INTRODUCTION

The Temporal Structure of the Visual Arts

The present study of narrative landscape forms a part of the general study of time in the visual arts. We, therefore, would like to begin with a review of the state of research on this broader subject, and then proceed to more specific problems.

The modern notion of the relation between time and the visual arts has long been under the decisive influence of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's famous essay, *Laokoon*, first published in 1766.[1] Current discussions about the issue, therefore, often begin with comments on the essay.[2] Here it is unnecessary to recapitulate Lessing's lengthy discussion which is based on the well-known dichotomy of literature and the visual arts: the former as the art of time and the latter as that of space. Here it may suffice to make one brief note about his theory with regard to the essential points of our present study of narrative landscape.

In the fifteenth chapter of *Laokoon,* Lessing concludes his criticism of Caylus' thesis with a remark that painting must deal with a subject-matter which exists in space simultaneously, while poetry deals with an event which occurs sequentially in time. Then, proceeding to the sixteenth chapter, the author postulates his own theory as follows:

"...if it is true that in its imitations painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs

[1] G. E. Lessing, *Lessings Laokoon* (Edited and commented by Hugo Blumner) (Berlin, 1880); From here on English translation is quoted from G. E. Lessing, *Laocoön* (Translated with an introduction and notes by E. A. McCormick)(Baltimore and London, 1984)

[2] *E. g.* J.McClain,"Time in the Visual Arts: Lessing and Modern Criticism," *JAACr*, XLIV,1 (1985), 41-58.

must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while *signs that follow one another* can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive.

Objects or parts of objects which exist in space are called bodies. Accordingly, bodies with their visible properties are the true subjects of painting.

Objects or part of objects which follow one another are called actions. Accordingly, actions are the true subjects of poetry."[3] (Our Italics)

Throughout his lengthy discussion, Lessing takes a firm standpoint that poetry consists of the 'signs that follow one another'. We must first examine this point.

Our common sense may accept Lessing's notion that literature consists of signs that follow sequentially. But, doesn't a poem written on a piece of paper exist in space? Doesn't a book which contains the whole text of *Ilias* in a single volume occupy a certain space? In fact, written or printed text, whether a poem or an encyclopaedia, exists in space, and all its part can be found in a single space simultaneously. Poetry, therefore, can be defined as an art of time only when every word ('sign' by Lessing) is read, whether loud or mute, one after another. In other words, literature becomes an art of time only through the action of the reader or the reciter directed toward the text. This is the reality of what Lessing called the temporality of literature, but he completely overlooked the point.

If correct, our present criticism of Lessing's theory leads us to admit that it is unreasonable to deny any temporality in the visual arts. If a poetry turns into an art of time when it is read by the reader, why can't a painting which exists spatially be turned into an art of time, if our eyes run through its compositional and iconographical components consecutively? In fact we often can and must 'scan' or 'read' a painting, especially when it is executed in a long frieze, as seen in an Oriental illuminated scroll. Even if a painting is shaped in a rectangular format, it is still possible to follow every compositional or iconographical element one after another, just

[3]Lessing, *Laocoön*, 78.

as when reading text.

As we shall discuss later, the visual arts often concern real time - the time we can measure by our clock - but it is the innate temporality that we primarily deal with here. Such temporality becomes perceptible through the action of the viewer/reader.[4] Thus, the role of viewer/reader occupies an importnat place in the current discussions about the time in the visual arts.

The lengthy summary of the history of the studies on the temporality of the visual arts in Gudula Overmeyer's publication in 1982 upsets the reader with the variety of approaches to this crucial issue as well as the complexity of the problems rising from it.[5] As she correctly points out at the outset of her study, time concerns so many different aspects of the visual arts that we must always be precise as to what sort of time problem we are dealing with. In fact, however, the scholarship in the past tended to confuse the multiple aspects of the problem and attempted at solving them with one *coup*.

It is Etienne Souriau who, shortly after the Second World War, opened a new path into the problem of the time in the visual arts.[6] Let us recapitulate a few important points in

[4]In 1920's two major studies were devoted to the theory of rhythmic movement in Albrecht Dürer.(H.Kauffmann, *Albrecht Dürers rhythmische Kunst,* Leipzig, 1924 and E.Panofsky," Albrecht Dürers rhythmische Kunst," *JKw*, 1926, 136-192.) and both authors were fully aware of the fact that rhythmic movement in the visual arts, especially in architecture, exists as an 'objective structure' in a work of art, which is to be completed through the 'subjective' experience of the viewer. (Panofsky, op. cit. 139) Since, however, these two studies mainly concerned the intuitive perception of rhythmic movment, the problem of reading never came to the fore (Cf. Panofsky's criticism of F.Wickhoff's theory of continuous representation: Ibid.,143ff.)

