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METHOD IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PAINTING[1]

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Painting adorned almost every surface in ancient Egypt, in both secular and non-secular contexts. Art did not exist without color. Through its pigments, painting recreated the natural and divine worlds, and enlivened each surface it touched. In its purest form, applied on a flat surface, Egyptian painting is characterized by the primacy of the outline. Almost every form and object is clearly contoured with interior details rendered linearly. Line defines the preliminary contour of the form, and was reapplied as the final outline. Within the preliminary contour, pigment was applied in solid blocks, mixtures or in semi-transparent layers on top of various colored bases. The color of the pigment clarified the nature and details of the artwork or monument and lent it symbolic meaning.

In Egyptian painting, figures and objects were rendered in their most characteristic aspect. Termed aspective,[2] human and animal forms were composed as a composite of profile and frontal views. The conventions utilized for painted figures and objects were the same as those in hieroglyphic writing with which painting is inextricably linked.[3] In Egyptian painting, figures always appeared in flat space, grouped on base lines, overlapped and sometimes superimposed.[4] Landscape and architectural details were represented in plan and elevation that were sometimes combined. Proportional lines and grids were used to construct figures and arrange compositions.[5] Artists were largely anonymous and often worked as a group.

This article will discuss the methodological and technological methods that are used in Egyptian painting. Given the wide-range of surfaces that were adorned with pigment, the major issues, techniques, and problems associated with flat painting will be explored. The study of Egyptian painting is typified by the plurality of approaches available to the researcher. The most traditional and often-used approach, stylistic analysis that traces similarities between groups of paintings and painted forms to create a typology as well as to date works of art. This type of analysis is utilized in art history to outline the qualities and forms of an artwork characteristics which are connected to historical, cultural or religious trends and, sometimes, to identify the style of particular artists, their workshops, techniques and work processes. In aesthetics, the nature and significance of works of specific media, periods, genres or styles are studied. Painting is also examined according to its magical function in specialized contexts (temple, tomb, palace, house) and how it intersected with the living, the dead, and the gods. The transmission of models, issues of center-periphery, gender, and the

1 This essay is dedicated to Betsy M. Bryan, Alexander Badawy Chair in Egyptian Art and Archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, in honor of her Festschrift, *Joyful in Thebes*.
2 Brunner-Traut 1974.
3 Fischer 1986, 24-46.
4 Russmann 2000, 72-73.
5 Robins 1986; 1994.

analysis of the 'other' have also received scholarly attention. The role of iconography is consistently explored in painting, both in terms of its meaning and function within sacred space and its communicative aspects. The interplay between text and image is examined particularly within the context of literary theory. Most recently, technological examinations have elucidated the properties of pigment, binders and resin and offer some important applications for dating and artistic workshop practices. In the sections below, the methodologies of ancient Egyptian painting will be explored, along with their pros and cons, and future approaches will be suggested.

1. Stylistic or formalistic analysis in painting

In the field of Egyptian painting, stylistic analysis is largely based on a reoccurring element (or elements) that is observable in one or more works or art. As such, style is used as an archival tool to date and place works of art; trace relationships between monuments or objects; measure innovations; and investigate individual and group techniques. Variations in style can be matched with historical events and cultural change, just as individual and group styles can reveal phases of development. A number of studies delve into stylistic components of painting to understand ancient motivations and experiences. These studies link the materiality of painting; its reception in the world of the living and the divine world; its performative role and context; and the influence of, and on, cultural dynamics (for example: Assmann 1996; Fitzenreiter 2001, Hartwig 2004, Riggs 2005; Bryan 2009).

One of the earliest uses of stylistic analysis was by William Matthew Flinders Petrie who analyzed the character of the designs on 'white-cross-lined' and 'decorated style' pottery and sorted them into an evolutionary sequence.[6] Motifs and the formal qualities of painting continue to be valued by scholars to fix works in a particular sequence or typology, for example in private tombs, painted wooden stelae, coffins and cartonnage, pottery, and papyri.[7]

Surveys of Egyptian art use style to trace the evolution of painting from the Predynastic Period through the New Kingdom.[8] A more recent survey of Pharaonic painting characterizes stylistic proportions, iconography and techniques of manufacture.[9] To date, no general survey of Late Period and Ptolemaic painting exists, with some excellent studies on specific sites or objects.[10] In the Greco-Roman Period, mummy portraits often eclipse the contribution and development of other painted funerary monuments. Portrait panels are analyzed stylistically along with the fast-paced change of women's hairstyles and fit into chronological groups or the *œuvre* of specific painters or workshops.[11] Stylistic development surveys focus primarily on tomb walls, although domestic interiors, vessels, stelae, coffins, panel portraits, papyri, cloth, and ostraca are sometimes included within the evolutionary

6 Petrie 1921, 14-22.

7 In private tombs, Cherpion 1987, 27-47; Dziobek, Schneyer, and Semmelbauer 1992. Painted wooden stelae, el-Leithy 2007. In coffins and cartonnage, Niwinski 1988; Taylor 1989; Willems 1988, 51-57. On pottery, Arnold, Bourriau and Nordström 1993, 96-100; Schiestl and Seiler 2012; Rzeuska and Wodziska 2009. On papyri, Munro 1987, 13-36; Niwinski 1991, 229-238.

