

## Text and Image and Romanesque Sculpture

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A recent generation of art historians, motivated in part by new theoretical constructs, some of which are anthropological in nature but most of which derive from literary theory, found itself obligated to question the tenets and customary practices of art history as a discipline. They believe that art historians, with their long tradition of connoisseurship, are too rooted in the physicality of the object, in the substance of works of art, to respond properly to new theoretical concepts. Hans Belting<sup>1</sup>, in *The End of the History of Art?*, as well as Norman Bryson and Michael Fried<sup>2</sup> relish, it would seem, their roles in decrying the death of the old discipline, reminiscent of Dylan Thomas's description of the town crier in Pompeii, although in truth and to do them justice, their aim, and largely successful it is, is to reinvigorate the discipline. Mieke Bal has noted that in fact such discussion "arguably indicate(s) an astonishing vitality [...] of art history within the humanities today"<sup>3</sup>, and Henri Zerner has predicted "that connoisseurship will be rescued and even rehabilitated"<sup>4</sup>. My own sense is that art history, a relatively new discipline and one that derives its being from its roots in philosophy, has always been multidimensional, virtually interdisciplinary, if not meta-disciplinary. Medieval art historians' reliance on religion and history, among other fields of study, distinguishes them more by degree than by type from their colleagues interested in more modern art. Art historians' proclivity, or perhaps better stated obsessive, concern for context has required them to consider social and historical place and time, and as such to employ a variety of disciplines to construct the environment – social, political, economic, and religious – for the works which they study. Of

course, as recent scholarship tells us, context is a construct equally artificial as is connoisseurship<sup>5</sup>.

My attempt here is not to reinvent art history, nor to discuss literary theory, even as it relates to art history. Rather, I would like to demonstrate ways in which art history's traditional methods of visual description and analysis might be used to better understand some texts and the ways in which they function as visual forms or structures. My thoughts as expressed here developed out of a reading of Calvin B. Kendall's *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscription*<sup>6</sup> and were first presented in a conference at the University of Minnesota in honor of his retirement from that institution. But, it seemed to me as well appropriate to include these unpublished remarks in a volume in honor of Xavier Barral i Altet, in part because of his fascinating and provocative recent book questioning the nature of the study of Romanesque art, a book whose perspective suggests a need for a more general questioning of the nature of the discipline of art history<sup>7</sup>. As such, this study is meant as an homage to two scholars I admire tremendously and whose friendship I value.

Kendall's monograph has taught us how to view Romanesque inscriptions in a new light, how to read them, and how to understand them. My own work on Jaca Cathedral, begun more than a few decades ago has required me to be concerned with the inscriptions on the west portal of that crucial monument, inscriptions that are intriguing because of their number, the sheer quantity of words carved, and by how the inscriptions function<sup>8</sup>.

Jaca's location on the pilgrimage road to the tomb of St. James at Santiago de Compostela and its role as capital city of the Kingdom of Aragon and the place from which the Aragonese reconquest of Moslem-held lands was launched, confirm its importance for cultural developments of the period. Even given the strategic and political importance of Jaca, some scholarly claims for the primacy of its art and architecture have been wildly inflated, although it is probably true that its tympanum, carved within the later years of the eleventh century, was one of the first sculptured tympana in Europe<sup>9</sup>.

The plasticity of the representation of humans and animals on the tympanum (fig. 1), which is carved from fine limestone, belies the relative shallowness of its carving, which allows the inscriptions to establish an equilibrium with the tympanum's sculptural representations. This fact is perhaps not insignificant, given that the inscriptions of the tympanum are incredibly full, occupying much of the background surface space, the implied lintel that serves as a base for the composition, and the entire circle of the chrismon, Christ's monogram in Greek, which is the tympanum's central motif<sup>10</sup>. Flanking the chrismon and establishing a heraldic composition are two lions. A snarling lion on the right side of the tympanum stands over two animals, while on the left, a more benign lion stands above a prostrate human figure who clutches a serpent. Both lions are alert; their tails respond to the curvilinear shape of the tympanum, even as their front paws and their muzzles nearly touch the chrismon, giving the sense that it is they who control its balance.

On one level, and undoubtedly the principal one, the inscriptions function to help the viewer understand the meaning or meanings of the individual carved elements, although given the scholarly debates on Jaca, it would seem that the inscriptions have as often muddied the waters as they have clarified them.