[5]G. Overmeyer, *Studien zur Zeitgestalt in der Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts, Robert Delaunay - Paul Klee* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 1982), 3-29. Her summary of the history of study is preceded by L. Dittmann, " Raum und Zeit als Darstellungsformen bildender Kunst," *Stadt und Landschaft - Raum und Zeit - Festschrift fur Erich Kuhn* (Koln, 1969), 46ff.

[6]Etienne Souriau, "Time in the Plastic Arts," *JAACr* VII (1949),294-307.

his argument:

Approximately the first half of his article is devoted to the definition of two different types of time regarding the plastic arts,[7] This part seems to us more important than the latter half, where the author attempts a comparative study between time in plastic art and that in music. At the beginning of his article he strongly refutes the 'rather banal description, 'arts of space,' in contrast to the phonetic and cinematic arts.., characterized as 'arts of time.'" He attributes this grave misunderstanding of the essential character of the plastic arts to "a great number of aestheticians from Hegel to Max Dessoir" who have their "historic origin in the philosophy of Kant." Then Souriau proceeds to demonstrate that even a painting requires a 'time of contemplation', asking: "Can one appreciate the full beauty of a painting without a period of contemplation wherein successive reactions take place?"

Evidently his remark can be applied upon the case of art forms in three dimensions, such as architecture or sculpture. "It is only by a dangerous abstraction...that one can conceive of a work of art as a totality seen in a single flash. In so far as it is offered to the sight,...or to the contemplation, the cathedral ..delivers itself little by little in different spectacles which are never simultaneous." Thus, Souriau challenges the fundamental issue once proposed by Lessing, i. e., that visual art ought not only to represent the prerogative instant of an action but also to be appreciated instantly.[8]

According to Souriau, these successive aspects of the plastic arts are enclosed in the physical frame of a work of art, not unlike a disc containing the structural law of musical

[7] *Ibid.*,294-300.

[8] According to Lessing, "painting can use only a single moment of an action in its coexisting compositions and must therefore choose the one which is most suggestive (*den prägnatesten*) and from which the preceding and suceeding actions are most easily comprehensible." (Ch.XVI, Lessing, *Laocoön*, 78) Further, "The beauty of an object arises from the harmonious effect of its various parts, *which the eye is able to take in at one glance.* It demnads, therefore, that these parts lie in juxtaposition; and since things whose part are in juxtaposition are the proper subject of painting, it follows that painting and painting alone can imitate material beauty.' (Ch.XX, *Ibid.*104) (Our Italics)

performance. He says, "One must see the movement of the spectator around the statue or the architectural monument as a plastic or view-absorbing execution, which unfolds in order the various aspects which are held within the physical frame....Are there profound and basic defferences between this 'plastic execution' and a musical performance?" In this respect our previous comment on Lessing's dichotomy agrees with Souriau's tenor.

He then goes on to propose another type of time, that is the time which frames the content of the universe of the work of art. This *intrinsic* time, as he calls it, "must be considered...entirely distinct from the space and time occupied by the physical form of the work, or by the reading of it, or meditation about it." According to the author, such time and space intrinsic to the represented content of a work of art is far more extended than the time (and space) enclosed within the physical framework. With regard to the length of the intrinsic time in the statue of Nike at Samothrace, he states that "one of the aesthetic secrets of this masterpiece is this choice of a prerogative moment that is still capable of keeping its relation with a long unfolding of continuous action...."[9] Or regarding Poussin's famous *Et in Arcadia ego*, Souriau remarks that "no artistic comprehension is possible if one does not take account of the temporal basis implied by the ages of the various persons, the presence of the tomb ...," or further that "this rhythm of life and death, in the past, the present, and the future ... are all part of the fundamental aesthetic structure of the work." In short, the *intrinsic* time of Souriau is practically what is meant, as he states, by images and iconography with regard to time in general. Thus, Souriau's intrinsic time

[9] Atsushi Tanikawa, *Keisho to Jikan* (Image and Time) (Tokyo, 1986), 191-198, has correctly pointed out that Souriau's 'prerogative moment' differs only little from Lessing's 'most suggestive single moment', though the former emphasizes the empirical aspect of the 'moment', while the latter's notion was based on the contemporaneous theory of imitation. In fact, however, Lessing did make an impotant concession to the temporaneity in the visual art only once in Ch.XVI, when he described his 'most suggestive moment' as the single moment "from which the preceding and succeeding actions are most easily comprehensible."

evidently belongs to the represented content of a work of art.