8 Predynastic, Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Periods, Altenmüller 1975; Smith 1949, 123-125, 140, 155, 173-175, 197-199, 213, 217-228, 2234; Kanawati and Willoughby-Winlaw 2010. Middle Kingdom, Terrace 1967, 42-52; see also Shedid 1994, 78-93 for Beni Hassan. New Kingdom, Mekhitarian 1954; Lhote 1954. Late Period, Daumas 1976, 247-380.

9 Bryan 2010.

10 Kaplan 1999; Riggs 2002, 86, n. 5-13; Venit 2002, 2010.

11 Borg 1996, 89-106; Borg 2000, 229-235; Parlasca and Seemann 1999.

sequence.[12] Inherent in most Egyptian painting surveys is the notion that the development of painting was an autonomous and necessary process that built on previous methods and innovations. Hegelian notions also often underlie painting analysis as an expression of a particular age (*Zeitgeist*).[13]

A number of studies use the principals of stylistic analysis to identify anonymous painters and their individual styles.[14] Paramount in these studies is the analysis of the painter's "hand" or manner of execution that is unique to an artist. In scholarship, the work of specific painters is distinguished in small, self-contained wall vignettes,[15] the painter's particular ergonomic gestures and spatial formulations,[16] through the comparison of epigraphic and stylistic data,[17] and by comparing patterns of techniques from one painting stage to another.[18] While formal analysis, particularly the method pioneered by George Beazley in Greek vase painting,[19] is applied to assess the styles of individual painters,[20] its success in Egyptian painting can be somewhat problematic given the workshop system in which painters, plasterers, sculptors and scribes worked together, in overlapping procedures. A recent examination of 18th dynasty work ostraca associated with the decoration of the tombs of the Chief Steward Senenmut, describe the decorative stages that were done by particular workers. Scribes (*sš*, *sš-ḳd*) "laid out pigments" i.e. preliminary drawings (*wꜣḥ ḏriw*).[21] Tomb artisans (*ẖrtyw-nṯr*) painted backgrounds and applied pigment. The final outline and details were done by scribes.

Work process, workshop organization and systems of patronage in painting have also benefited from the application of stylistic analysis. Marcelle Baud[22] first examined work procedures, technique, coloring, and draftsmanship in flat painting within the New Kingdom tombs at Thebes. Later studies expanded this analysis to incorporate the use of grid lines, color choices and layering techniques, outline attributes and the spatial distribution of scenes on tomb walls.[23] The stratigraphy of tomb painting is also examined, stage by stage, from the preparation of the walls until the completion of the final coatings, with the goal of elucidating the work process and the material subtleties of the painters.[24] Papyri and other objects have also undergone analysis of production processes.[25] Royal New Kingdom tombs often display clear visual and textual evidence of work methods, as for example in the unfinished tomb of Horemhab (KV 57).[26]

Texts indicate that tomb painters were attached to institutional or domestic workshops that provided their materials, goods, services and pay.[27] Most scholars believe copybooks existed for painting, but suggest they were rather summary, composed of basic types of scenes, picture programs, and information on color symbolism and the

12 Farina 1929; Müller 1959; Altenmüller 1975, 277, 280; James 1985; James 1996, 897-906; Hartwig 2001; Bryan 2010.
13 Hartwig 2015b, 40-41.
14 Kozloff 1979, 395-402; Beinlich-Seeber and Shedid 1987, 139-141; Mekhitarian 1956; Mekhitarian 1957; Shedid 1988, 87-90; Shedid 1994, 87-93; Tefnin 2006, 47-48.
15 Bryan 2001, 65-66, 68.
16 Laboury and Tavier 2010.
17 Bács 2001; Keller 1981; Keller 1993, 61-62, 65-67; and in royal tombs, Keller 2003, 98-99.
18 Leterme, Hartwig and Vandenabeele 2009; Hartwig 2013b, 144-146.
19 Kurtz 1985.
20 Kozloff 1990; Kozloff 1992.
21 Bryan 2010, 1003-1004; Bryan 2016, 14-18.
22 Baud 1935, 225-233.
23 Müller 1986, 149-164; Shedid 1988, 18-88; Robins 1994, 182-200, 209-219; Bryan 2001, 63-72.
24 Leterme, Hartwig, and Vandenabeele 2009.
25 Černy 1952; Niwinski 1989, 73-91; James 2001, 141-144.
26 Hornung 1971, 32-37.
27 Drenkhahn 1976, 69-71; Drenkhanh 1986; Steinmann 1980, 153-155; Steinmann 1982, 149-156.

proportional canon.[28] In temples, it has been argued that artists drew cartoons and then transferred the designs to the wall.[29] Certainly, the large number of motifs and designs dictated the use of copybooks that were likely housed in the temple archives and artist's workshops.