The message of the tympanum is a «vehement exhortation to penitence» in the words of Serafin Moralejo<sup>11</sup>, offering eternal salvation to those who renounce their evil ways. The inscription above the lion to our left, tells us that the lion protects the repentant believer, who is represented wearing the sackcloth of public penitents and brandishing

a serpent. The other lion, that on our right, is shown crushing the agents of evil, represented by the basilisk and a bear, or perhaps a leontophonos, that rare beast cited in the bestiaries and identified at Jaca by Calvin Kendall<sup>12</sup>. The bestiary explains that the burned flesh of the leontophonos is fatal to lions. In order to protect themselves, lions, we are told, do not bite leontophonoi, but rather trample them, precisely what is represented at Jaca.

The text around the chrismon, beginning precisely at the top of the ring, explains that the chrismon functions as a Trinitarian symbol, even as, the Greek letters *rho*, *alpha*, and *chi* should be read as the Latin letters P, A, and X, thus the anagram *pax*<sup>13</sup>. Although the inscription begins precisely at the top of the ring, it, in fact, reads as a continuous, uninterrupted band, emphasizing the message's sense of perpetuity; in Kendall's words, «The door of eternal salvation or "peace", which is Christ, lies open to the public penitent who follows the penitential instruction of the verses of the lintel»<sup>14</sup>.

At Jaca, the inscriptions operate as boundaries: by circumscribing the chrismon, separating it visually from the animals and figures that are carved on the portal, by defining a basal support for the carved lions and chrismon, and by demarcating the top of the tympanum and thus establishing its upper limits. In fact the words on the tympanum function in a manner parallel to the billet moldings so typically used at Jaca to establish or reinforce architectural forms and as such stress a kind of regimented separation of parts, like vestigial or symbolic crenulations. The architectural forms are perhaps as exhortative as are the inscriptions. I am reminded here of Michael Camille's characterization of medieval writing "as the instrument of domination and exclusion"<sup>15</sup>.

That the placement of the inscriptions is far from accidental and that they are intrinsically related to the formal arrangement of the sculpture is evidenced in Aragon by the fact that inscriptions on the tympanum at Santa Cruz de la Serós (fig. 2), modeled after the tympanum of Jaca, from which it is separated by less than ten miles, has inscriptions placed in the same position as at Jaca, around the chrismon and on the implied lintel, even though the inscriptions themselves

are different, though not unrelated, at the two churches<sup>16</sup>.

It is interesting that here the verse inscription that circles the chrismon continues on the lintel. Although, and quite cleverly I think, the lintel inscription can stand on its own as an imperative device, the chrismon inscription requires the lintel's words to complete the leonine hexameter. It is as if the tympanum's artists or designer recognized the appropriateness or advantageousness of placing inscriptions in the same positions as they are at Jaca, even if the texts are different and even if it meant splitting the text to fill the required fields. Although the particular case of Santa Cruz argues for its being a copy of Jaca specifically, the placement of inscriptions at Jaca is, in fact, a relatively common arrangement on Romanesque portals.

At the Church of Saint-Lazare in Autun, in Burgundy, inscriptions again appear around the mandorla, visual, iconographic and conceptual equivalent to the Jaca chrismon, and on the molding below it, which reads as the upper edge of the lintel. Thus, the inscriptions here, as at Jaca and Santa Cruz de la Serós, function visually to reinforce the portal as an allegory of the church by isolating Christ from the other figures in the composition<sup>17</sup>.

On two tympana from the Burgundian church of Saint-Bénigne of Dijon, today in the Musée Archéologique of that city, inscriptions are on the lintel and around the frame, the same scheme appearing at the church of Saint-André in Luz-Saint-Sauveur, in Hautes-Pyrénées.

At Saint-Pierre in Vandeins (fig. 3), in Ain, the inscriptions appear as a kind of archivolt, one of a series of enframements for the tympanum, as well as on the mandorla, and as horizontal bands above and below the scenes of the Last Supper and the Washing of the Feet. Interestingly, the horizontal inscriptions begin on the lintel and continue above the scene of the Last Supper, that is, below the image of Christ. The logic of the placement might be explained by the fact that the reader looks up, but it might be that the artist was equally, or perhaps more, concerned with the visual function of the inscriptions as decorated borders that capture light and shade and thus form a plastic enframement, precisely the function of the

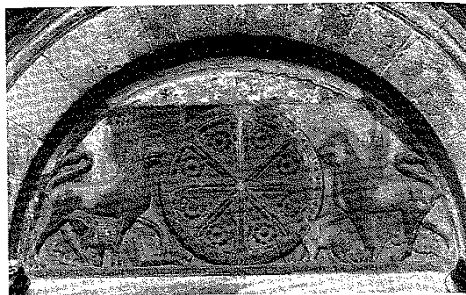


Fig. 1: Jaca, cathedral, tympanum (cl. D. L. SIMON jr.).