Today a strong interest in the issue of time in the visual arts is rapidly growing among students of art history. Since 1980, not a single year has passed without a publication on the issue, where every author proposes a new system of temporality in the visual arts. In 1980 Lorenz Dittmann distinguished several different kinds of time in the visual arts as follows[10]: (1) historical (chronological) time that concerns a work of art as an art-object; (2) represented temporal situation, for instance, the executor in motion in one of the decapitation scenes by Caravaggio; and (3) temporality inherent to the visual structure of a work of art, by which the order of perception is determined which he calls *Zeitgestalt.*

Following Dittmann's example, Overmeyer presented a different system of temporality in the visual arts for her research on Klee and Delaunay[11]: (1) time narrated by means of iconography and symbolic time-motifs, which are irrelevant to the aesthetic (sensorial) phase of picture; (2) choice of painting materials and the process of execution; and (3) formal time-structure attained through (a) brush-work and other painting methods, (b) composition, (c) linear contour, (d) color scheme, (e) *chiaroscuro*, and f) space construction.

It may not be accidental that both authors distinguish the time represented by motifs, iconography, or narrative on the one hand, from that which is produced through our perception guided by various formal arrangement on the picture surface on the other hand. In this respect the preceding three scholars accord with each other, though in general terms. In other words, they believe that there are two major aspects of temporality in the visual arts: the one has its root in the content which is represented by means of iconography or symbolic motifs, while the other becomes perceptible through the action of the viewer/reader guided by the formal characteristics inherent in a work of art.

[10] L.Dittmann, "Überlegungen und Beobachtungen zur Zeitgestalt des Gemaldes," *Neue Hefte fur Philosophie* XVIII/XIX (Göttingen, 1980), 133-150, quoted by Overmeyer in *Zeitgestalt*, 25 .

[11] *Ibid.* 27.

It is often said that a masterpiece of art is created through a perfect agreement between form and content. Sometimes this may be the case, but it can never be a rule. To be candid, such is often a banal cliche drawn from a *fait accomplis*: even an artist can never know what sort of form best matches the given content. Or, an artist often succeeds in expressing a deep, hitherto unknown meaning, in the course of his purely formal endeavor. Be that as it may, Souriau is indiscriminate in assuming a possibility of harmonizing these two major aspects of temporality in the visual arts. A passage in his thesis we have quoted above actually continues as following: "And one of the aesthetic secrets of this masterpiece (Nike of Samothrace) is this choice of a prerogative moment that is still capable of keeping its relation with a long unfolding of continuous action, so that the psychological time of contemplation is enclosed within the time of the works (=intrinsic time) and participates in it without effort and almost without limit."[12]

Obviously, 'a long unfolding of continuous action' in Souriau's thesis refers to the dramatic action of the flying and trumpeting of Nike. As has been stated by Souriau himself, this action belongs to intrinsic time, since it is implied by the specific iconography of the statue, which, in turn, is supported by the reader's pertinent mythological knowledge of Nike. How, then, can this experience of *intrinsic* time *enclose* the psychological time of contemplation? At least Souriau should have precisely defined this 'enclosing', unless it is a passing metaphor.

We may perhaps propose a more correct explanation of the fact about Nike of Samothrace: it is not entirely from Nike's posture nor from her action of flying and blowing the trumpet that 'the psychological time of contemplation' of this heroic statue emanates. These all belong to the sphere of content. Aside from these 'iconographical' elements, we must note that a set of formal elements, such as the unusually busy and waving movement of the drapery foldings, or the sequential change of form and position of the feathers on her two wings, do indeed contribute to produce the time of contemplation. It may not be too far-fetched if we see in this unique treatment of the

[12] Souriau,"Time in the Plastic Arts,". 299.

drapery foldings and feathers a Hellenistic predecessor of Balla's dog in his *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912).

Peinture et temps by Bernard Lamblin was published posthumously in 1983, being edited and forworded by Mme. Bianca Lamblin, his widow, and prefaced by Mikel Dufrenne.[13] It is impossible to summarize this voluminous publication in a few pages. Luckily, however, Mme.Lamblin in her foreword briefly describes the general composition of the author's argument[14]. The book consists of two parts. In the first part which deals with more general problems, the opening chapter examines the difficulty in relating painting to time as directly as to space. The second chapter explores the temporality in the perception of panel painting. It is confirmed that there is an itinerary of our reading eye, *le parcours progressif de la lecture du tableau.*

This second chapter is further divided into six sections. The first concerns the time of itinerary: an aesthetic experience of a work of painting, that is inevitably temporal. The second section deals with the problem of the orientation of such an itinerary, especially in the case of painted scrolls, such as Chinese landscape scrolls, or ensemble pictures, such as the Marie de Medicis cycle now in the Louvre. The following three sections discuss the inborn tendency of human eye to scan a picture surface from left to right.

In the second part of the book there are five chapters, each taking up a different subject-matter of painting regarding time. They are divided in accordance with the traditional classification of pictures: religious, historical, landscape, genre, and still life.

