

## The “Language of Painting”

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# The “Language of Painting”: Aesthetic Appreciation in Edwardian Art Criticism

Sophie Hatchwell

In 1908 the artist-critic Walter Sickert (1860–1942) and the dealer-critic Robert Ross (1869–1918) engaged in a debate in the London art press and in their own private correspondence in which they discussed the idea of a “language of painting.” Using their debate as a case study, this article investigates how these writers posited different approaches to the practice of viewing art. I show how they used the notion of a “language of painting” as a basis for discussing critical authority, the nature of art appreciation, the role of beauty and pleasure, and the value of form and technique. In doing so, I reveal how they both adapted and departed from the ideas and rhetorical practices of nineteenth-century art writing, in order to consolidate their own critical authority and to present diversified ways of speaking about art attuned to new developments in the art world. In a wider sense, this article contributes to ongoing scholarly reevaluation of the Edwardian period, which aims to recover a sense of the era’s innovation and heterogeneity.

*Keywords:* Walter Sickert (1860–1942); Robert Ross (1869–1918); D.S. MacColl (1859–1948); Art Criticism; Art Press; Language; Experience; Aesthetics

1. The language of painting is like any other language. It can only be currently read by those who have learnt it and are in the habit of hearing it spoken around them.

—Walter Sickert, “A New Life of Whistler,” *The Fortnightly Review*, December 1, 1908<sup>1</sup>

2. “The language of painting is like any other language.” Is it? Why then go abroad in order to acquire a foreign accent, especially if there is no such thing as racial painting, according to the Whistler doctrine? ... Painting is not, of course, a language at all. It is the visual expression of intellectual, sensuous, or aesthetic aspiration. To treat it like the unintelligible conversation of superior people collectively called artists has indeed been the aim of many modern painters. To contend that “it can only be read by those who have learnt it” is like saying that only actors ought to go to a play.

—Robert Ross, “Art and Artists,” *The Morning Post*, December 7, 1908

3. I dislike, violently, so far as I can understand it, Oscar’s writings. Chiefly because they have always, in spite of an old friendship with him, seemed to me a sort of glorification of nonsense.

—Walter Sickert, Letter to Robert Ross, n.d. [ca. December 2, 1908]<sup>2</sup>

4. Ross, Minor, kindly come into my study after prayers. I want to speak to you ... I cannot remember a single quip by you, or by any other of the writers of the ephemeral school to which you belong. Then you read a page as carefully as you look at a canvas. From your notice of my article on Whistler in *The Fortnightly* of December 1908, one would gather that I had denied genius to Whistler, and only allotted him talent. If you will read it again, you will find that I lead him, most carefully up from talent, to its cultivated product, genius. This is not laziness in you, or carelessness. It is just naughtiness.

—Sickert, “Open Letter to Robert Ross,” *Art News*, March 31, 1910<sup>3</sup>

These four quotations are part of a 1908–10 exchange between the artist-critic Walter Sickert (1860–1942) and the dealer-critic Robert Ross (1869–1918) in which the two men debated the meaning of the term “language of art.” This previously overlooked debate, which was played out in the London art press and in private correspondence, occurred at an important point in the development of art in Britain: a time when a number of writers and artists moved away from late-Victorian aesthetic categorizations (Aestheticism, Arts and Crafts) and looked towards a variety of new aesthetic possibilities, from the form-focused approach of the critic-artist Roger Fry (1866–1934) to the urban modernity of Sickert’s Camden Town Group.<sup>4</sup> These quotations give an insight into the varying definitions of art that coexisted at this time and, crucially, they also show the theoretical divergences between artists and art writers. Responding to the changing nature of the Edwardian art world, the definition of art disputed in their exchange centers on questions of reception and considers the varying ways in which art can and should be experienced.