Fig. 2: Santa Cruz de la Serós, tympanum (cl. D. L. Simon jr.).



Fig. 3: Vandeins, Saint Pierre, tympanum (cl. R. Lieberman, after KENDALL).

decorations of the archivolt carvings, and that as well mark off discrete sections of the tympanum.

At the former cathedral of Saint-Pierre at Maguelone (fig. 4), in the Hérault, the inscription,

which borders the large and intricately carved acanthus lintel, begins on the top left and runs across the top, down the right side and around two thirds of the bottom edge of the lintel. Another inscription moves along the left edge and around the bottom, meeting the first inscription about a third of the way from the left edge. Once again the inscription makes more sense visually, that is, as an artistic device, than it does when one attempts to read it. So, while there is a disjuncture in how the inscriptions are to be read, the visual arrangement is continuous and clarifies the compositional organization of the tympanum.

On the tympanum of Sainte-Foy at Conques (Aveyron) the placement of the extensive inscriptions is so architectonic that they virtually define an architectural structure within which the carved Last Judgment plays itself out.

The examples I have cited are mostly from southern France and northern Spain, but there are examples in Italy, which function in like manner, for example at Verona, Ferrara, and Pistoia. Thus, the proclivity to use inscriptions as a design feature is not limited by country or region. And although there are of course other schemes, these examples are sufficient to demonstrate that in virtually all of them the inscriptions function to define or isolate specific aspects of the physical arrangement of forms.

The essential issue for our purposes is that there are real patterns here. And, as Calvin Kendall points out in *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and their Verse Inscriptions*, one of the patterns is that the verse-inscribed portals are a Romanesque phenomenon, dying out in the latter part of the twelfth century, their demise concomitant with the rise of Gothic art<sup>18</sup>. Kendall asks why the change, and his answer convincingly suggests a changing role of artist and patron in accentuating their place in the creation of the portal as a representational object, as distinct from the earlier portals which speak in a voice divine. Kendall has described those inscriptions where the portals speak in the first person as "performatives", that is the use of commands in the imperative or subjunctive mood<sup>19</sup>.

As such, the inscriptions establish a direct bond between the sculpted portal and the beholder, effecting "the conversion of language into

discourse"<sup>20</sup>. We might remember that, as Meyer Schapiro in particular has elucidated<sup>21</sup>, visual discourse is as much an issue in the twelfth century as is the verbal one discussed by Kendall. Kendall notes that by the middle of the twelfth century portal inscriptions became much more rare. I wonder whether the kind of change evidenced in the mid- and late-twelfth century portals, i.e., with their lack of inscriptions, was a result of the fact that sculpture increasingly took on the didactic role previously assigned to inscriptions, that the proliferation of decoration, as well as the proclivity of anecdotal themes on portals is a visual parallel to those earlier written imperatives, those performatives, if only in the sense that they serve to actively involve the viewer in the work.

I wonder as well if the change in style, in type of building to be decorated, made the inscriptions' use inappropriate for the new kinds of structures that were being built. For, what we have seen is that Romanesque portal inscriptions function to demarcate discrete units within the larger unity of sculptural and architectural forms, composed, as it were, like the very buildings on which the sculpture and inscriptions are placed. What I am suggesting is that Gothic aesthetic practices and its conceptual framework might well have precluded employing inscriptions in the manner in which they were used during the Romanesque period. As is well known, among the noteworthy distinctions between Romanesque and Gothic buildings is the fact that Romanesque architecture is characterized by a tendency to maintain distinctions between separate parts or units, as seen for example in the space compartments that at once divide and unify the Romanesque nave and in the mural self-containment of Romanesque walls, for example. The arrangement reminds us of the pictorial devices, whereby, in the words of Hans Swarzenski, "each part of a figure or an object now becomes firmly defined and isolated by sharp lines, and all are welded together into a purely abstract geometrical unity"<sup>22</sup>, or, in the words of Henri Focillon, "all the parts interlock and interpenetrate, so that each block of ornament in pictorial guise is like a small separate world, close-knit and compact, a law unto itself"<sup>23</sup>.