Thus, in the elaborate study by Lamblin, the time problems are again divided into two major general groups: the formal and the iconographical. The author's approach to the formal aspects of the temporality in the visual arts, which is called 'immanent time' by Dufrenne, is characteristically physiological rather than intellectual, as it is revealed by Lamblin's concern with the orientation of the viewer's gaze from left to right.

[13] B.Lamblin, *Peinture et temps* (Paris, 1983).

[14] *Ibid.* VII.

Although the author often applies the term reading (*lecture*), he seldom discusses the *textual* structure of painting, on which the reader works with his/her memory and intellect.[15]

Although Lamblin paid little attention to the aspect of time in the visual arts, the issue had often been treated with special reference to the textual structure as well as the content of the picture. In fact, the problem has been discussed not so much by art historians as by critics of literature, especially those who are interested in a semiotic analysis of the visual arts. Among them, Louis Marin has been stimulating art historians with a series of articles since the end of 1960's. In "Elements pour une semiologie picturale" (1969), he explains that the act of reading definitely produces time, which is a kind of sequential relationship contained in the instant moment of pictorial vision. In other words, from the act of reading evolves first a variety contained in an unified entirety, and then a sequence in the unifying moment of vision.[16]

In an article published in the following year of 1970, he demonstrates more explicitly his notion of the time in the visual arts through a careful analysis of the descriptions of Poussin's famous *Man Killed by a Snake, a* painting treated by various authors of the past, including Fénelon and Félibien.[17] According to Marin, there is no narrative in its proper sense in representational art, as this is characterized, especially in the seventeenth century, by the unity of time and space. The

[15] M.Dufrenne comments on Lamblin's study: "Si la surface s'anime sous le regard, comme l'a déjà animée le geste du peintre, c'est que l'oeuvre, toute prisoniere qu'elle est de l'immobile, manifeste du mouvement -Kandinsky préfère dire : des tensions - et par là en appelle au temps ou ce mouvement virtuel se deploie. Mais prenez garde - et Lamblin nous en avertit - qu'il ne s'agit pas ici du mouvement qui, dans une oeuvre figurative, peut être represente, comme sur la toile de Poussin, ...; et pas davantage du temps objectif qui nombre le mouvement; Il s'agit d'un mouvement qui est un devenir, pour mieux un advenir:... Ibid., X(Our Italics)

[16] Later included in *Etudes sémiologiques* (Paris, 1971) (Japanese translation by S.Shinoda and Y.Yamazaki, *Kaigano Kigogaku* , Tokyo, 1986, from which the present quotation is being made: esp. 6-12.)

17L. Marin, "La description de l'image : à propos d'un paysage de Poussin," *Communication* XV (1970). 186-209 , esp.195-197.

temporality in such an art is neither continuous (successive) nor linear.

It is, however, the result of the inflation (*gonflement*) of the instant represented there, and that is caused by the description and narrative entering the picture. The temporality only appropriate to the painting becomes perceptible by this oscillation of descriptive discourse. The scanning, *parcours*, of the viewer's gaze makes such temporality manifest most vividly, and the sequential relationship of time becomes determined and perceptible, in a painting like Poussin's, through representation and illusion.

Thus, according to Marin, the continuity and sequentiality in a picture is based on a pictorial illusion, being, however, made visible by the discourse and reading on the side of the viewer/reader of the picture. This illusion, in its turn, is supported by a number of signs or marks, the intensity of which is differentiated by the moving gaze of the reader according to their spatial arrangement in the picture. This order of signs and marks in picture space and their eventual arrangement on the picture surface create the illusion of continuity. Thus, a painting is transformed into text and the personages represented in the painting into relational figures.

In concluding a brief summary of Marin's notion of time in his 1970 article, we must point out that he has attributed a special function to such a description of Poussin's painting that is done by Fenelon or Felibien: Marin believes that, guided by the order of those signs and marks, the discourse finally brings forth the meaning (*sens*) appropriate only to the painting. In our view, this is very important, since it will perhaps reveal the intricate relationship between the form and meaning of a picture as well as the role of the viewer/reader of a picture in the production of meaning in the visual arts.[18]

[18] *Ibid.*, 200. More recently Marin has repeated a similar view about the time in Classicistic painting in "Toward A Theory of Reading in the Viasual Arts: Poussin's The Arcadian Shepherds," *The Reader in the Text* (Ed. by S.R. Suleiman and I.Crosman) (Princeton, 1980), 293-324, esp.294-299. A rather sarcasitic view about such a semiotic approach to iconology has been expressed by Ch. Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics," *JAACr* (Spring 1978), 289-301. Whether knowing Marin's contributions or not, she