In royal Ramesside tomb painting, the workmen's archive at Deir el-Medina indicates that the workforce varied from 32-120 men, including scribes, painters and outline-draftsmen.[30] Based on visual analysis, the division of craftsmen into left and right sides of "the tomb" appears to be more an administrative than a procedural reality.[31] In addition to their work on the royal tombs, stylistic and textual evidence suggests that Deir el-Medina artists often painted their own tombs, those of their colleagues, and contributed to a flourishing industry of painting funerary objects that included coffins.[32] Visual and documentary evidence indicates that Deir el-Medina workmen and other craftsmen also painted a few Theban tombs.[33] At least during the Ramesside period, workshop records, tomb journal entries and receipts indicate that craftsmen were recompensed for their work beyond their monthly salaries.[34] However, given the demands of decorating the royal tomb, the painting of non-royal tombs outside of Deir el-Medina appears to be more the exception than the rule.

It is generally accepted that the patron regularly examined the work on his tomb and burial equipment, given its importance for his afterlife and his self-presentation for posterity. From the Old Kingdom, scenes of the owner visiting his tomb in a carrying chair show his personal involvement with the decoration of this chapel and the payment of his workmen.[35] In the late Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom, stylistic and textual evidence indicates that schools of artists moved between Memphis and outlying provincial centers to paint relief and tomb walls with state approval.[36] Stylistic evidence exists for the same practice in the New Kingdom.[37] In the New Kingdom, private patronage systems reflected the administrative position and status of the tomb owner and his access to trained painters.[38] Painted papyri and coffins range from custom-made to mass-produced products with blanks for the patron's name.[39] By the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, patron choice dictated the use of painted portraits or masks, particularly at Hawara, as well as their "style" of representation.[40] Paleography and object inscriptions also reveal the identities of artists connected with the painting of stucco masks.[41]

The use of style as an interpretive and historical tool is a rich avenue of exploration in the field of Egyptian painting. Here, successive works and their variations are matched with historical events and aspects of culture to account for stylistic change. The tombs of the provincial nomarchs in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties show a stylistic change, characterized by attenuated figures with large eyes, particularly in Thebes.

28 Müller 1982; Beinlich-Seeber and Shedid 1987, 123-124.
29 Vassilika 1989, 155-167.
30 Bogoslovsky 1980, 95-111.
31 Keller 1981, 11-12; Eyre 1984, 206-207.
32 Helck 1963, 150-151; Bogoslovsky 1980, 111-116; Keller 1993, 58-60, 62-66; Keller 2001, 73-93; Cooney 2007, 131-175.
33 Bács 2001, 2011.
34 Cooney 2008a, 88-101. Also note that the lack of texts suggests artist/patron agreements were most likely verbal. If anything was written down, it was the amount of labor and its price.
35 Roth 1994, 227-238.
36 Barta 1970, 128-129; Jaro-Deckert 1984, 118-127; Robins 1990, 42-43.
37 Zivie 2003, 67-82; Zivie 2013.
38 Eyre 1987, 199; Hartwig 2004, 22-36.
39 Niwinski 1988, 63; Cooney 2007; Goelet 1994, 141-142; Leach and Parkinson 2010, 40-47.
40 Riggs 2002, 96.
41 Doxiadis 2000, 237, n. 32.

This change may be due, in part, to the dissemination of the "Second Style," a stylistic change in art that may have originated in the changing religious belief systems in the capital.[42] However, this style may just as well have started outside of the Memphite region and represents the surfacing of an Upper Egyptian stylistic tradition.[43] By the First Intermediate Period, the strong use of color (sometimes to the detriment of form) is used to catch and describe a precise moment.[44] The innovation that appears on the painted walls of nomarchs' tombs in Thebes, Moalla, Gebelein, and Aswan reveals the remarkable innovation and experimentation that was the First Intermediate Period's stylistic legacy to the Middle Kingdom.[45] Whether it began as an expression of new religious beliefs or provincial power, this stylistic change becomes isolated from its original ideological context, and expresses the innovation and local experimentation inherent in the cultural sphere of the First Intermediate Period. Under the patronage of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre, this style was elevated to official state-sanctioned art.[46]

