



Montage: Salomon Trismosin *Splendor Solis* (1682), and *Alchemist heating a pot* by David Teniers (1610-1690)

It is difficult to make the link between art-history and the task of gardening the earth, without taking the alchemical tradition into consideration (in which this combination exists). If the project of art-history is extended to the gardening of the earth, a whole range of disciplines become connected.

Through the alchemical connection—which is ethos and eidos in one—art history can prompt the entire range of disciplines involved in environmental humanities. What it also can do is to lift the lineup (*Aufstellung*), which is explicit in design and implicit in art-history, as a remedial structure.

This aspect rather pertains to STS (science technology studies) in the sense that the readability of the atlas (Didi-Huberman) is must prevail before we know what something is, where we are, and to what we are heading. This understanding of art-history is, for the time being, *not* indigenous.



Alchemical *Tree of Life*. Opening page of *On Learned Ignorance* in *Codex Cusanus 218*

Amongst the matters we may need to *unlearn* are a number notions that we cultivated at a *discursive* level, leading us to think *we know what things are*. For instance, *art-history*. At art school, this discipline is thought to be related because the subject contains the denominator taught at such schools: *art*.

If we go beyond the denominator—art—we will soon detect that art-history is a *hybrid* discipline, and the the knowledges relevant in the education of artists and designers, go way *beyond* the humanities. In some cases, art historians are well versed in aesthetic theory, while in other cases verge to archaeology.

Some art-historians ask questions that are tangential to conservation. While others (such as Georges Didi-Huberman) determines himself as a visual anthropologist. Anthropologist partly in the philosophical sense, and partly in the fieldworking sense: materials, atelier and exhibition as fieldwork subjects.

If we focus on the core of art history, what distinguishes the profession is an extant practice of seeing a lot. And the vocation includes the ability to transpose this experience into a realm of reflection. This practice is quite robust and admirable in the sense that art historians acquire this as an expertise.

Their role as historians, however, implicates *time* in unusual ways (by the standards of the profession of historians): since on the one hand, they use visual evidence alongside written sources, in ways which historians don't; and also because they engage with a different temporal aspect—*provenance*.

If provenance is extended to determine the time of the image in the hands of the maker and—later—the owners, and their settings, provenance becomes an important source of *context* to written sources. As records increasingly include *pictorial* repro-materials, the hierarchy of documentation is tried.

When the hierarchy of *text* and *image* become—occasionally or permanently—*reversed*, text becomes more salient, in a shifted mode, as context. That is, they can be determined as *found* materials. This, in itself, is characteristic of the turn to *deconstruction*, in philosophy and aesthetic theory, a while back.

Yet *another* step in this development may be envisaged as writing—as found material—is constituted as *text*, by the work of *semiotics* in material factors that are either *added* to or *removed* from it: that are in proximate relation to it. That is, relations that may be *intimate*, *remote* or *mediated* as by design.

When the *remote*, *intimate* and *medial* are extended to *space* for books we are in a *library*. When metadata *linked* to the books become salient—the *life* of the books in terms of *ownership* and *handling*—their *provenance* comes into the bargain, and we are in an *archive*. The findings rise to prominence.

The point being that the world of signs is *performative*—they are either made or enacted—and they develop through the *interceptive* affordance of agency. They have to be joined with language to work along with it. And they may be linked to a mechanism activated as the amount of information is excessive.