After having witnessed the futility of applying the structuralist approach to the history of art during the late '60s and '70s,[19] art historians long remained rather sceptical about a new semiotic approach to historical issues. At about the same time, however, some art historians came to share the same interest in the textual structure of art with that of semioticians. The best example is probably the studies of ancient Roman narratives by Richard Brilliant. Already in 1967, Brilliant had made penetrating observations on the spatio-temporal structure of the narrative reliefs on the arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum, whereby he made a number of valuable remarks on the various devices invented by the Roman artists who sometime articulate and sometime even distort the flow of the narrative time on the relief panels.[20] Later, Brilliant summed up the temporal aspects of major late Roman narrative representations in his article in *L'Arte* (1970).[21]

specifically states in 294-295: "Painting presents its components simultaneously rather than sequentially. This is awkward for models adapted to description of narrative - semiological and otherwise! There is, however, a considerable literature that tends to minimize this characteristic of painting and rationalize modes of analysis that are based on time sequence.....Another widespread view attempts to infuse sequentiality into painting by specifying the order in which formal arrangement dictates that the eye shall experience images....Ideas like these have eased the approach from semiology of narrative to semiology of the literary aspects of art. The result has been concentration on these aspects of art and correspondent slowness to define a semiology of purely visual elements."

[19] For example, J. Burnham, *The Structure of Art* (1971 and 1973, New York).

[20] R. Brilliant, "The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum, " *MAAR* XXIX (1979), esp.219ff.

[21] *Idem.*,"Temporal Aspects in Late Roman Art," *L'Arte* X (1970), 65ff.

Eventually in 1984 Brilliant put together in a monograph the results of his previous studies on Roman narratives.[22] It clearly reveals the influence of literary criticism with its semiotic methods of analysis. First, Brilliant notes that the repertory of Roman narrative art consists largely of serialized images used to tell stories. Still, the performance of the artist-narrator, his methods of narration, the reaction of his audience, and the peculiar properties of visual narratives have not been studied systematically. So, he says, he has drawn on some of these models and theories in order to define the methods, intentions, and codes employed by the ancient artists to tell sotries to an audience of spectators.[23] Concerning the temporal structure of those Roman visual narratives, the author makes, quite correctly, the following remark:

"Temporal succession in these works can be conceived as a road that neither comes from somewhere nor goes anywhere but is comprehended ... as a whole. The various actions and events of the romance, thus seen, are connected by a network of overlapping descriptions bound up in a present that incorporates past and future, experienced together.

Similarly, the eye's passage from frame to frame in a complex work of visual narrative, or from place to place within a frame, may track the line of temporal succession in unbroken continuity as it moves stage by stage. Yet, resting in one place, the eye modifies the discontinuity caused by the enframement of the particular moment between the end of the *before* and the beginning of the *thereafter*.....As a result, the presentation of visual narratives may develop both diachronic and synchronic modes of reading, the former determined by the succession of images, the latter freed from those constraints."

[22] *Idem*, *Visual Narratives, Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (Ithaca and London, 1984).

[23] *Ibid.*,11.

We may notice that Marin's observations on the temporality in the visual arts still echo here.[24]

On the methodological premises such as these, Brilliant attempts an analysis of how the Roman artists used to shape and condition the observer's competence to follow and decode the narrative material presented in the work of art.[25]

Practically, Brilliant has dealt with a considrable variety of monuments of very different characters from widely separated periods, - from the Etruscan urn reliefs down to the decoration on the Arch of Constantine - within a limited space. As the result, it is difficult to grasp a theoretical coherency which might have united the number of valuable observations the author presents in the book. In spite of this, Brilliant's approach to the time problem certainly marks a very significant step into the future of art historical study. It is especially so since latest studies of the problem of time in the visual art by semioticians tend to neglect a careful analysis of actual works of art: in spite of Marin's important remarks on the function of the visible signs and marks on a picture surface which determines the itinerary of the *parcours* of viewer's gaze, the semiotic treatment of art historical issues in last few years fails to recognize the importance of the fundamental visual/formal premises for the representation of time in the

[24] *Ibid.*, 18-19.We are not so certain as to whether a synchronic mode of reading, as Brilliant asserts here, is theoretically possible.

[25] *Ibid.*,20.

visual arts.

In the same year as Brilliant's *Visual Narrative*, 1984, la Societe des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussel organized an exhibition of art, titled *L'Art et le Temps, regards sur la quatrieme dimension.* The catalogue edited by Michel Baudson contains a series of articles representing a variety of views about the relationship between time and art.[26] The first part contains articles concerning the science and philosophy of time, whereas the second part is specifically devoted to temporality in the works of art of the past and present. The variety of approaches to the subject clearly demonstrates the complexity of the time problem in art. A few contributors, however, attempt at organizing and classifying these complicated aspects of the time in the visual arts in order. At the outset of his article, "L'Instnat, Newman," Jean-François Lyotard distinguishes several different time-aspects[27]: (1) The time of <production> or the time that is needed by a painter to execute his work; (2) The time of consumption, or, the time needed for a viewer to contemplate a work of art; (3) The time to which a work of art refers to (a moment, a scene, a situation, a series of events; the time as diegetic referent, a story narrated by the picture); (4) The time of circulation/ provenance, or the period of time from the birth of a work of art until it comes to be experienced by the viewer; and (5) The time as an actual artwork .