The most cogent description of aesthetics is voiced by Kendall Walton in the entry on "Aesthetics" in Oxford Art Online: "The primary subject matter of aesthetics is the complex cultural institution in which works of art are embedded, including artistic creation, performance, appreciation, interpretation, criticism, judgement, and the various roles the arts play in people's lives and in society" (Walton; see also essays by Ross 2005 and Lang 2013). This definition widens the scope of aesthetics beyond generalizations about art and incorporates the nature and significance of works of particular media, periods, genres or styles. Further, concepts of imitation, expression, and communication can be examined alongside pictorial representation, symbolism, without laboring under an absolutist designation of "art".

Early scholars began by examining the aesthetics of ancient Egyptian art, in particular the Egyptian idea of perspective (Capart 1928; Schafer 1974). Later studies focused on the aesthetics of art as a sign and an interpretation of perpetuated reality (Junge 1990; Assmann 1987a). Other articles focus on the criteria of artistic judgment and its effect on the viewer (Muller 1990, 1998; Verbovsek 2015) and the ongoing social function of the elite tomb within the local community (Assmann 1996). The common link between all is the perception and nature of beauty in ancient Egypt. The question of ancient Egyptian aesthetics is also explored in terms of context, practice and performative aspects of art (Baines 2015; Riggs 2016).

Take, for example, the tomb painting of a funerary episode found in the mid eighteenth dynasty of Theban tomb of Minnakht (TT 87) (Baines 2015, p. 4ff., pl. I). Embedded in the painting are the aesthetic choices made by patrons, designers and painters, which were culturally determined. The proportions and scale of the figures, ordered in a series of registers, communicate an aesthetic performance in an aesthetically ordered location. In short, the artwork's aesthetics inhere in the painting as well as in the eye of the beholder(s).

The use of style in the analysis of ancient Egyptian painting is not without its critics. The use of style to categorize, date or identify synchronic trends is often criticized as subjective and limited to an artwork's surface properties. Stylistic features are affected by the work's cultural and historical context. Stylistic analysis must be augmented with data and theoretical approaches from aesthetics, anthropology,

42 Russmann 1995, 273-279.
43 Wildung 1999, 344.
44 Tiradritti 2015, 254-256.
45 Fischer 1975, 294-295; Spanel 1990, 18.
46 Terrace 1967, 42-52; Wildung 2003, 67-71.

archaeology, cognitive theory, paleography, prosopographical information, proportional grids, contemporaneous fashions, and other quantitative methods, to move the focus beneath the surface, into the work of art itself. Aesthetic theory, committed to cultural and material bases of interpretation, has questioned the usefulness of stylistic analysis, as if the simple act of characterization divorces a work of art from its context and exists only in the eye of the beholder (Riggs 2016, 3-6). Are formal, phenomenological, and semantic approaches any less valid than archaeological, cognitive and anthropological methods? The goal is to tease out the meaning that inheres in the object, examine and categorize it without resorting to contemporary notions of "art." These are the questions that will dominate the study of ancient Egyptian aesthetics as a subject in its own right.

2. Context and the transmission of models in painting: Sacred space, center and periphery, gender and the 'other'

Painting occurred in both sacred and non-sacred contexts in ancient Egypt, and responded in similar ways.[47] In temples, flat painting could be used provisionally as the outline for reliefs or as the decoration in the chapel or temple itself.[48] Since temples were symbolic of the cosmological environment in which the gods would dwell and confer benefits on the king and (through him) humanity, painted decoration created and enhanced this cosmos. Scholars argue that painted images in houses and palaces created an inner cosmos in domestic environments.[49] Likewise, certain motifs in palaces acted as talismans to guard against the entry of chaotic forces and reinforced notions of kingship.[50] Royal tomb painting in the New Kingdom recreated the cosmos for the eternal benefit of the king. Solar related imagery in Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasty royal tombs followed the east-west axis, to emphasize the evening and morning manifestations of the sun.[51] Private tomb painting could also generate a series cosmoi for the benefit of the deceased.[52]

In private tombs, painting occurred within a sacred space but scholars differ about its function. Some suggest that tomb painting created a familiar world for the deceased. Others argue that painted representations created an ideal world in the beyond for the tomb owner or a *liminal* area in which the dead could meet with the living. Some suggest tomb decoration was left unfinished so that the dead could not come back to haunt the living.[53] From the First Intermediate Period on, painted tomb decoration is discussed in terms of the tomb owner's self-presentation, until the post-Amarna period, when the eternal veneration of the gods comes to the fore[54].