While carved portals continue to be produced during the Gothic period, what comes to be

stressed is the unification of elements, rather than their separation. This of course parallels or reflects the architectural forms and structures of the period. Multiple entrance portals are conceived as single compositions and, even in the case of individual portals, the undivided unity of the whole is emphasized. For example, even carved capitals, seemingly individual architectural elements complete in themselves, are employed at the Cathedral of Chartres and other Gothic churches so that they flow together, both visually and in terms of the narrative content depicted on them, to such an extent that some art historians refer to these sculptures as capital friezes, rather than as capitals per se, i.e., accentuating their continuities rather than their individualities.

That inscriptions might serve formal and aesthetic functions within Romanesque portals helps us in fact explain their very existence. It is precisely when lay literacy was on the rise, which Michael Clanchy has shown developed progressively during the twelfth century<sup>24</sup>, that inscriptions on portals disappear. And, it is not clear – even apart from the issue of literacy during the twelfth century – who would have been able to see the portal inscriptions sufficiently well to have read them. For example, on the portals of the churches of Saint-Julien-et-Saint-Laurent in Condeissat and Saint-Pierre in Vandain (fig. 3), both in Ain, inscriptions are placed on the inside of the mandorla, a particularly salubrious location for capturing light and shade and thus creating a sculptural pattern, but a particularly infelicitous location from the point of view of legibility. And, if we can imagine what the portals would have looked like with original polychrome, I am not at all sure that the paint applied to the sculptures would have allowed us to read the inscriptions more clearly. Indeed, paint might have obscured our ability to decipher individual letters; however, it would certainly have highlighted the decorative patterning of the forms.

That inscriptions were thought of as aesthetic devices, as well as of text, is evidenced by some examples where the inscriptions would have been seen at eye level, that is forswearing some of the problems of reading the inscriptions at the height of a tympanum. At San Juan de la Peña in Aragon, the low door that connects the cloister

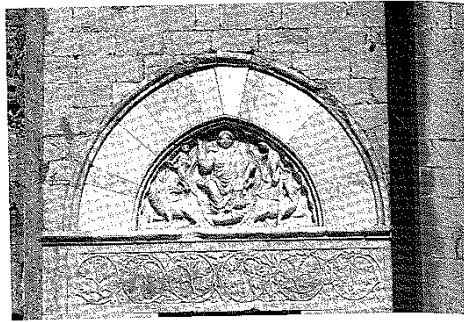


Fig. 4: Maguelone, former cathedral, tympanum (cl. R. Lieberman, after KENDALL).

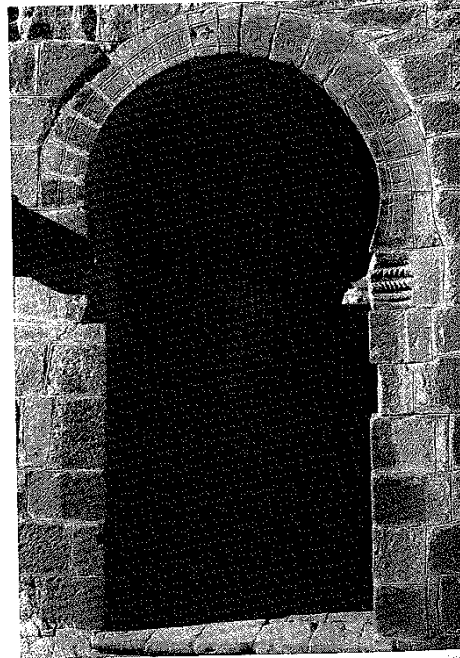


Fig. 5: San Juan de la Peña, cloister portal (R. Lieberman, after KENDALL, cl. D. L. Simon jr.).

to the church was reused from the ninth-century Mozarabic structure that antedated the building of the Romanesque church (fig. 5). The twelfth century inscription that was added to the older reemployed door is written in a consciously archaizing manner, in a type of Visigothic script

that is in keeping with the style of the antique doorway but that is not easily legible.

The concern for aesthetics with which inscriptions were conceived is evident on many monuments, for example, at the Abbey of Saint-Pierre in Moissac in the Midi-Pyrénées, the cloister-pier inscription that commemorates the construction of the cloister during the abbacy of Ansquil is a gorgeous affair; as Kendall points out the “lines are inscribed in elaborately interlocked, interlaced, raised and joined letters”. Precisely for this reason “it requires an effort to decipher the meaning of the attractive patterns they form”<sup>25</sup>.