This article presents an analysis of how Sickert and Ross interpreted the idea of a “language of painting” from their respective positions of artist and art writer. The idea of art as language becomes an analogy for the extent to which art can be made legible to different types of viewers. Tracing this theme through the writings of Ross and Sickert, I show how this process is governed by artists and writers exercising particular critical authority over their subject. Edwardian critics were writing at a key moment, when ideas about art and the viewing experience were being re-evaluated and adjusted in response to changing social and economic conditions. In the art world, this involved shifts in collecting patterns and display practices, and increasing financial challenges for artists and dealers.<sup>5</sup> The writings of Ross and Sickert – men at the forefront of their respective professions – provide a means to unravel the ways in which new aesthetic approaches were formulated at this time.

This article, therefore, aligns with recent attempts to re-evaluate the art and culture of the Edwardian era.<sup>6</sup> Such attempts have sought to recover a sense of the era’s heterogeneity and innovation. In the context of art, this involves challenging traditional characterizations of the period as either a linear continuation of Victorian practices, or a single moment of schism preceding formalism. This article contributes to such re-evaluation by taking a case study approach and exploring the multiple and coexisting

attitudes to aesthetic appreciation that appear in the debate between Ross and Sickert. Here I conduct an investigation into critical context, and focus on the formulation of theoretical attitudes rather than their application to actual works of art. I commence with an analysis of the critics' use of rhetoric and the ways in which a distinction is made between the views of artists and non-artists. I then contextualize their debate by outlining the varying ways in which the phrase "language of art" has appeared in Victorian art criticism, from the writings of John Ruskin (1819–1900) through to the work of "New Art Critics" such as the critic-painter D.S. MacColl (1859–1948); I also consider how such writers have presented a hierarchical model of aesthetic appreciation. There follows a close reading of Ross's and Sickert's statements on the language of art, where I discuss their approaches to critical authority, to the formal and technical aspects of art, and to the conventional or intuitive and sensory nature of visual communication. Ultimately, I show how their divergent approaches contribute to the re-characterization of the Edwardian art world as heterogeneous, and indicate a growing concern with the ways in which art can be viewed and understood.

### Artists versus Critics

Sickert, a former pupil of the artist James McNeil Whistler (1834–1903), reviewed the biography *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* by Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell for the December 1908 issue of *The Fortnightly Review*, a journal of politics, science, literature and art. In this article (see quotation 1 above), he suggested that painting should be seen as a "language," a form of communication best understood by those already "fluent." In the course of his review, he provided not only a critical analysis of the Pennells' new book, but also a considered statement of his own aesthetic position at a significant point in his career, a time when he was returning to London following a seven-year residency in France and seeking to affirm his place at the forefront of Edwardian artistic developments.<sup>7</sup> The day the article was published, Sickert attended a dinner given in honor of Ross's successful settlement of the late Oscar Wilde's literary estate, for which Ross was the executor. Sickert wrote in the following days to congratulate Ross and, with typical bluntness, to criticize Wilde's writing (see quotation 3 above). Less than a week later, Ross's review (quotation 2) appeared in *The Morning Post* and critiqued Sickert's article, directly challenging the artist's theories. His response to Sickert draws attention to the dialectic between artists and writers each claiming critical authority over their subject. It joins the wide body of Edwardian art writing that placed authority and professional judgment in a central role within critical practice.<sup>8</sup>

Ross was both a dealer and a critic, with a specific interest in British art. He was part of the social and professional circles surrounding Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) in the later nineteenth century, and worked as a literary critic during an era marked by the influence of New Journalism. However, his involvement with the art world from 1900 onwards prompted a shift away from purely literary matters and resulted in a growing involvement with the economic and social dissemination of new art.<sup>9</sup> Between 1900 and 1908 he became manager of Carfax and Co., London, a small dealer-gallery specializing in modern British art. He wrote occasional articles for *The*

*Burlington Magazine*, and became a committee member for the Contemporary Arts Society in 1910.<sup>10</sup> He was appointed art critic for *The Morning Post* in July 1908, capitalizing on his familiarity with modern British painting and drawing on his familiarity with the sensationalism of the nineteenth-century press.<sup>11</sup> Ross's article on Sickert's "language of painting" was published very early in his tenure at the paper, and therefore can be read as a statement of intent for his approach as an art critic. For Sickert, this critique became a sticking point, re-emerging in at least four subsequent articles and letters over a period of four years and fueling his attitude towards the critical competency (or lack thereof) of writer-critics.<sup>12</sup>

