Cole, 'Perpetual Exorcism in Sistine Rome,' pp. 57–76. An excellent example of the Christian conversion of Islamic structures is the Giralda, formerly the minaret of the principal mosque in Seville, converted into a bell tower after the Reconquista, to which was added a statue symbolizing the triumph of Christian faith in the sixteenth century.

35 On the 'black legend,' see, for example, Maltby, *The Black Legend in England*, esp. pp. 12–24.

36 Our remark here echoes claims in Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage*, esp. p. xii.

Figure 0.8. Giuliano da Sangallo (design) and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (realization), Ceiling of Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, gilded wood, 1450–1500, Rome. Photo: Alvesgaspar, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Figure 0.9. Giambologna with Pietro Tacca, *Equestrian monument of Ferdinando I de' Medici* (detail), 1602–1608, bronze, Piazza Santissima Annunziata, Florence. Photo: Daniel M. Zolli

AD CAP. IIII. 80

Attabaliba, fide accepta se liberatum iri, ad diuersa loca suos ablegat adferendi auri & argenti causa.

CONFIDENS Atabaliba promissis Pizarri, suos confestim in diuersa loca mittit, qui vndecunque aurea & argentea vasa, & aurum argentumque in quamcumq; formam elaboratum adferrent, illos orans, vt quam citissime fieri posset redirent, si eius libertas ipsis cordi esset. Breui propterea aduenirecœperunt Indi auro & argento onusti. Sed cum triclinium amplum esset, & onera quæ ferebant Indi non magni ponderis, licet multa, spectantium oculos minus implebant quam triclinium, non tam quod pauca essent, quam quod tæderet Hispanos tam longæ moræ, vt ea inter se partiri possent. Eam ob causam plerique dicere, Atabalibam de industria istas moras nectere, vt clam suis euocatis, omnes Christianos internecione deleret: censebant propterea nonnulli ipsum è medio tollendum, atque in eam sententiam referentibus plerisque, haud dubie irum fuisset, nisi Ferdinandus Pizarrus obstitisset. Atabaliba similia consilia agitari suspicatus, Pizarro dicit inanem esse illorum timorem, quandoquidem vinctus ab ipsis detineretur, nec maturius illa aurea & argentea vasa adferri posse, perpensa locorum vnde peterentur distantia: Quito enim, Pachacama & Cuzco (vnde potissima redemptionis suæ summa aduehi debebat) procul à Caxamalca distare. Si tamen certiores esse vellent, se nihil in ipsorum perniciē moliri, integrum ipsis esse aliquos è suis ablegare per eius ditiones, ad obseruandū, an vlla fieret subditorū ipsius congregatio. Ferdinandus de Soto in Cuzco, quod ducentis milliaribus à Caxamalca distat, profectus, & Ferdinandus Pizarrus in Pachacama, centum milliaribus ab eadem Caxamalca distantem, nullum militum delectum aut conuocationem, sed solos Indos vasa diuersi generis Caxamalcam deferentes offenderunt.

Figure 0.10. Theodore de Bry, Ransom payment of Atahualpa brought to Francisco Pizarro at Cajamarca (Peru), engraving, from *Americae Pars Sexta sive Historiae ab Hieronymi Benzoni […]* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Theodore de Bry, 1596). Photo: Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC- rbdk d031_0006

White rightly wondered, 'without the riches of the Indies'?[37] Applying the point more broadly still, we might recall Walter Benjamin's assertion, at once lucid and disillusioned, that 'there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'[38]

To this can be added the many instances in which the geographic contamination of matter figured as a virtue. Bronze for example – being an alloy made of copper and tin, ingredients mined in disparate areas in northern and southern Europe – depended, by necessity, on geographic and material admixtures. So, too, did the practice of dyeing wool, luxury cloth, and thread for tapestries. That certain families in dye-related trades, like the Rucellai – dye merchants of Florence – derived not just their fortunes, but their surnames, from the distinctive raw ingredients they used to color cloth (here, the lichen orchil, or *oricello*) hints at how embedded contaminating elements could be in an individual's self-image.[39] Nor is it a coincidence that dyed objects thrived in European trade outposts like Antwerp, where dyes, dyestuffs, and even dyeing expertise could be imported on a global scale.[40]