Coffin decoration is analyzed in terms of its sacred environment as an eternal home, a miniature tomb, and a substitute body. In the Middle Kingdom, the coffin's form along with its painted images and texts created an environment through which the deceased would be protected, equipped and reborn.[55] From the New Kingdom on, this

47 Müller 1980.
48 Baines 2001, 149-151; Weatherhead 2007b; Ullmann 2007.
49 Kemp 1979, 53; O'Connor 1991, 181-185; Weatherhead 2007a.
50 Lacovara 1997, 35, 63-64.
51 Hornung 1990; Wilkinson 1994, 83-84.
52 Kamrin 1999, 139-157, 162-165.
53 Ideal world, Bolshakov 1997, 264-267, 279-280. Liminal area, Assmann 1983, 28-29. Unfinished, Barocas 1982, 429-440.
54 Assmann 2003.
55 Willems 1988, 238-244.

symbolic function was transferred to anthropoid coffins which essentially conformed to the *s3ḥ* image, the glorified image of the deceased raised to the status of divinity, who was envisioned with a mummiform body, often with golden skin, blue-striped wig and *wsḫ*-collar, although the range of colors remained limited.[56] Greco-Roman mummy portraits with their wrappings and cartonnage served as the visualization and actualization of the deceased's cosmic renewal.[57] Painted vignettes recreated chapters from various funerary books and included the deceased in the company of the gods as well as other protective symbols that assured the deceased's protection and rebirth.

The underlying notion behind the use and reuse of painted imagery is another avenue of exploration. Besides the practice of archaism mentioned below, the transmission of painted models often revealed the impact of the center on the periphery and vice versa. Painted motifs (and in some cases styles) in necropolis centers such those near Thebes and Memphis were transferred by the artist to his provincial commissions, most likely with patron approval.[58] Sometimes, this resulted in an entirely new stylistic expression. Within certain necropoleis, it has been suggested that artists were chosen for their knowledge of particular iconographic programs or connection to the deceased and local culture.[59] In terms of reuse, a number of New Kingdom painted tombs indicate that the usurper honored the existing decoration, and in some cases, emulated it.[60] With coffin reuse, usurpation ranged from the rubbing out of the original owner's name to the complete repainting of the coffin's decorative program.[61] The use and reuse of particular imagery apparently responded to the tomb owner's status, aspirations, the artist's repertoire, and the sacred character of the environment in which painting occurred.

Painted imagery also reveals the presence and confluence of different artistic styles and/or regional traits. Regional painting styles may have influenced one another in the Predynastic Period.[62] The Minoan-style frescos at Tell el-Dab'a are debated as being completed by artists exported from Crete, or by local artists versed in an international artistic *koiné*.[63] Artistic attribution, patronage and contexts of use don't necessarily lead to a nuanced meaning that reflects the complexity of the ancient Mediterranean world in the second millennium.[64] Instead, the very 'visual hybridity' of a work of art bore the imprint of social and historic memory that was inherent in formulaic courtly interactions among the great powers of the late Bronze Age. In Ptolemaic and Roman funerary art, previous scholarship tended to see it as Egyptian visual renderings with Greek and Roman traits. However, recent studies of portrait panels, painted shrouds, tombs and funerary equipment, reveal the combination of Egyptian, Hellenic and Roman systems of representation.[65] Rather than a passive acceptance of dominant forms, the mixture of these representational systems appears to be a dynamic response to cultural factors in the ancient Mediterranean world that shaped selfhood.[66]

56 Taylor 2001b, 164-165.
57 Corcoran 1997, 47-51.
58 Manniche 1988, 85-86; Friedman 2001, 106; Kanawati 2001, 74-75; Lembke 2004, 372.
59 Iconographic programs: Bács 2001, 95; Davies 2001b, 120. Connections: Vischak 2006 and 2014.
60 Polz 1990, 302, 307-308; Bács 2001.
61 Cooney 2015: 275-276.
62 Finkenstaedt 1980, 116-120.
63 Morgan 1995, 41-44; Bietak 2005, 15-16. On the possibility of local Semitic artists as the authors of the Tell el-Dabaa fragments, see discussion by Tiradritti 2015, 258-260.
64 Feldman 2006.
65 Castiglione 1961; Whitehouse 1998; Kaplan 1999; Venit 2002, 68-167; Lieven 2004; Dunand 2004, 565-579; Riggs 2006.
66 Riggs 2002: 96-99; Venit 2010.

