

## RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne

**Vernon Hyde Minor, *Baroque Visual Rhetoric*,  
Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2016, 288  
pp., 51 b/w illus., \$ 85, Cloth, ISBN 9781442648791**

Susanne McColeman

---

The Nature of Naturalism  
Volume 41, numéro 2, 2016

URI : [id.erudit.org/iderudit/1038081ar](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1038081ar)  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1038081ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

---

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada |  
Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN 0315-9906 (imprimé)  
1981-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

---

Citer cet article

McColeman, S. (2016). Vernon Hyde Minor, *Baroque Visual Rhetoric*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2016, 288 pp., 51 b/w illus., \$ 85, Cloth, ISBN 9781442648791. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne*, 41(2), 134–136. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1038081ar>

---

Tous droits réservés © UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada), 2016

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne. [<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>]

---



Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. [www.erudit.org](http://www.erudit.org)

them as Realist, and they were recast as Naturalist. The comparison to instantaneous photography also affected Courbet's legacy since, as Young explains in the conclusion, interpreting his paintings as frozen in time rather than durational deprived them of meaning in the present, and they could thereby be drained of their politics. It is as though the very possibility of an enduring, absorbed state was denied. In the end, then, the book is about the disappearance of Realism as an artistic category as well as the diminishing possibilities for absorption in the modern world.

This last point brings me to what I find most compelling about Young's argument: the connections to the present day and to current calls for a slower approach to life. In another recent book about time, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013), Jonathan Crary describes the intensification of modern time, so that today, in 24/7 time, we feel compelled to fill every instant with productivity, while any remaining moments are dedicated to consumption. He argues that this tendency robs us of any time to be filled by daydreaming or introspection, or what Young calls absorption. Crary writes, "Billions of dollars are spent every year researching how to reduce decision-making time, how to eliminate the useless time of reflection and contemplation. This is the form of contemporary progress—the relentless capture and control of time and experience."<sup>9</sup> According to Crary, sleeping and waiting are the only instances of empty time in our lives that offer the possibility of resistance. Crary does not say much about art in his book, leaving untouched the question of whether art can serve as a mode of resistance. Young's book fills that void, showing how the late Realist artists sought out spaces and moments that had not yet been colonized by modern, disciplined time and painted them in a way that called attention to their distinct

temporalities. The implication of Young's argument is that the beholder of these paintings—absorbed in slow looking—is also engaged in a form of resistance. Though this is not the type of book one would assign to undergraduate students, the argument is relevant to their lives and therefore worth introducing to them. Amid the endless stream of images that come our way as part of the twenty-first-century visual economy, Young's book provides a lesson in the value of slow looking. ¶

Dr. Andrea Korda is an Assistant Professor at the Augustana Faculty of the University of Alberta. —korda@ualberta.ca

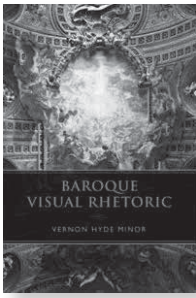
1. Derek Allan, *Art and Time* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013); Simona Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden, 2014); Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York, 2013); Amelia Groom, ed., *Time* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (Durham, NC, 2013); and Christine Ross, *The Past Is the Present; It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* (New York, 2012).
2. Petra Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2012), 382–83.
3. E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (Dec. 1967): 56–97.
4. See Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, "Re-working E. P. Thompson's 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism,'" *Time and Society* 5, 3 (1996): 275–99. Young draws on Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism*; or, *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC, 1991).
5. Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (New York, 1988).
6. For examples, see Caroline Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (New Haven, 2008); David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848–1914* (Manchester and New York, 2004); David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry, eds., *English Art 1860–1914: Modern Artists and Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2001); Pamela Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity: The British Problem Picture, 1895–1914* (Aldershot, Surrey, 2003); and Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven, 2007).
7. Paul Barlow, "Fear and Loathing of the Academic, or Just What Is It that Makes the Avant-Garde So Different, So Appealing?" in *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Rafael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (New Brunswick, NJ, 2000).
8. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 150.
9. Crary, *24/7*, 40.