This logic of geographic pluralism sometimes repeated itself in the built environment. Witness the Doge's Palace in Venice, which, with its gestures both to north Italian Gothic and Arabic architecture, announced the seafaring Republic as a significant literal and symbolic hinge between East and West. Or the so-called Manueline architecture of sixteenth-century Lisbon, it too a cosmopolitan port city, which absorbed the kaleidoscopic influences of Portuguese navigators in Africa, Brazil, and India, among other places. Or, in a somewhat different vein, in the Islamic earthenware bowls, or *bacini*, that decorate the exteriors of churches including the twelfth-century structure of San Nicola in Sardinia and on a handful of buildings in Pisa. Likely imported from North Africa, where merchants maintained strong trade networks, this glazed kitchenware – painted with Arabic script and Islamic iconography – brought an exotic color and sheen to façades made of local brick, while also serving as a subtle reminder of just how far mercantile tendrils reached (Figs. 0.11–13).[41]

37 Elliot, *The Old World and the New 1492–1650*, p. 65.

38 Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History,' p. 256.

39 The Rucellai traced their surname to the crimson wool dye orchil (*oricello*), the recipe for which their ancestors had procured in the Levant and used to build their dye-manufacturing empire in Florence. On the etymology of the Rucellai name, see *Un mercante fiorentino e la sua famiglia nel secolo XV*, pp. 53–54.

40 On Antwerp dye-manufacturing see, for example, Thijs, 'Perceptions of Deceit and Innovation in the Antwerp Textile Industry,' pp. 127–148. See also *Unfolding the Textile Medium in Early Modern Art and Literature*.

41 On *bacini*, see Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza*, esp. pp. 2–3, 95; Berti, *Le ceramiche medievali e post-medievali*, pp. 10–11, 25–26, 29; Berti, 'Keramische "Bacini" mittelalterliche Kirchen Pisas aus islamischer und örtlicher Produktion,' pp. 607–608. See also Mathews, 'Other Peoples' Dishes,' 5–23 and Kessler, *Experiencing Medieval Art*, p. 143.

Figure 0.11. Church of San Sisto, Pisa. Photo: Giuseppe Capitano courtesy of Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Figure 0.12. Original placement of some ceramic *bacini* on the façade of the Church of San Sisto, Pisa. Photo: Giuseppe Capitano courtesy of Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Figure 0.13. Maiolica bowl produced in Tunisia used as a *bacino* in Pisa, *c.* end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century, Church of San Michele degli Scalzi, Pisa, now in the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa. Photo: Giuseppe Capitano courtesy of Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Naturally, such phenomena were not confined to architecture. Another of their manifestations – one among many – was in the palettes of certain European painters. It is no coincidence, for example, that Titian painted with the array of colors that he did: Venice was, after all, a preeminent destination for merchants, and an emporium for pigments, from throughout the world. In Titian's portrait of his pigment seller, Alvise della Scala, the effects of this geographic contamination are doubly apparent: manifest in the literal stuff of the painting; and in the sitter's own apparent wealth, derived from the box of pigments displayed beside him (Fig. 0.14). The very names of the substances in this painting indicate their diverse points of origin: 'ultramarine' (literally, 'beyond the sea,' from mines in present-day Afghanistan), 'blue from Germany' (azurite), and 'indigo from Baghdad' (though originating in India, the substance arrived into Europe via the Islamic city), among others.[42] If a painting like this has come to stand for pure Venetian pictorial practice – characterized by, e.g., colorful, loose brushstrokes and the dissolution of line – its materials more

42 On this painting, see Weddigen and Weber, 'The Alchemy of Colors: Titian Portrays his Pigment Merchant Alvise "dai Colori" dalla Scala,' pp. 50–63; Delancey, 'Celebrating Citizenship,' 15–60; and Kim, 'Lotto's Carpets,' esp. 200. On the geography on pigments, real or notional, see Dunlop, 'On the Origins of European Painting Materials,' esp. pp. 77–86.