Foreigners are depicted in the classic *topos* of the 'other' in painting with their distinctive skin color, racial physiognomy and ethic dress, all of which existed outside of the norms of conventional Egyptian depictions. Scholarship views the suppression and submission of foreigners as a reflection of the élite notion that the conquering of foreigners was equivalent to the divine suppression of chaos that threatened to destroy cosmic order.[67] Yet, at the same time in the artistic realm, the ambivalence of the ancient Egyptian feeling toward foreigners resulted in portrayals in which they were rendered as "good" and part of the Egyptian cultural framework. In the royal tombs, for example, foreigners are shown as capable of making the successful passage into the next world. Likewise, painted stelae represent foreigners as elite members of Egyptian society in their characteristic dress and physiognomy.[68] After 1000 B.C., foreigners became Egyptian kings themselves, and preserved their distinct racial identities in art while merging them with existing Egyptian royal templates.[69] Thus, the depiction of the 'other' in painting reflected political realities, the cultural climate and traditional theological notions; a complicated and often ambivalent combination that will continue to be refined in future scholarship.

Gender theory is applied to the study of material culture in order to go beyond the binary investigation of male and female. Scholars, influenced by Foucault, queer theory, and gender studies, approach gender as a construct that is informed by context and status (Sweeney 2008, 2011). Examples include Hatshepsut's adoption of the red-brown 'male' body and royal regalia. While her 'male' representation adhered to the traditional models of a king, it is argued that her written names remained in the feminine gender to maintain the relationship to her body (Matić 2016) or goddesses (Robins 2015). A number of studies characterize New Kingdom female coffins and shabtis as gender neutral or masculinized to enable the female to participate in the inherently male rebirth process (Cooney 2008b). Analyses of female royal Ramesside tomb programs note the changes in the role and status of the female occupant and how they conveyed the necessary gender fluidity for rebirth (McCarthy 2008) As these examples suggest, gender theory used in combination with painted funerary objects, wall painting and other corpora is a rich analytic tool for future research.

3. Iconography, iconology and symbolism in painting

Iconography and the cultural significance of art complement stylistic analysis. The analysis of the subject matter, or iconography with its attendant symbolism, continues to be innovative. In its basic sense, iconography is analyzed in terms of the image and what it signified. In terms of the former, primary subject matter is examined along with objects or events to gain insight into underlying themes and concepts that, in turn, leads to the meaning or content of the work. Inherent in iconographical analysis is the role of symbols that indicate a general idea. In iconography, objects serve as vehicles for symbolic meaning that could be overt (primary) or disguised (secondary). Iconology, on the other hand, uses the observations gained from iconography to explain the underlying cultural meanings of the work.[70]

67 Hornung 1990, 172-185; O'Connor 2003, 160.

68 Kendall 1999.

69 Morkot 2003, 80-88. See excellent discussion by Roth 2015.

70 Panofsky 1955; Lash 1996.

Painted tomb scenes, coffin motifs, pottery, papyri and textile vignettes have benefited greatly from iconographic analysis, particularly when used in connection with the provenance or context of the monument or object.[71] On coffins, illustrated papyri, pottery and textiles, motifs are identified and interpreted as carriers of mythological and magical import that reflected contemporary religious beliefs and practices.[72] Iconography is routinely examined in Egyptian tomb painting, most notably in royal tombs where painted imagery joined the king with the sun god and guaranteed the ruler's perpetual regeneration.[73] In the private sphere, specific scenes and entire tombs are analyzed to understand the underlying function and signification of their imagery.[74] Images such as the hunt in the papyrus thicket, and fishing and fowling, otherwise known as 'scenes of daily life', offer up various meanings under the iconographical lens. So-called scenes of daily life are argued to be mechanisms to ward off chaos and to ensure the deceased's rebirth in the hereafter as well as the means to negotiate the deceased's self-presentation across space and time.[75] Inherent in these examinations is the idea that iconography and pictorial symbolism are connected with the "transformation of state" or the changing of what is depicted into something desirable.[76]

In its larger application, iconography responded to and revealed various aspects of culture. The palace floors at Tell el-Amara with their thematic focus on the immediacy of nature expressed the beliefs of Akhenaten's religious program as preserved in the Great Hymn of the Aten.[77] Painted tomb imagery encoded larger ideological and religious movements that permeated ancient Egyptian society.[78] And, archaism, or the use of models from the past, reflected and revealed particular cultural dynamics in the Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasties, as witnessed in the Theban chapels and painted stelae that consciously copied scenes from Old and New Kingdom painted tombs.[79] Archaism may have derived from antiquarian interest and aesthetic reverence. However, this conscious copying of earlier monuments never slavishly reproduced them but, instead, combined both old and new styles and motifs which served as the starting point for artistic regeneration.