Vernon Hyde Minor  
*Baroque Visual Rhetoric*  
Toronto, University of Toronto  
Press, 2016  
288 pp. 51 b/w illus.  
\$85 Cloth ISBN 9781442648791

Susanne McColeman

VERNON HYDE MINOR'S *Baroque Visual Rhetoric*, an insightful study about the power of art to "convince, move, and delight" (12), draws upon the critical traditions of rhetoric and poetics to analyze painting, sculpture, and architecture from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This book consists of a series of essays, each focusing on a case study or a comparison of works, in which the author discusses how "determining ideas" (3) are conveyed through baroque art. Collectively, these do not comprise a comprehensive or systematic examination of the period, but are reflections on a relatively small selection of artworks that have profoundly moved the author.

Central to Minor's understanding of the art and culture of this period is the dichotomy between baroque and classical visual rhetoric. He characterizes baroque visual rhetoric as optimistic, awe-inspiring, vivid, grand, consoling, and frame-breaking. Moreover, the baroque artist created works that are "perceptually challenging" (48), employing sophisticated metaphors and conceits in the form of layered ontologies. He connects these qualities to the celebratory rhetoric and culture of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, and places them in opposition to the restraint, clarity, and calmness that characterize classical visual rhetoric. The baroque style, however, declined in popularity during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries; baroque art eventually became associated with *cattivo gusto*, or bad taste, and classical art with *buon gusto*, or good



taste. Perhaps most interesting is Minor's account of the "transitional zone" (195) between the two styles, when artists continued to employ forms from baroque visual rhetoric, such as allegorical figures, but did not convey the same meanings or truths. Describing this absence of original meaning, Minor provocatively refers, for example, to Filippo della Valle's sculptural allegories for the *Tomb of Innocent XII* as "zombie-like" figures, which remain powerful in their uncanny effect on the viewer (58).

In his introduction, Minor states that his "fascination lies with well-known works of European art, especially Italian," (3) but this does not convey just how narrow his geographical scope truly is. His case studies are almost exclusively Roman, a fact he eventually discloses near the end of his second chapter. Four of his twelve chapters deal with works in St. Peter's Basilica, including Gianlorenzo Bernini's *Baldacchino*, a number of papal tombs, and Bernini's *Cathedra Petri*. Three chapters focus on the Cathedral of San Giovanni in Laterano, more specifically the *Apostles* series of sculptures and the Corsini Chapel. Additional chapters interpret the architecture of Francesco Borromini's Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza and paintings in Sant'Andrea della Valle and Il Gesù in Rome. Only Chapter Eleven, "Blaise Pascal, Jansenists, Jesuits, and the *Lettres Provinciales*," addresses baroque art outside of Rome. This chapter transports the reader to the convent of Port-Royal in Paris, and therefore seems somewhat out of place in this book. This is no more than a minor

flaw; the chapter's inclusion is far from arbitrary. In this chapter, Minor argues that eighteenth-century Italian classical visual rhetoric and the concept of *buon gusto* had their roots in the rhetoric of the seventeenth-century French Jansenists, the Jesuits' rivals, and his analysis of three of Philippe de Champaigne's Jansenist paintings serves as a foil to his interpretation of baroque papal and Jesuit art in his other chapters. Still, it is exceptional within a book that otherwise could have been called *Baroque Visual Rhetoric in Rome*.