Figure 0.14. Titian, *Portrait of the Pigment Merchant Alvise dalla Scala*, oil on canvas 1561–1562, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Photo: BPK, Berlin / Art Resource, NY

closely resemble a geopolitical event: a flow of international resources that has here collided, in a temporary configuration, on Titian's canvas.[43] Along similar lines, the red lakes that the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez used may well have derived from cochineal insects imported from the Americas, an industry over which the Spanish held a monopoly.[44]

It is unlikely, of course, that that the farmers and artisans who cultivated, dyed, or wove the thread in European tapestries – often, if not always, involuntarily, and especially in colonial realms – would describe their labor in strictly positive terms.[45] The focus of Sylvia Houghteling's chapter – a monumental textile cycle that Charles V commissioned in 1535 to commemorate his victory over Ottoman forces in Tunis – is a case in point. Conceived as an expression of Spanish domination over the Muslim populations of the Iberian Peninsula, the tapestries projected a triumphal iconography of centralized Christian control. Yet the history of their production, Houghteling argues, undermines such tidy thinking. The silk from which the tapestries were made, to single out just one of the materials she discusses, not only utilized dyestuffs from the New World, but it was cultivated, spun, and dyed by forcibly converted Muslims in Granada. Against Charles V's official message of Christian purity, these materials – and the extractive labor on which they depended – forcefully expose the differences, and the unavoidable contamination, that inhered in an empire comprising disparate parts. While shifting emphasis from *what* these objects show (e.g., iconography, style) to *how* they are made – by highlighting, that is, the indigenous labor on which many European objects fundamentally depend – is an act of historical enfranchisement, it also means contending with the systems of oppression that made contaminated matter so profitable on the European stage.[46]

But then, early modern society was also coming to understand matter – no matter how local or exotic – as always already contaminated. Amy Knight Powell's contribution charts a prehistory for the seismic shift in habits of viewing and thinking that occurred during the Scientific Revolution, spurred, among other things, by the invention of the telescope and microscope. Focusing on the work of

43 We derive our description of the art object as a geo-political event from Ingold, 'Toward an Ecology of Materials,' esp. 431–435.

44 See, for example, Hamann, 'The Mirrors of Las Meninas,' 6–35; and Pérez, *Velázquez: Técnica y evolution*, esp. pp. 26–28. Such stories replayed themselves continuously in the early modern world: in the European 'discovery' of *pau-brasil* for example, a genus of tree from which a dye reminiscent of burning embers (*brasa* in Portugese) could be derived. So significant did the Portugese find this resource that they called this *terra nova* 'Brasil': naming an entire land after their precious cargo while predictably eliding the ecological implications of its manufacture and the indigenous Tupinambà who harvested the wood. See Phipps, 'Global Colors,' pp. 128–130.

45 For an example of how indigenous farmers might profit from the export of colonial resources, here cochineal, see Baskes, 'Seeking Red,' pp. 101–117.

46 Dean and Leibsohn, 'Hybridity and Its Discontents,' 5–35.

the Flemish painter Peter Bruegel the Elder and his followers, Powell probes this group's sympathies with atomistic philosophy, a field in existence since antiquity, yet largely rejected in the sixteenth century because it threatened the belief that the world – and all matter – was governed by a divinely created order. In the minute, atomistic mark-making of Bruegel's paintings, Powell argues, one finds an anticipation of the Scientific Revolution's own revelation that supposedly pure matter was, in her words, 'revoltingly uneven,' 'crumbling into minutiae,' 'their impurity [all] but inevitable.'

Communities, Imagined and Real

What will be clear from the preceding analyses is that concepts of purity and contamination, however defined, depend upon the existence of communities. To place stock in these categories at all – to seek purity, or to see oneself or others as contaminated – often meant asserting one's belonging within a group bound together by matters of common concern. But as the political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued in a different context, such communities are social constructs, formed – most powerfully – in the imagination.[47] In Anderson's analysis, countless factors fostered and reinforced these 'imagined communities': they were bound together linguistically for example; and they depended on an oppositional logic, the idea that one community differed from another. But so too were they fostered and reinforced by technologies and their use. While Anderson's project was an archaeology of the modern nation state – and the medium to which he referred was the newspaper – it is possible to see echoes of this idea in the early modern period.[48] The emergence of printed media is a good example.