Although comprehensive and intelligible, Lyotard's system of time is so brief and compact that it would need a further explication, but, since his essay is specifically focussed on the last fifth type of time, of which Lyotard believes the works by Burnet Newman present the best case study, he does not enter

[26]Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Cat. Exh. *L'Art et le Temps* (Under the direction of Michel Baudson) (Brussels, 1984).

[27]*Ibid.*, 99.

further into the other aspects of time.

In the same publication, Umberto Eco, one of the leading scholars of semiotics today, has contributed an article which discusses the general aspect of the time in arts, including the visual arts, music, and literature.[28] Later, in 1987, Eco again took up the same issue in another publication concerning time and the visual arts.[29] Here Eco recapitulates his preceding study at the beginning, but the classification of various time problems slightly differs from that in his previous publication.

According to Eco's theory, the issues of the time in art are first grouped in two sets: the first concerns the expression (or, self-manifestation) of time, and the second the time represented as the content of a work of art.[30] The first group contains the following items: (1) the temporality in an art-object (*la consommation physique*), or the natural mutation and decay of the physical support of an art object; (2) the time effects due to the mobility and deliberate transformation (*flux syntagmatique*) of a work of art, such as mobile sculpture; (3) the time of the scanning, *parcours*, required of the spectator for perceiving all entire physical aspects of an immobile art object, whether Michelangelo's David or the Cathedral of Milan; (4) the time of recomposition, as in jigsaw puzzles.

The second group, that of the time represented as the

[28]U. Eco, "Le temps de l'art," 73-83. The article was later published in Italian as: "Il tempo nell'arte," *Sugli specchi e altri saggi* (Milan, 1985), 115-124.

[29]U. Eco, "Tempo, identità, e rappresentazione," *Le figure del tempo* (Ed. by L. Corrain)(Milan, 1987), 7-17.

[30]In the article contained in the Brussels catalogue even, the classified list of the time-issues as well as the headings shown at the beginning of the article do not precisely correspond to those which appear in the subsequent part of the article. Here we follow the order of Eco's discussion in the main text of the catalogue essay.

content of a work of art, includes the following: (1) the time of the enunciated (*tempo rappresentato*), or the time of the chronological flow, or succession of events (i. e., narratives, poems, etc.) which constitute the object of the representation in a work of art; and (2) the time of enunciation, which is needed for the creation of a work of art. This, however, also comprises the time of reading (*letture*) or interpreting a picture, or even questioning about it.[31] Specifically, action painting such as Pollock's concerns in fact the time of the enunciated enunciation, since it *represents* the time needed for the whole process of its execution.

It has already been stated by Marin that the scanning of the viewer's gaze produces an illusory sequentiality even in such a Classicist painting from the seventeenth century like Poussin's. This enables a narrative or text to be immanent in the picture. That is to say that the *parcours* of the viewer's sensory gaze on a picture surface is the direct premise for the production of content. Admitting this, we must also confirm that the course of the scanning of our gaze is directed not only by the physio-psychological intensity of the signs and marks arranged on the picture surface but also by the implicit syntax that produces the fundamental meaning of the picture. Evidently, the relation between the sensory, perceptive intensity of these signs and marks and the implicit semantico-syntactic order is reciprocal. Hence it is not unlikely that, even if a literary content is premediated by the artist, it can easily be exposed to a radical syntactic transformation due to an even haphazard effect of those signs and marks. Their nature and function are thus essentially ambiguous.

This ambiguity becomes most conspicuous in the case of abstract art, especially in action painting. Here the viewer's gaze is guided by purely formal components of the picture and

31"Il quale non è soltanto il tempo della circumnavigazione fisica dell'oggetto, ma anche il tempo dell'interrogazione, dell'enigma, che per certi testi 'sacri' è stato ed è il tempo della tradizione, della storia che accumula e sedimenta letture diverse.' Eco, "Tempo, identità e rappresentazione," 7.

their physiological order. Yet, if we assert that Pollock's painting must be read, as Eco does, we must also admit that our gaze follows the syntactic order of the implicit text which we write into the picture almost spontaneously. In our subsequent study of Stuart Davis' works in the final chapter, we also would like to demonstrate that, conversely, the transition from the reading of 'iconographical' components to the perception of 'formal' articulation is a continuous, uninterrupted process.