Overall, Minor focuses more on baroque art and on works that are stylistically "in transit" (197) than on eighteenth-century classical visual rhetoric, since he has already written at length on the subject of *buon gusto* in his 2006 book *The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste*. In fact, *Baroque Visual Rhetoric* reads as an extension of this earlier study. As Minor points out himself, his chapter on Jansenism and the paintings of Philippe de Champaigne fulfills the promise he had made in his earlier book to elaborate on the link between Jansenism and *buon gusto*. More than that, in *Baroque Visual Rhetoric* Minor elaborates on other key ideas put forth in *The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste*, particularly those from the first chapter, "*Cattivo Gusto* and Some Aspects of Baroque Rhetoric." Though *Baroque Visual Rhetoric* is certainly able to stand alone as a brilliant study of baroque art, readers interested in learning about the other side of the baroque/classical dichotomy during this period would do well to read his earlier text.

Minor's work is a significant contribution to the rich body of scholarship on rhetoric and the visual arts in early modern Europe that has developed since the 1950s, from the foundational work of John R. Spencer to the studies by Michael Baxandall, David Summers, Patricia Rubin, Marc Fumaroli, Caroline van Eck, and Maarten Delbeke, to name only a few. Much of this scholarship engages in close textual readings of early

modern literature on art to reveal the relationship between rhetoric and the production or reception of images, or to analyze the rhetoric of the texts themselves; other studies focus on how particular rhetorical devices, such as *enargeia* (vividness), serve to persuade or move the viewer in a work of art. Minor engages with these interests as well, but his work stands out for his use of modern critical theory to better understand the rhetorical devices at play in baroque art.

Indeed, Minor dedicates a full chapter to "Critical Perspectives," and constantly returns to discussions of theory and methodology throughout the book, drawing ideas from a wealth of philosophical and theoretical sources in order to elucidate various aspects of his selected works of art. The author does not adhere strictly to one theoretical model when examining his objects of study; however, there are certain theoretical concepts and assumptions that are central to how he understands the art and culture of the Baroque. Minor favours the perspective of Martin Heidegger in particular, especially his idea that baroque art is "truth-disclosing." The *parergon* or frame as discussed in the writings of Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida is another concept used prominently in his analysis. In addition to looking at painted or architectural frames that define the layered ontologies in his selection of works, he follows the lead of Gilles Deleuze by devoting considerable attention to the drapery framing sculptural bodies and the baroque fold in general. The concept of the sublime comes up over and over again as well, as Minor discusses the inexpressibility topos Filippo Baldinucci used to describe Bernini's *Baldacchino*, the complex architectural geometry of Borromini's Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, and the representation of Mary Magdalene's theophanic moment in one of Philippe de Champaigne's paintings for the convent of Port-Royal.

These foundational ideas are interlaced with philosophy and theory by

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Paul de Man, Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Sigmund Freud, Gottfried Leibniz, Mieke Bal, Norman Bryson, and others, making for complex and insightful arguments and reflections. In tandem with foregrounding critical theory and reflecting on the philosophy of art, Minor sometimes writes about the history of art historical methodology as well, a fact that will surprise no one who is familiar with his book *Art History's History* (1994 and 2000). The way Minor navigates philosophical issues and critical theory not only enriches our understanding of baroque art, but also makes this book relevant for any scholar interested in art historical methodology.

Susanne McColeman recently completed her PhD in Art History at Queen's University, where her research focused on the grotesques of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

—susanne.mccoleman@queensu.ca

Giovanni Careri

*Caravage: La peinture en ses miroirs*

Paris, Citadelles & Mazenod, 2015

384 pp. 325 illus. coul.

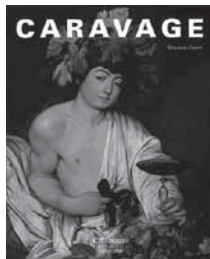
€189 Relié ISBN 9782850886416.

Itay Sapir

QU'EST-CE QU'UN «OUVRAGE de référence» sur un peintre? Comment sait-on qu'on a entre les mains ce qu'en anglais on appellerait «the definitive account», nous donnant, pour un temps, le fin mot sur la carrière d'un artiste? La question est épineuse, d'autant plus lorsqu'il s'agit d'un peintre—Caravage—sur lequel tout semble avoir déjà été dit, un artiste qui est l'objet d'un véritable déluge de publications depuis une vingtaine d'années.