To appreciate how vital printing was to the ideological formation, maintenance, and self-definition of early modern communities, one need only look to Martin Luther. The German theologian's writings – which circulated promiscuously, in multiple copies, among large audiences – reinforced, and indeed created, shared opinion about the need for reform. So, too, did the illustrations that decorated his broadsheets and pamphlets, likewise sized for circulation. Those in Luther's anti-papist pamphlet of 1521, the *Passionale Christi und Antichristi*, are exemplary. Conceived as diptychs, the woodcuts, by Lucas Cranach, juxtapose – in clear, didactic form – the faith of the papacy, tainted by corruption, to the humble teachings of Christ (Fig. 0.15). The faith community that Luther promoted, in these images as

47 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

48 See *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe*.

Figure 0.15. Lucas Cranach the Elder, woodcut illustration for the *Passional Christi und Antichristi* of Martin Luther (Wittenberg: Johann Grünenberg, 1521). Photo: Courtesy of the British Library

in his writings, was defined against an impure Papacy. And print was a strategic instrument for generating that opinion.

The images that accompanied printed accounts of extra-European exploration sometimes played out in parallel form. In one woodcut appended to the German translation of the Bolognese traveler Ludovico di Varthema's travel diary (published in 1515), for instance, the artist Jörg Breu offered European viewers a macabre representation of Varthemea's description of the diabolical idol that the people of Calicut (in India) worshiped (Fig. 0.16). By manufacturing – here, literally demonizing – cultural otherness, images like this might magnify, by way of antithesis, Europeans' own ideological priorities. More nefariously, they held the potential to legitimize – and normalize – the violent subjugation and subordination that so often accompanied European colonialism and imperialism.

Yet as much as art could sharpen divisions – pitting one self-identified pure community against a contaminated other – it occasionally served the opposite aim: endeavoring to mend the differences that tore at the fabric of early modern European society. A case in point is the *Allegory of the Immaculate Conception* painted in 1616 by the Seville-based artist and Jesuit priest Juan de Roelas (Figs. 0.17–18). To the scholar Felipe Pereda we owe our knowledge of how the painting's conspicuous placement of

Der künig von Calicut mit allem seinem volck in seynem land/ vnd künigreych ist ein abgöttereyer. Vnd bettet dē teüfel an wie ir vernemen wert. Sie bekennen vnd verjehen das ein got sey/der beschaffen hab den hym/ mel/vnd die erden/ vnd die gantzē welt. Vnd sprech/ en wañ got wölte richten vñ vrteylen/ einen vnd den andern/ vnd alle werck vnd übel der mēschen rechen vnd straffen/wer im kein freüd so er das gethün mag durch seinen knecht. Vnd darumb hab er vns disen geyst den teüfel gesant in dise welt/ vñ im den gewalt gegeben/zů richten vnd zů vrteylen/wölcher wol thůt dem thů er auch wol/ vnd wer übel thůt/ dem thůt er auch übel/dē selbē nēnen sye dē deümo/ vñ got nēnen sie tamerāi. Zů wissē das d künig zů Calicut die bild nuß des teüfels hält in seinē palast in gebew/ wie ein Capel/ist zwē schrit weit/vff all sier ort/vñ drey schrit

Figure 0.16. Jörg Breu, woodcut illustration of the 'Idol of Calicut,' in Ludovico di Varthema, *Die Ritterlich und lobwürdig Reisz […]* (Strassburg: J. Knobloch, 1516). Photo: © Österreichische National-bibliothek, Vienna: 72.T.75

Figure 0.17. Juan de Roelas, *Allegory of the Immaculate Conception*, 1616. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional de Escultura, Valladolid, Spain. Photo: HIP / Art Resource, NY

Figure 0.18. Juan de Roelas, *Allegory of the Immaculate Conception*, detail of nursing mother and Sevillan citizens. Photo: HIP / Art Resource, NY

Seville and its citizens under the protection of the 'Immaculate' Mary was a means of fostering tolerance and inclusion in a politically and culturally disjointed city mired in difference.[49] As one of the principal ports for the European slave market, the Andalusian city was multi-racial, and Spanish Catholics were anxious about accepting those of supposedly impure blood – black, Jewish, Muslim – into their faith. If the Virgin Mary – unlike Seville's ethnically varied population – was pure of blood (i.e., free of original sin), her milk, the painting suggests, could nurture, and purify, all who accepted or converted to Catholicism, including those whose own blood was polluted. The community that Roelas imagined, in this case, was a universal utopian one.