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The preceding review of the history of the research on temporality in the visual arts helps us to define the focussing points of our subsequent study on narrative landscape.

First, our discussion will concentrate upon the temporality in the visual arts which is produced by the scanning/reading of the picture. For this purpose we eliminate most of the other aspects of temporality in spite of their importance in discovering and interpreting the essential quality of works of art.

Hence the problem of the natural transformation (deformation, disintegration, decay, etc.) of a work of art is to be excluded from our present research. Likewise, the iconographical representations of time-concepts by symbolic images or motifs, such as the iconography of Father Time, will not be dealt with here. Further, the time premediated as a deliberate transformation and mobility of works of art - most of kinetic art, video, and cinema - must be omitted. Finally the time needed for the production of a work of art is to be kept out of our scope, though it may be dealt with when the reading of action painting emerges as a subject of our subsequent discussion.

After setting aside all these temporal elements in the visual arts, we may focus our attention exclusively upon the temporality that results from the scanning and reading of a

picture, or, more specifically, upon how the course of reading for the viewer's gaze is dictated by those 'signs and marks' on the picture surface. Since, as has been mentioned above, the function of these signs and marks is essentially ambiguous, we must often deal with the crucial reciprocal relationship between issues of form and content.

In this regard, continuous narrative representation does offer the best case of study. Primarily constructed on a given literary text, it allows us in the first place to examine how an arrangement is made for a preliminary reading. Then, we can proceed to investigate the process of the transformation of the primary syntactic relationship due to the formal and interpretative demands rising from both artists and readers of a work of art.[32]

In concluding our review of the state of research, we would like to briefly investigate a classic case of the paradox of time itself. The investigation will reveal to us a few essential aspects of time, on the basis of which we hope to construct a set of working concepts for our subsequent analysis of the temporal structure of the visual arts.

It is the famous paradox proposed by John McTaggart in 1927 that caused a century long debate among philosophers as to whether time is real or unreal.[33] It, however, is not our

[32]Our reader may well ask why it must be the temporality in the visual arts rather than their textuality that we are specifically dealing with. Our perspective is that a discussion on the syntactic structure of picture will inevitablly lead us to discuss beyong the realm of text to the problem of purely formal syntax, which we will compare to the structure of a musical work. The last chapers of the present thesis will be devoted to the works by Kandinsky, Klee, and Stuart Davis specifically in terms of the musicality in the art of the twentieth century,under the general heading: *From Poetry to Music.*

[33]J. M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, II (Cambridge, 1927),V,33. Here quoted from R. M. Gale, ed., *The Philosophy of Time; A Collection of Essays* (N. J. and Sussex, 1978), 86ff.

present purpose to participate in the entangled discussion by philosophers about the existence of time. What matters here is the unique characterization of time by McTaggart.

He says that "positions in time, as time appears to us *prima facie*, are distinguished in two ways."[34]:

(1) "Each position is Earlier than some and Later than some of the other positions." The relation between two such positions is asymmetrical. Thus, according to McTaggart, time appears to form a series of events where each position (event) is related to every other sequentially.

(2) Then McTaggart continues: "In the second place, each position is either Past, Present or Future" and he calls the series of positions formed in such a way A series, whereas the first series is called B series. We must admit, according to McTaggart, that "the events should form an A series as well as a B series, and that "in present experience, we never observe events in time except as forming both these series."

Now, of these two series of events, McTaggart asserts, the B series is always true, since the Earlier-than/Later-than relationship is permanent without exception. For instance, it is a permanent truth that the World War II is later than the World War I. On the contrary, the World War II was in future in the 1930s, but it became present, and now it belongs to the past.

Then, it seems very likely that the A series is no more than a subjective impression. This impression, however, is very real: whereas the Earlier-than/Later-than relationship in the B series is formed by our intellection based on our recollection and reflection, the transitoriness of events can be given directly to our inner perception. Therefore, in spite of the

[34]McTaggart, *Op. cit.*, 87ff.

'scientific' truth provided by the B series, our reality of time largely depends on the A series.

Hence McTaggart insists that "it might be the case that the distinction of positions in time into past, present, and future, is only a constant illusion of our minds, and that the real nature of time contains only the distinctions of the B series. In that case we should not perceive time as it really is, though we might be able to think of it as it really is."