The lively rhetoric and occasional melodrama of Sickert's and Ross's articles on a "language of art" are, in the first instance, devices for establishing critical authority. Ross's response to Sickert in *The Morning Post* is striking for its hyperbolic force and its strong refutation of the artist's position. Numerous direct quotations, rhetorical questions and tongue-in-cheek analogies invite and then simultaneously deny dialogue, and in this denial undermine the rationality of the artist's claims. His sarcastic portrayal of artists as a defined collective of "superior people" marks them out to his readers as elitist, thus allowing him to subtly establish writer-critics in the sympathetic role of democratic educators, a characterization I will return to presently. His article is fast-paced and forceful in style, indicative of the heated tone of critical articles in the popular press, aimed at a socially diverse though broadly cosmopolitan audience. This is in contrast to Sickert's original article, a more considered and balanced work appropriate for its inclusion in a highbrow monthly journal. While Sickert's first article does not overtly engage in the heated and witty posturing common to much of his critical work, his later "Open Letter to Robert Ross" (1910, see quotation 4 above) makes a dramatic contribution to the debate, utilizing the same aforementioned literary devices in a challenge to the writer's critical authority. Marked by an extensive use of hyperbole, this article is scathing in its criticism of Ross's approach. The derogatory address to "Ross, Minor" sets up a boarding school analogy apposite to the petulant tone of the article and asserts Sickert's authority as an artist-critic over the writer.

This is a technique repeated and refined by Sickert in other articles in this period, which see writer-critics frequently coming under attack for failing to understand art practice and for misrepresenting art and artists to the public. In "Stones from a Glass House" (1910), he again censured Ross, "the entertaining and paradoxical critic of *The Morning Post*," for his lack of technical knowledge and instructed him to "learn then, O writer" from the more authoritative artist.<sup>13</sup> The debate reached its most revealing and vitriolic in the "Open Letter" as he launched a misfired attack on Ross, wrongly believing him to have written a contentious review in *The Morning Post* in March 1910.<sup>14</sup> Sickert's "Open Letter" serves to establish Ross's position in relation to the artists through a suggestion of a divergent Aesthetic heritage.<sup>15</sup> Sickert uses the moniker "Ross, Minor" first to indicate his junior position in relation to the artist, and second to suggest the writer's affiliation with a senior member of the Aestheticist "house" (to continue the boarding school analogy). In this case, the artist is alluding to Ross's strong affiliation with the work of Oscar Wilde, which was a key influence on his approach as an art writer, and in particular informed his views about the value of the art writing of non-artists.<sup>16</sup> Sickert, influenced primarily by Whistler (who was himself at

times at odds with Wilde) traces his disagreement with Ross to their respective aesthetic roots and characterizes Ross as “minor” to Wilde’s “major.”

Such authoritative positioning on the part of Sickert and Ross acts as a marker of the ongoing development of art-critical practice into the twentieth century. Similar critical discussions between artists and writers were a feature of the nineteenth-century art world, and played an important role in the theoretical development of the Aestheticism that influenced both Sickert and Ross. Public debates between Whistler and writers such as Ruskin and Wilde helped to establish both a theoretical framework for, and the formal conventions of, the critical rhetoric that emerged in the Edwardian period. Their disagreements in the press and “acrimonious correspondence” raised and developed core issues in the artistic field: issues of critical authority; the nature of aesthetic experience; and the theoretical restriction of access to art appreciation.<sup>17</sup> These ideas and rhetorical styles became a point of reference for both Sickert and Ross, which they adapted for a post-*fin-de-siècle* context. An understanding of the critical approach of Aestheticism is therefore necessary to an analysis of their critical approach, and their contribution to the dialectic between artists and writers.