Architecture and maintenance of the built world also has the potential to constitute, delimit, and isolate imagined communities. While brick-and-mortar walls – city fortifications, convents, orphanages – could protect communities from foreign contagion without, preserving a people's sense of belonging, they could also enclose populations deemed dangerous within. As Lisa Pon reveals in her chapter, two architectural types in early modern Venice – the island's Jewish Ghetto and its plague hospitals, or *lazaretti* – situate architecture within the spatial dynamics of quarantine.[50] Emerging in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these structures

49 Pereda, '*Vox Populi*,' 286–334.

50 Historians credit Venice's maritime neighbor to the south, the Adriatic port city of Ragusa (modern-day Dubrovnik, in Croatia), with pioneering the first quarantine methods in the pre-modern West. By 1400, the Ragusan government forced individuals and goods arriving from infected regions into isolation for forty days on one of four uninhabited islands beyond the city's fortified walls (a duration from which the

served to relocate individuals deemed unsafe to the Venetian community away from the city's center to its peripheral zones, be they sites of industrial contamination (former foundries, from which the word *getto* – cast – derives) or lagoonal islands ('isolation,' meanwhile, derives from the Latin *insula*, or 'island'). Rather than seeing purity and contamination as absolute categories here, though, Pon argues for a dynamic porosity between the two. She wagers that, as much as urban quarantine aimed to control, and bureaucratically identify, impure populations, so too did the Republic's economic well-being depend on 'leakage' in these spaces: on Christians' need to enter, and Jews' ability to leave, the ghetto for business; and – in the case of *lazaretti* – on patients' coming and going as they sickened or recovered.

Along similar lines, Lauren Jacobi's essay bridges themes of space and geography, addressing how seemingly contaminated spaces were controlled as Italians territorialized papal domains. More specifically, she studies Pope Sixtus V's failed project to drain the Italian Pontine marshes, which were construed as a degraded, environmental wasteland in need of redemption. Addressing issues of ethnic determinism, she brings her study to twentieth-century history, tracing the Fascist attempt to cleanse the marshes.

While the structures that Pon and Jacobi track endured over time, communities driven by their own sense of purity might destroy the architecture or infrastructure of those they deemed less so. This was the case, for example, in the Regensburg pogrom of 1519, when the council of the southern German city banished the Jews, and razed their synagogue, building a Christian church over its ruins. Such acts of purification occurred at a broader scale throughout the New World, where, under Spanish royal ordinance, whole city precincts were leveled to make way for new buildings.[51] As the Spanish cardinal Juan de Torquemada put it, speaking of the wholesale 'renewal' of Tenochtitlan, the city had once been a 'Babylon, a republic of confusion and evil, but now it is another Jerusalem.'[52] By de-contaminating the capital of the Aztec empire of its heathenism, and re-making the urban environment in their own image, Torquemada implied, the Spanish had done the purifying work of God.

But here, too, one must exercise caution. It was not unusual, for example, for structures and spaces that one party destroyed, or materials that that it re-purposed, to remain significant for their former users. We have only to look at one colonial building project in Cuzco to appreciate this point. Realizing that the city's indigenous residents regarded the sand covering their main plaza – sand that the Inka had

word 'quarantine' derives, and one that Ragusans selected as much for religious reasons as for medical ones, since Lent was an already familiar span of time). On anti-plague measures in Ragusa, see Tomić and Blažina, *Expelling the Plague*.

51 On Spanish urbanism in the Americas, see, for example, Kubler, 'Open Grid Town Plans in Europe and America, 1500–1520,' IV, pp. 105–122.

52 Cited in Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World 1493–1793*, p. 151. This source is also discussed in Kim, 'Uneasy Reflections,' 90–91.

Figure 0.19. Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin, 1560–1654, Cuzco. Photo: Diego Delso courtesy of Wikimedia Commons licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

imported hundreds of miles from the Pacific coast – as holy, Spanish authorities had the material removed and mixed into the mortar used to construct their new cathedral: an act, Spaniards thought, that would eradicate the sand's sacred aura, and that of the Incan plaza in turn (Fig. 0.19). Yet, as Thomas Cummins has shown, Andean logic held that the sacred essence (*kamay*) inhered permanently in the sand – indeed in all sacred materials – even when its architectural context or form changed.[53] While the Spaniards believed they were de-sanctifying the sand, for the natives of Cuzco the substance still vibrated with *kamay*, an affirmation of the presence, and persistence, of the Incan past in the mortar joints of a Christian cathedral.[54]

53 Cummins, 'A Tale of Two Cities,' esp. pp. 160–163. On the idea that colonization introduces a markedly different understanding of landscapes and urban environments than that of the indigenous or colonized people inhabiting those spaces, see Walter Mignolo's concept of 'coexisting territorialities,' developed in Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance,* esp. pp. 219–258.