Here, it seems to us, a serious question is inevitable: the B series of McTaggart obviously concerns the relationship among the positions (events), each of which has been thoroughly qualified and distinguished from the other, so much so that we seldom fail to distinguish their Earlier-than/Later-than relation. Quite conversely, doesn't the A series matter implicitly the changing characteristic of a single event rather than the established relationship between them? Such a suspicion is in fact reflected in a question which McTaggart himself raises:

"It would, I suppose, be universally admitted that time involves change.....If, then, a B series without an A series can constitute time, change must be possible without an A series....What, on this supposition, could it be that changes? Can we say that, in a time which formed a B series but not an A series, the change consisted in the fact that the event ceased to be an event, while another event began to be an event? If this were the case, we should certainly have got a change....But this is impossible....Change, then cannot arise from an event ceasing to be an event, nor from one event changing into another....If the characteristics of an event change, then there is certainly change. But what characteristics of an event can change? It seems to me that there is only one class of such characteristics, and that class consists of the determinations of the event in question by the terms of the A series."

While McTaggart's penetrating observations were generally

appreciated as revealing the essential nature of time, they were also challenged by many other scholars, among whom Bertrand Russell's criticism is perhaps the best known. Russel tried to reconstruct the A series of McTaggart using the definition of the B series. In doing so, he succeeded in defending a scientific view of time that establishes a universal truth of the reality of time on the basis of the distinctive positions and their characteristics. It is still true, however, that in our daily experience change means an indivisible, continuous phenomenon, which can never be represented by a set of limited number of positions, however many they may be.

Thus, we may conclude from McTaggart's observations that the A series is essentially relevant to the change of the characteristics of an event, whereas the B series is determined by the relation among established events. Hence, the relation between the positions in the A series must be continuous, whereas that in the B series is sequential, i. e., each event must be as distinguishable from each other as possible.

From the above observation we can conclude that the two series of positions in time must be differently characterized and even in more concrete terms than McTaggart has done:

Firstly, the positions in the B series are not only distinguishable from each other, as has just been mentioned, but also appropriately distanced from each other, and this temporal distance can often be translated in terms of space, if we want to visualize it. Secondly, but more importantly, the positions in the A series constantly demand that they are all based on a single identity: a meaningful talk about a change always concerns a single subject that changes. A change of another subject necessitates another talk, and it would be totally absurd to talk about the changes of two different subjects as if they would form a single changing phenomenon.

Thus, we must conclude that the problem of the continuity of time in the visual arts must be founded on the correct indication of permanent identity. Without such an identity-index, it would be not only impossible but also meaningless to form a continuous series of events. Such a meaningless series of positions, if this could happen, has to be a random juxtaposition of recollections and expectations, as can often be observed in the case of severe mental disorder.[35]

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Our preceding observations on the essential aspects of time itself have already suggested the direction of art historians' future research on the visual structure of temporality.

Considering the characteristics of time in the B series, our investigation will primarily focus upon how each event is made visually distinctive regarding its visual characteristics as well as the spatio-temporal distance set between two neighboring positions.

From the characteristics of time in the A series, our future research will be directed not only toward how a constant identity is visually indicated through all the events but also of what or whose identity is indicated to establish continuity among all the positions. Is it the identity of the protagonist in narrative that visualizes the continuous development of the story? Or, is it the consciousness of the viewer/reader that can establish the entire plot of the story as an indivisible cycle within an artistic framework of time? These questions must be answered through our subsequent study of concrete cases.[36]

[35] Eco, "Tempo, identità," 8-9 alludes to the identity problem in the perception of time. But he does not specifically discuss what sorts of identity indices are necessary in order to visually establish such continuity in the visual arts.

Finally we must suggest that from the study of temporality in visual narrative, a study of *a*-temporality in the visual arts becomes an exigency. As long as art is the synthesis of the temporal and atemporal, it is necessary to clarify how an artistic quality is brought forth in its entirety, .

[36] Evidently, our question here cannot be irrelevant to the apparent ambiguity in the definition of time by Immanuel Kant: according to him, time is, on the one hand, "nichts anders, als *die Form des innern Sinnes*, d. i. des Anschauens unserer selbst und unsers innern Zustandes." On the other hand, he also had to insist that time is "*die formale Bedingung a priori aller Erscheinungen überhaupt*."[I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, I:Transzendentale Elementarlehre, 1.Teil:Die Transzendentale Aesthetik, 2. Ab. Von der Zeit, ss.6: Schlusse aus diesen Begriffen. Here quoted from: I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (ed. by W. Weischedel), I (Wiesbaden, 1977 [3]), 80-83.] The ambiguity is also expressed in the same place: " Die Zeit ist also lediglich *eine subjektive Bedingung unserer...Anschuung*, und an sich, ausser dem Subjekte, nichts. Nichts desto weniger ist sie *in Ansehung aller Erscheinungen*, mithin auch aller Dinge, die uns in der Erfahrung vorkommen können, *notwendiger Weise objektiv*. " (Our Italics) Thus, if our premise is justifiable that permanent identity must be the basis for the continuity of time for our time experience, the identity-index can possibly be found either in our subjective intuition or in objective world.