In the preceding century, Whistler’s art writing publicly proclaimed the superiority of artist-critics over writer-critics, in a manner marked by dynamic critical posturing. His use of the press as a public forum for theoretical debate developed dramatically during his court case with Ruskin in 1877. Ruskin, in a review of Whistler’s Grosvenor Gallery exhibition, had publicly criticized Whistler’s *Nocturne in Black and Gold* (c. 1872–7, Detroit Institute of Art), and Whistler responded by suing him for damages. It was, as Linda Merrill has argued, “an occasion overwhelmed by its own publicity,” significant for the degree of public and media commentary it elicited.<sup>18</sup> The initial criticism of Whistler’s art by Ruskin, a pamphlet published by Whistler aiming to spin the debate to his own advantage, and the resultant letters to the press, developed both the tone and tactics employed by artists and writers to assume critical authority over their opponents. The vitriol of Ruskin’s attack was matched and sustained by Whistler as he attacked writer-critics for “the outrage of proffered assistance from the unscientific.”<sup>19</sup> His case against Ruskin was cast as a “war ... really one between the brush and the pen.”<sup>20</sup> Following this, Whistler’s provocative and sensationalist “butterfly letters” to the press of the 1880s and 1890s allowed him to make personal attacks on hostile critics as well as fellow Aesthetes with whom he frequently disagreed (Wilde included).<sup>21</sup>

Echoes of the dramatic tone to critical debate set by Whistler and his rivals can be heard in Edwardian art criticism. The art-critical rhetoric utilized by Sickert and Ross references this tone with the aim of emphasizing publicly the lack of common ground between their aesthetic approaches. Sickert’s private letter to Ross, sent after the honorary dinner on 1 December, provides further clarification of their actual point of conflict as it shows Sickert distancing himself from the views and approach of Wilde and his Aestheticized “glorification of nonsense.”<sup>22</sup> By stressing his fundamental incompatibility with Wilde, Sickert is suggesting that he is equally at odds with Ross, whom he positions within a divergent Wildean Aesthetic tradition. This aesthetic divergence, revealed through their use of dramatic rhetoric, further acts as a point of differentiation between the critical authority of artist-critics and writer-critics.

## Language of Painting: Conceptions and Traditions

It is with the notion of a "language of painting" that Ross and Sickert's positions deviate most evidently. Its appearance in their 1908 debate is also the first of many outings for the phrase in Sickert's writing; the concept was further developed in a 1910 article entitled "The Language of Art," and recurred in his writings throughout the pre-war period.<sup>23</sup> A valuable critical device for the artist, it allowed him to explore the intersections between form, technique and subject in a manner that focused on reception rather than on the process of inspiration. His development of the idea of a "language of art," however, drew on a long tradition. A recurring motif in art writing, this phrase serves to highlight the analogous relationship between the literary and visual as forms of communication. Language is culturally conditioned and dependent on shared knowledge, and the "language of art" metaphor or analogy argues that this conditioning occurs in visual as well as in written or verbal texts.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the relationship between literature and art may center on the ekphrastic potential of written or verbal language, i.e. the literary evocation of the visual. Such a relationship places art and writing in a state of tension.<sup>25</sup> Perceiving a visual language in art (formal or symbolic) circumvents this fluctuating hierarchy, and instead utilizes analytic techniques from literature to aid understanding of the communicative processes of visual art. However, this is not without problems, as the application of the phrase "language of art" is by no means consistent throughout art writing. When, then, is this "language of art" a useful analogy for the communicative function of visual art? When does it become a metaphor, or when is art seen as a true structured and conditioned language in itself?

For Edwardian writers, Ruskin's *Modern Painters Volume I*, re-published in an edited collection in 1903, provided a key precedent for the theorization of art as a language. Ruskin stated:

Painting or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but in itself nothing. ... Language is thus to be distinguished from, and held subordinate to, that which it conveys.<sup>26</sup>

Here, the notion of a language of art is metaphorical and Ruskin shows how the communicative nature of paintings is comparable to the communicative function of the spoken word: "we should call a man a great painter only as he excelled in precision and force in the language of his lines, and a great versifier, as he excelled in precision and force in the language of words."<sup>27</sup> For Ruskin, the language of art refers primarily to the practical aspects of painting such as technique and form, which he terms "treatment" and "vehicle."<sup>28</sup> This is separated from and subordinate to "that which it conveys": the concept and its related subject matter, as "the highest thoughts are those which are least dependent on language."<sup>29</sup> Here he develops the assertion, present in his writings at this time, that art was both an intellectual and imaginative act as "any work of art which represents, not a material object, but the mental conception of a material object, is, in the primary sense of the word, Ideal. That is to say it represents an idea not a thing."<sup>30</sup> Ruskin's empirical approach to picture viewing