54 On the spoliation of sacred stones from the Incan temple and fortress Saqsaywaman for Cuzco Cathedral, and for related discussions of the persistence of Andean veneration of sacred stones used in Spanish colonial buildings, foundations, and walls, see Dean, 'Rocks and Reverence,' pp. 180–201; and Dean, *A Culture of Stone*, pp. 25–64, 143–178; and most recently, Schreffler, *Cuzco*, esp. p. 97. On 'vibrant matter,' see Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, esp. pp. 1–19.

Buildings and ritual spaces could also be reclaimed. Extending the volume's compass to what is now the southwestern United States, the co-authored essay by Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn takes up this issue. In particular, they examine the causes and aftermath of a seventeenth-century revolt that occurred when Spanish Catholic friars attempted to consecrate spaces that were already sacred to indigenous Pueblo people. Strikingly, the authors show that the Spanish claim to have purified a hitherto contaminated space was antithetical to Indigenous American beliefs, wherein binary opposition was rarely found. Indeed, after the revolt, the Pueblo people did not eradicate but appropriated Catholic buildings: a testament, perhaps, to how indigenous religious ideas might endure because of – not despite – past trauma. As Dean and Leibsohn's contribution demonstrates, the line between the pure and the contaminated cannot be neatly drawn.

Art History's Imagined Communities

The logic of imagined communities also pervaded early modern European writing about art. The very concept of a Renaissance after all – from its earliest formulations, and particularly in Italy – was nothing if not a narrative of purification: plotting the culture's rebirth, its reemergence, from a notional 'dark ages.' Already in 1339, in his epic poem *Africa*, the scholar and poet Petrarch deployed this metaphor: 'After the darkness has been dispelled, our grandsons will be able to walk into the pure radiance of the past.'[55] Some two centuries later, in his *Lives of the Artists* (published in 1550 and again, in substantially different form, in 1568), Vasari famously linked the demise of a pure (classical Roman) style during the Middle Ages to foreign contagion: to the corrupting presence, in particular, of Germans and Greeks in Italy, their styles – the *maniera tedesca* and *maniera greca* – setting art on the path to decline.[56] In Vasari's narrative, it took Giotto, the son of a shepherd, whom the painter Cimabue discovered drawing 'pictures of animals on stone and in the sand' (working, suggestively, with dirt) to initiate art's rebirth. Only by knowing no model other than Nature herself, and uncontaminated by outside influences, Cimabue's included, had Giotto succeeded in '[banishing] the awkward Greek manner.'[57]

55 See *Petrarch's 'Africa,'* p. 17.

56 On the idea in Vasari that Greek and German populations had contaminated Italy's classical style, see Kim, *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance*, esp. pp. 45–48.

57 Vasari, *Le vite*, I, p. 370. Vasari's anecdote drew upon, but also enlarged, a claim that circulated among artists and writers already in the fourteenth century. The painter-writer Cennino Cennini claimed, for example, that Giotto had 'restored painting' and 'changed the profession of painting from Greek back into Latin' (see Wood, *A History of Art History*, p. 59). The first biographer of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Karel van Mander, advanced a similar claim when he wrote that the Flemish painter had been 'born

Like most narratives of progress, the story that Vasari told about art and architecture's faltering steps toward perfection in his own time could not tolerate 'matter out of place.' The writer's regional, artistic, and conceptual biases – his promotion of Tuscan artists and aesthetic norms, and his distaste for goldsmiths for example – are well documented.[58] Equally well known is the dissent that Vasari's purifying framework ignited. El Greco – to cite but one example – took umbrage with Vasari's negative appraisal of the Greek manner: 'what Giotto did is simple in comparison,' the Greek-born painter wrote in the margins of his copy of the *Lives*, 'because the Greek style is full of ingenious difficulties.'[59] In the century following the publication of the *Lives*, in fact, numerous treatises, many of them rooted in other geographies, adapted Vasari's schema to serve their own (often quite different) purifying agendas: Karel van Mander (1604) in the Low Countries; Vicente Carducho (1633) and Francisco Pacheco (1649) in Spain; Joachim von Sandrart (1675–1680) in Germany; and Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1678) in Bologna – and these are just some of the most well-known examples.[60]