To conclude, and to return to Jaca and the issue of inscriptions on portals as a Romanesque phenomenon, certainly it is no surprise to recognize that changing social and other contexts,

changing world views and mind sets, and changing physical relationships are reflected in the changing conceptual and visual organization of portals, making the use of old arrangements either unnecessary or inappropriate for the new kinds of structures that were being built. The old words in the form of inscriptions on Romanesque portals certainly do a number of things, and one of them is to establish or reinforce borders and boundaries, and as such, they insinuate a defensive posture. Visually they parallel or perhaps even become metaphors for the admonitory, imperative messages so characteristic of so many of the Romanesque portals. Apparently, and eventually, such an arrangement came to be seen as no longer in keeping with changing and new values.

#### NOTES

1. H. BELTING, *The End of the History of Art?*, Chicago, 1987.
2. N. BRYSON, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Regime*, Cambridge, 1981; N. BRYSON, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, London, 1983; M. FRIED, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane*, Chicago, 1980; M. BAL, “On Looking and Reading: Word and Image, Visual Poetics, and Comparative Arts”, *Semiotica*, 77, 1998, p. 283.
3. M. BAL, “On Looking and Reading”, cit., p. 283-284.
4. H. ZERNER, «Editor’s Statement: The Crisis in the Discipline», *Art Journal*, 42, 1982, p. 279.
5. M. BAL and N. BRYSON, “Semiotics and Art History”, *Art Bulletin*, 73, 1991, p. 174-208: 176-180.
6. C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions*, Toronto, 1998.
7. X. BARRAL I ALTET, *Contre l’art roman? Essai sur un passé réinventé*, Paris, 2006.
8. For bibliography, see D. L. SIMON, “El tímpano de la catedral de Jaca”, in *Actas del XV congreso de historia de la Corona de Aragón*, III, Zaragoza, 1994, p. 405-419. I would like to acknowledge support for my investigations on Jaca cathedral from the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain’s Ministry of Culture and

United States Universities. My recent work on Jaca is part of a larger project, “Arte y monarquía en el nacimiento y consolidación del reino de Aragón”, for which Prof. Javier Martínez de Aguirre of the Universidad Complutense of Madrid serves as coordinator and which has been funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación of the Government of Spain.

9. S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, “La sculpture romane de la Cathédrale de Jaca. État des questions”, *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, 10, 1979, p. 79-106.

10. The inscriptions in the background read: “IMPERIVM MORTIS CON/CULCANS EST LEO FORTIS” (The strong lion tramples underfoot the sovereign power of death) and “PARCERE STERNENTI/ LEO SCIT XPISUSQUE PETE NTI” (The lion knows to spare the man who prostrates himself, and Christ knows to pardon the man who prays). The inscription around the chrismon reads: “+ HAC IN SCVLPTVRA LECTOR SIT NOSCERE CVRA, P PATER. A GENITVS. DVPLEX EST SPIRITVS ALMVS, HII TRES IVRE QVIDEM DOMINVS SVNT VNVS ET IDEM” (In this sculpture, reader, take care to understand [the symbolism] in this way: P is the Father, A is the Son, the double letter is the Holy Spirit. These three are indeed rightly one and the same, the Lord). The inscription on the lintel reads: “VIVERE SI QVERIS QVI MORTIS LEGE TENERIS: HVC SVPLICANDO VENI. RENVENS FOMENTA VENERI. COR VICIIS MVNDA. PEREAS NE MORTE SECVNDA” (If you are bound by the law of death seek to live, come hither in prayer, renouncing the fomentations

of poison. Cleanse your heart of vices, lest you perish in the second death).

11. S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, "La sculpture romane", cit., p. 94.
12. C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church*, cit., p. 126-128.
13. J. F. ESTEBAN LORENTE, "Las inscripciones del tímpano de la Catedral de Jaca", *Artigrama* 10, 1993, p. 143-161; C. L. KENDALL, "The Verse Inscriptions of the Tympanum of Jaca and the PAX Anagram", *Mediaevalia*, 19, 1996, p. 405-434; C. L. KENDALL, *Allegory of the Church*, cit., p. 122-138; J. F. ESTEBAN LORENTE, "El tímpano de la Catedral de Jaca (continuación)", *Aragón en la Edad Media*, 14-15, 1999, p. 451-472.
14. C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church*, cit., p. 129.
15. M. CAMILLE, "The Devil's Writing: Diabolic Literacy in Medieval Art", in I. LAVIN (ed.), *World Art. Themes of Unity in Diversity*. Acts of the xxv international congress in the history of art (Washington, D.C., 1986), University Park, Pennsylvania, 1989, p. 355.
16. For the inscription at Santa Cruz de la Serós and all other inscriptions referred to in this article, see the *Catalogue of Verse Inscriptions*, in C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church*, pp. 197-300.
17. C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church*, cit., p. 90.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 185-195.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 92-98.