Iconographic analysis is an effective method of investigation, but it is only as successful as the thoroughness of the researcher. Because a number of interpretations are available for each image or scene, the key to deciphering symbolic meaning lies in the extensive analysis of ancient Egyptian religion, literature, myth, culture, statistics, and political history in order to arrive at the most consistent, predominant meaning for the image.[80] Yet, some scholars question whether a single iconographical interpretation is possible, given the variations in location, the status of the patron, and the chronological periods involved.[81] However, if these variables can be addressed

71 Just a brief enumeration of some iconographic studies: for the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods, Hendrickx and Eycherman 2012 and Patch 2012; for the Old Kingdom, van Walsem 2005; the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom, Fischer 1975 and Assmann 1975, respectively. See summation in Müller 2015.

72 Coffins: Willems 1988, 239-244; Taylor 2001a, 214-243; Taylor 2001b. Pottery: Graff 1999. Papyri: Niwinski 1989, 37-42; Niwinksi 2000. Textiles: Pinch 1993, 131-134.

73 Hornung 1990.

74 Bochi 1994; Bochi 2003; Laboury 1997, 49-81; Kanawati 2001; Hartwig 2004; Hodel-Hoenes 2000; Parkinson 2008, and see below section 4.

75 Robins 1993, 187-189; Kamrin 1999, 96-98, 105-115; Manniche 2003; Hartwig 2004, 37-54; Bryan 2009, 19.

76 Wallace 1966, 107; Ritner 2001, 333.

77 Freed 1999, 119-123; Weatherhead 2007a, 349.

78 Fischer 1975; Hornung 1990, 78-79; Assmann 1987b; Hartwig 2004, 126-130; el-Shahawy 2010, 298-301.

79 Smith 1998, 242; Morkot 2003, 89-90.

80 For an excellent enumeration, see Müller 2012, 118.

81 van Walsem 1998; van Walsem 2005, 65-69, 101-103.

in iconographic interpretation, the result can be a clear vision of the meaning and cultural/religious dimensions of painted decoration.

4. The interplay of text and image in painting: semiotics, hermeneutics, and reception theory

In studies of Egyptian painting, the indissoluble connection between text and image has opened the artwork up to semiotic theory and issues of reception. Semiotics is the study of signs as cultural expressions. Semiotic meaning has been explored in Egyptian painting through the shift (*décalage*) that occurs between two levels of the image, namely between the figurative signifier and the existential world serving the referent; as well as between the real world and its represented image.[82] Hermeneutics deals with interpretation and the analysis of underlying layers of meaning that exceed the literal or obvious signification of textual and visual motifs as well as the mechanisms that produce those underlying meanings.[83]

The reflexive arrangement between the subject-action-object has been explored in painting in the *M33*-scene in which the tomb owner is depicted and captioned as *m33*, "seeing" or "inspecting" various activities. With the aid of hermeneutics, the different layers of meaning in the *M33*-scene overlap, and act to secure the deceased's eternal rebirth within the enclosed circuit of the image, which can also be viewed as the tomb owner's imagined memory and desired future (Assmann 1991).[84] A different interpretation of the *M33*-scene, this time applied to the painted relief tombs of the Old Kingdom, connects the *M33*-icon with the tomb owner's control of the proceeds of his funerary estate and his continual participation with the *Diesseits*.[85]

Classical authors (who were informed by Late Egyptian texts, myths, and temple symbolism), discuss the relationship between word and image, and mention how the ancient Egyptians codified and relayed their world through their iconography.[86] Egyptian visitor graffiti records the writer's response to the aesthetic qualities and antiquity of the painted imagery as well as the status of the tomb owner.[87] These writings indicate that art addressed not only the world of the gods but also to the world of living. Current studies suggest that painted imagery provided the viewer with a means to understand, at various levels, what was represented and what was signified according the larger the Egyptian world-view.[88]

Perception of Egyptian form and color in painting is increasingly addressed in contemporary scholarship. Beginning with the fundamental study by Heinrich Schäfer,[89] the term *aspective* or aspect-viewing[90] was coined to describe the character of two-dimensional imagery in Egyptian art, whereby figures were constructed in their most easily recognized aspect. How the Egyptians arrived at this method of figural construction continues to be a frequent topic of discussion.[91] The perception of color is

82 Tefnin 1991.
83 Angenot 2005; Angénot 2011, 255.
84 Angenot 2005: 21-23; and see discussion in Angenot 2015.
85 Fitzenreiter 2001, 83-88, 129-140.
86 Assmann 2002, 343-344, 352-354, 419.
87 Müller 1990; Müller 1998; Peden 2001; Navrátilová 2007, 131-144; Den Doncker 2012.
88 Fitzenreiter 2011; Hartwig 2011, 316-321; Hartwig 2015b, 51-53.
89 Schäfer 1974.
90 Brunner-Traut 1974.
91 Baines 1985b.