One lesson to draw from this burgeoning body of art treatises is that each, in its own way, contributed to the self-definition of an imagined community, shaped by issues of shared artistic concern, and (often) defined by contrast to other communities: Florentine versus Bolognese; Italian versus German or Spanish; and so forth. Another is that purification in early modern European art writing, far from a fixed and coherent condition, was a process delicately negotiated by its authors, their audiences, and the institutions that governed both. Yet a third lesson is that the vision of purity that these European treatises routinely sought to produce, no matter how heavily policed, was never impervious to contaminants. Despite his Tuscan triumphalism, Vasari – to continue our example – conceded that the knowledge of oil painting, one of the most consequential developments in sixteenth-century European art, only occurred when Antonello da Messina, a Sicilian artist, visited Jan Van Eyck in Bruges (a manifest fiction but revealing nevertheless). Vasari's frequent recourse to the term *varietà*, the idea that artists might embrace multiple stylistic influences encompassing multiple geographies, registers his recognition

amidst peasants' – that his art simply expressed that which he already was. See Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel*, pp. 13–15. For Giotto and dirt, see Cole, '*Arti povere*, 1300–1650,' p. 259.

58 See, for example, Collareta, 'The Historian and the Technique,' pp. 291–300; on Vasari's geographic biases, and for a nuanced set of alternatives to his model, see Campbell, *The Endless Periphery*.

59 Salas and Marias, *El Greco y el arte de su tiempo*. When the Bolognese family of painters, the Carracci, decorated their copy of the *Lives* with insults – 'presumptuous and ignorant,' 'vile liar Vasari' – they were objecting to their own tradition's relative erasure. On the Carracci marginalia, see Fanti, 'Le postille carraccesche alle Vite del Vasari,' 148–164; and Dempsey, 'The Carracci Postille to Vasari's Lives,' 72–76.

60 Karen van Mander's *Het Schilder-boeck* (1604) in the Low Countries; Vicente Carducho's *Diálogos sobre la pintura* (1633) and Francisco Pacheco's *Arte de la pintura* in Spain (1649); Joachim von Sandrart's *Teutsche Academie* in Germany (1675–1680); and Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina Pittrice* in Bologna (1678).

that – when practiced judiciously – stylistic contamination, rather than purity, in an artist's output could be a conscious goal.[61] Purifying frameworks in art writing, one might conclude, are always contaminated.

Needless to say, the modern discipline of art history is itself made up of imagined communities. If the formal integration of art history into universities – in Europe at least – coincided with the emergence of the modern nation state, and if much of the twentieth-century historiography of early modern art history cleaved to the modern organization of Europe, we now inhabit a discipline less inclined to see its objects of analysis according to these divisions.

Predictably then, perhaps, some of the most original work now being done in the early modern field centers around artworks and practices that might give a more acute view of some of our current realities – global or institutional – or which expose the limitations of models developed to accommodate the European point of view. Recent scholarship on the Virgin of Guadalupe, for example, has shown how ill-suited Eurocentric ideas of early modern art and authorship are to the icon and its copies. Against the Europeanate idea that copying was derivative – overly contaminated by influence – New Spanish painters who replicated the icon, like Miguel Cabrera, understood producing a perfect (pure) copy of the icon as a performance itself, and the very source of their authorial reputation, albeit in terms far different than their European counterparts.[62] Italy, too, has been a beneficiary of this mode of thinking, as the growing literature on the Spanish presence on the peninsula, and its impact on Italian art and architecture, can attest.[63]

A comparable claim exists for the recent disciplinary interest in trans- and intermediality, as scholars endeavor to loosen the medium-specific restrictions that have largely governed the study of early modern European art and architecture, themselves a legacy of that period (one need only think of the state-sponsored Academy of Design, in Florence, and its treatment of painting, sculpture, and architecture – each pursued in isolation – as tributaries of design). The resulting picture is far different than it was just several decades ago. When approaching, say, Filippo Brunelleschi, scholars now want to know how his training as a goldsmith may have informed his architectural pursuits.[64] Or how Michelangelo's sculptural practice – and particularly

61 On the term *varietà* in Vasari, and its relationship to artists' travels, see Kim, *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance*, esp. pp. 125–160.