20. C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church*, cit., p. 95-96, citing É. BENVENISTE, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. M. A. MEEK, Miami, 1971.
21. Among other works, see M. SCHAPIRO, "On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art", in K. B. IYER (ed.), *Art and Thought. Issued in Honor of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on the Occasion of His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, London, 1947, p. 130-150; ID., "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle Image-Signs", *Semiotica*, 1, 1969, p. 223-242; ID., *Romanesque Architectural Sculpture: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures*, ed. L. SEIDEL, Chicago, 2006.
22. H. SWARZENSKI, *Monuments of Romanesque Art. The art of church treasures in North-Western Europe*, Chicago, 1954, p. 27
23. H. FOCILLON, *The Art of the West in the Middle Ages*, 1, *Romanesque Art*, ed. J. BONY, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1963, p. 111.
24. M. CLANCHY, *From Memory to Written Record. England, 1066-1307*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1979, p. 177-181. See also M. CAMILLE, "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy", *Art History*, 8, 1985, p. 26-49; L. G. DUGGAN, "Was art really the 'book of the illiterate'?", *Word and Image*, 5, 1989, p. 227-251.
25. C. B. KENDALL, *The Allegory of the Church*, cit., p. 189.

## Against Written Sources? A Brief Essay on How not to Recover the Past

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The History of Fine Arts is a history of visual forms. The main task of a historian of fine arts is to master the visual language, and its inflections and dialects at various times and places. Should this make me a "formalist", I am ready to admit it. But immediately I would protest: the art form is not just any visual form, but a form with content, or, as it was lucidly put not long ago, embodied meaning. Such forms bear a special message, they communicate, and the way they communicate makes a significant part of an art historian's study of the visual forms language. In fact, there are instances when only the content or the concept turns an otherwise formally insignificant piece of communication into a work of art<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, without art as a physical, material phenomenon there is no content, no communication. Thus without an expert familiarity with the forms and their language, the historian of fine arts is not a historian of fine arts. Or, we must all master the language of the material studied by our discipline, before we can handle anything else<sup>2</sup>.

For quite some time there has been an uneasy feeling among the students of visual arts that their discipline is dying. In my opinion that malaise has real roots, and they lie in the fact that the historians of visual arts have abrogated their primary task – the analysis of visual forms language – and thus, in fact, walked out on their discipline. A discipline without practitioners is no discipline at all<sup>3</sup>.

The man these lines are dedicated to with my deepest respect, regards, and expressions of friendship, Professor Xavier Barral i Altet, has done an excellent job combating what he has rightly seen

as sterile, dogmatic formalism, formalism for formalism's sake. His latest major work, his remarkable book *Contre l'art roman?* is a masterpiece of debunking of old, untenable positions, the rigid formalist included. The reader has already noticed that I am paraphrasing Barral's title, which I am doing, I believe, for a good reason, and as a compliment. Barralian criticism has amply demonstrated what setting a work of art within a context, and studying it within that context from points of view of various related and relevant disciplines, means for our understanding of the work and its historic role. As long as a master practices his craft, the result is an enrichment of our discipline<sup>4</sup>. However, this going out of our discipline, and pretending that we are «exact scientists», whereas we are not and cannot be so, leads to another extreme; of fishing for information outside the fine arts history area, and forgetting the work of art itself and what it has to tell us<sup>5</sup>. This does not happen in Barralian criticism, but it happens ever so often when minor spirits try to follow the master's lead. In such cases, only too frequently, we end up with an analysis which has little or nothing to do with the history of fine arts. No wonder the visual arts history may be dying, when its own perpetrators do not practice it. A scholar in any discipline is a mind, in fine arts he is also an eye. Whereas I have no doubts that Professor Barral is both a superb mind and superb eye, amply witnessed by his scholarly oeuvre, the art of seeing seems to be getting a bad press among those who call themselves historians of fine arts. In particular, I am appalled to what extent the fine arts history has become fishing for a document to prove the