addressed as a code; part of a transmitted language that shifts in meaning depending on the lens used (i.e. scholarly knowledge or technological observation).[92] The way in which the mind orders information underlies these discussions and suggests that the perception of aesthetics and cognitive theory, which have been successfully applied to hieroglyphic images in the Egyptian language offers a promising approach for future studies in the field of Egyptian painting.[93]

5. Color and Technology

According to the ancient Egyptian worldview, color reflected the character of all things made by the Creator.[94] Color originated from the divine power and strengthened contact with it. In religious terms, color conveyed concepts through the properties of its minerals that the Egyptian mind could not grasp. Color also conveyed information about an object's actual state, and through the underlying magical powers associated with color, gave it supernatural qualities.[95] Thus, color represented the visible world and conveyed symbolic concepts. Colored minerals and stones replicated and reinforced the perception of Egypt's natural environment, which were codified and utilized in painting. Yet, color symbolism often reflected complicated religious concepts with meanings that were often contradictory.[96]

Examination of Egyptian color terminology development according to the Berlin-Kay model reveals four basic color terms, *km* (black), *ḥḏ* (white), *dšr* (red), and *wȝḏ* (green).[97] Unfortunately, ancient Egyptian words do not correspond to the range of colors used in the palette, which suggests that color terms belonged to a working vocabulary of limited applications.[98] Diagnostic features such as size, shape, and location (in space and time), and lexicalized features of brightness, texture, and coloring materials may have taken precedence over the development of color vocabularies.[99] Nevertheless, most scholars agree that the ancient Egyptians did not have an absolute definition of color terms in the European sense because the range of color usage was not always anchored in language.

Studies in the field of Egyptian painting are in the area of technology, in particular, the analysis of the chemical properties of pigments, binders, varnishes and pigment recipes,[100] the quantifying of prestige by the use of certain pigments,[101] and the variations in the perception of color.[102] Archaeometry (the application of scientific techniques from natural sciences to answer specific questions about different materials in art history or archaeology) has opened a new way of painting analysis. Archaeometric analysis is conducted by elemental methods such as x-ray fluorescence (XRF) and x-ray power

92 Delange 1998; Tiradritti 2008, 24-62.
93 In hieroglyphs, see the work of Goldwasser 2002. In art, Wildung 1997; Hartwig 2003; Bryan 1996; Verbovsek 2005; Verbovsek 2015.
94 Kees 1943, 414- 415; Aufrère 1998 Aufrère 1999; Aufrère 2001.
95 Colinart, Delange and Pagès 1996, 29-34; Bryan 2016, 18-20.
96 Robins 2001; Pinch 2001.
97 Berlin and Kay 1969; Baines 1985a.
98 Quirke 2001. See examples in Tiradritti 2008, 24-61.
99 See for example the terminology of quality in Cooney 2007; Loth 2007.
100 Le Fur 1994; Colinart, Delange, and Pagès 1996, 35-45; Colinart and Menu 1998, 51-95, 111-203; Lee and Quirke 2000; Colinart 2001; Green 2001; Pagès-Camagna and Colinart 2003; Middleton and Uprichard 2008; Pagès-Camagna and Le Hô 2008; Pagès-Camagna and Guichard 2010.
101 El Goresy *et al.* 1986; Middleton and Humphrey 2001.
102 Heywood 2001; Warburton 2008.

diffraction (XRD) spectroscopy; structural techniques like Raman spectroscopy and color spectroscopy; sampling techniques such as Fourier transform spectrometry or gas chromatography/mass spectrometry. Non-invasive archaeometric analysis is currently being used in the field to identify pictorial materials such as the pigments, binders, varnishes and pigment recipes used by the painters, the transformation of materials and past restorations, the chronological development of painting over time and the operational sequence of painting on a given surface.[103] The strength of archaeometric techniques is that they produce objective data about the global composition of the pictorial layer.

While the field of color technology charges ahead, its applications suggest another area of growth in the field of Egyptian painting. Yet despite the many advantages scientific analysis offers to the study of painting, it must always be used in tandem with visual analysis. The methods outlined in this essay provide different lenses with which to investigate Egyptian painting now and for the future.

Suggested Reading

Surveys such as Robins 1986, James 1996, Hartwig 2001, Tiradritti 2008 and Bryan 2010 give succint overviews of painting. Several volumes of symposium papers discuss the cultural and technological applications of painting including, Davies 2001a, Tefnin 1997, and Kóthay 2012. For a lucid summary on the nature of painting, see Russmann 2000; and on the scientific aspects, see Lee and Quirke 2000; Middleton and Uprichard 2008; and Dawson, Rozeik and Wright 2010.

103 For example: Kondo and Yoshimura 2004; Vandenabeele *et al.* 2009; García-Moreno, *et al.* 2013.

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