62 See Cuadriello, *El divino pintor*; Peterson, 'The Reproducibility of the Sacred,' pp. 43–78; Petersen, 'Creating the Virgin of Guadalupe,' 571–610; and Hyman and Mundy, 'Out of the Shadow of Vasari,' 283–317, esp. 309–312. On invention and the addition of signatures to these works see, especially, Hyman, 'Inventing Painting,' 102–135. On the Virgin of Guadalupe copies in particular, see Bargellini, 'Originality and Invention in the Painting of New Spain,' pp. 79–91. See also Amara Solari's recent study on the indigenous Mayan veneration of the Virgin Mary; Solari, *Idolizing Mary*.

63 See Cole, 'Toward an Art History of Spanish Italy,' 37–46; and Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson*, esp. pp. 118–145.

64 Payne, 'Materiality, Crafting, and Scale in Renaissance Architecture,' 365–386; and Payne, *L'Architecture parmi les arts*.

his use of the claw chisel to score his marble surfaces – may have benefited from his early formation in a painter's workshop: where he had worked with tempera and studied engravings, both practices that deployed hatching as a technique.[65] Or just how different the history of the etched print would look were it seen as a tributary development of armor decoration – particularly in Augsburg, where workshops had been etching armor 'plates' for nearly two centuries before Daniel Hopfer (first trained as an armor decorator) adapted the technique to create works on paper (Fig. 0.20).[66]

In a different vein, art historians continue to take stock of early modern European art's role in creating and naturalizing ideas of nationality and race, not just in its own time but in later epochs. The National Socialists' (mis-)use of German Renaissance art, and particularly the art of Albrecht Dürer, in the 1930s and 1940s to underwrite their belief in national destiny, as well as the atrocities they committed in the name of racial purity, is a well-known, if extreme instance of the latter phenomenon.[67] Recent scholarship reminds us that such appropriations are grimly familiar today, as contemporary far-right movements scour early modern art – and indeed all of what they deem 'Western art' – for talismanic forms to prove and protect the supposed purity of their (mythical) white heritage. All too often, early modern images have been weaponized as memes and frequently posted or otherwise used without context in white supremacist media.[68] By this dangerous alchemy, far-right groups have made Michelangelo's *David* (1501–1504) into a false idol to white supremacist ideology, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Tower of Babel* (*c.* 1568) into an icon of xenophobic sentiment, by likening Europe's multiculturalism to Babylon.[69] Such propaganda transforms early modern art into a sort of cultural armor to protect the imagined purity of white heritage, and it contaminates past historical horizons with present fears.

Building on related observations, the volume's final chapter, by Caroline A. Jones and Joseph Koerner, examines the historical stakes of purification during the Renaissance and in modernity. In contrast to purity (a static condition) and contamination (a process of defilement), purification, they argue, is an historical process, bound up with instruments of power, of which art history's own institutions – museums, universities, presses – are also forms.

65 Cole, 'The Technical Turn,' esp. p. 111.

66 Metzger, 'The Iron Age,' esp. pp. 25–26.

67 See for example, Moxey, 'Impossible Distance,' 750–763; and more recently Kinew, 'Sedlmayr's Mother-of-Pearl,' 88–96.

68 For how this applies to medival studies, see for example M. Rambaran-Olm, 'Anglo-Saxon Studies [Early English Studies], Academia and White Supremacy,' posted 27 June, 2018, https://mrambaranolm.medium.com/anglo-saxon-studies-academia-and-white-supremacy-17c87b360bf3, accessed 15 August 2018.

69 On the far-right's appropriation of pre-modern art, see Silveri and Stark, 'Reactionary Art Histories,' pp. 9, 11, 25.

Figure 0.20. Attributed to Kolman Helmschmid (armor) and Daniel Hopfer (etching), *Cuirass and Tassets*, steel and leather, ca. 1510–1520, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art

Collectively, the essays in this volume examine how concepts of cleanliness and the impure impressed themselves on artistic and architectural practice, facture, and on style in the period; how they shaped – and were shaped by – ideas about authorship and about nature; their role in cross-cultural relations; and in the construction, legislation, and maintenance of the built environment. With each of these subjects, the book's contributors consider how contamination and purity reverberate across broader cultural, geographic, and intellectual registers at a time when the two categories took on heightened importance.

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