Le nouveau *Caravage* de Giovanni Careri donne plusieurs indices de sa candidature sérieuse à être désormais l'ouvrage de référence—en français à

tout le moins—sur le peintre lombard. Le titre tout d'abord: c'est tout simplement le nom de l'artiste qui apparaîtrait sur la couverture, même si un sous-titre, dont je parlerai plus loin, apparaît sur la page de garde et spécifie l'angle d'attaque choisi par Careri. Le format du livre exprime lui aussi sa prétention à un statut de «référence»: c'est un objet extrêmement beau, difficilement manipulable tellement il est grand et lourd, et il inclut une iconographie d'une qualité sans précédent dans les publications sur Caravage, que ce soit pour le nombre d'œuvres reproduites—pratiquement toutes les peintures du corpus de l'artiste, y compris de nombreuses attributions débattues, en plus de dizaines d'œuvres d'autres artistes servant comme points de comparaison—ou pour la qualité des reproductions et des détails agrandis et magnifiés. C'est donc un répertoire d'images sans égal sur papier, et une référence incontournable pour quiconque voudrait examiner



les œuvres de Caravage sans pouvoir se déplacer jusqu'aux originaux. Enfin, le nom même de l'auteur promet un récit «définitif» puisqu'on lui reconnaît des ouvrages majeurs sur des artistes dont les liens avec Caravage sont d'une grande importance historique et conceptuelle, tels que Michel-Ange et le Bernin. D'ailleurs, Careri reprend ici, à grand profit, quelques idées maîtresses de sa pensée, développées dans ces écrits précédents. Un exemple frappant est l'insistance sur l'utilité du concept de montage, emprunté à l'analyse cinématographique, pour comprendre des œuvres baroques—des ensembles

multimédia comme ceux du Bernin d'abord, mais aussi, comme on l'apprend ici, de «simples» peintures.

Cependant, le *Caravage* de Careri refuse, par quelques autres aspects, de jouer le jeu de «l'ouvrage de référence». D'abord, si toutes les œuvres communément attribuées à Caravage sont traitées dans ce livre, certaines sont mentionnées presque en passant, sans trop s'y attarder—elles sont, cependant, toujours magnifiquement reproduites—alors que d'autres font l'objet d'une analyse détaillée, comme c'est notamment le cas de *L'incrédulité de saint Thomas*, avec laquelle commence le livre et qui a droit à un chapitre à elle seule, hors cadre chronologique. Careri détermine l'ordre des analyses et leur dosage selon ses intérêts propres et pourrait décevoir les lecteurs qui s'attendent à tout apprendre sur toutes les œuvres. Le même choix est fait pour les références bibliographiques; certes, l'exhaustivité dans le cas d'un peintre sur-étudié comme Caravage est tout simplement impossible, mais même en prenant cela en compte, la liste de références consultées est ici relativement maigre, comme l'est l'appareil de notes. Parmi les centaines, ou plus probablement les milliers de textes de niveau académique qui ont Caravage comme objet principal, sans parler des innombrables études sur les contemporains du peintre, sur son époque, la société romaine qui l'a accueilli, la théologie post-tridentine, etc., Careri fait un tri hautement sélectif: en tout et pour tout, moins de quatre-vingt-dix références sont nommées.

Deux de ce nombre sont, de l'aveu même de l'auteur, particulièrement fondamentales pour son étude: *Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: Dislocating the Storia in Early Modern Painting* de Lorenzo Pericolo, et *The Moment of Caravaggio* de Michael Fried (qui vient de sortir en traduction française). Deux «guides» assez peu conventionnels: si le livre de Pericolo a été très bien accueilli par les spécialistes de Caravage, malgré des débats sur la validité définitive de sa grille interprétative, Fried reste un personnage hautement