(empirical in the sense of pragmatic and methodical observation) is based on a systematic analysis of both the practical steps of a painting's construction and the development of personal appreciation. He introduces a structured method for understanding painting, the influence of which can be felt in Sickert's criticism, as I discuss presently. However, he stops short of considering the arbitrary and conventional nature of his "expressive language." It was not until a form of art criticism focused on materiality emerged in response to Impressionism that painting could be conceived of in terms of an inherent and arbitrary system of formal relations.

In this context, the idea of a "language of painting" found a welcome home in the work of the "New Art Critics" of the 1880s and 90s: MacColl, R.A.M. Stevenson, George Moore, Elizabeth Pennell and Sickert.<sup>31</sup> Their writing was characterized by a concern for the "surface effects" of pictures. In the words of MacColl, their approach "favour[ed] the pictorial qualities of a picture rather than its representational elements."<sup>32</sup> These critics were supporters of French Impressionism, of Whistler, and of the forward-looking "London Impressionist" faction of the New English Art Club.<sup>33</sup> MacColl's article "Art: Subject and Technique" in the *Spectator* in 1893 encapsulates the New Art Criticism's response to modern styles in painting.<sup>34</sup> In this text, he employs the phrase the "language of painting" to discuss the technical qualities of art, and how they should affect how it is read and appreciated. As an artist-critic and a well-known watercolorist, his focus on technique is imbued with a particular level of professionalism and insight.

Comparing painting to verbal language, MacColl asserts that speech consists of both "form and texture"; similarly, painting should convey "intonation, accent, expression."<sup>35</sup> By reference to such stylistic devices, the "language" of painting begins to denote formal components. Here MacColl suggests that painting could be seen literally as a language by highlighting the conventional nature of its construction through reference to form. However, he stops short of a direct comparison with the linguistic and grammatical structures of written and verbal language and avoids drawing potentially useful parallels to concepts such as syntax. Instead, the "language of painting" is used as an analogy, as a basis for discussing the "legibility" of art. MacColl argues that while verbal language is readily understood, visual language is not so easily or widely comprehended, as painting "speaks a language by no means so generally known or readily acquired."<sup>36</sup> As he states, "all the art of it, the means by which, as in language, the feeling of the painter towards his subject is determined and conveyed ... all of this goes for nothing, and the spectator is left contemplating a bare 'subject'." Through the conception of a language of art, the average viewer is therefore prohibited from full aesthetic appreciation. The complex expressive qualities of art as experience are reduced to a reading of subject matter. Any focus on subject was seen as an unnecessary distraction from the "dignity" of technique.<sup>37</sup> It was associated with a preoccupation with the morality art, an approach that MacColl and the New Art Critics saw as unrefined.

In "Subject and Technique," the ability to comprehend painterly language becomes a privilege reserved for artists. MacColl's characterization of "the painter, the complexity of whose feeling, the gravity of whose spirit, the refinement of whose vision express themselves in their own language of painting," uses language as a metaphor to highlight the personal and individualistic nature of art.<sup>38</sup> He also emphasizes the privileged

disposition of artists' vision, arguing that, unlike the layperson, artists have a unique and special perception, an "innocent eye" that allows them a direct and unbiased sensation of vision, through which artistic expression may be inspired.<sup>39</sup> This echoes Ruskin's approach, specifically the idea of an innocent, specialized vision, but recasts this as the unique provision of the privileged artist. Rooted in the artist's professional ability, such vision is embedded in technique, as MacColl makes clear with reference to stippling, which "stand[s] for an ... act of vision"; the artist's gaze, therefore, is inscribed physically into the paint surface. Reference to the practical act of painting, to "brush work" and "tools," further roots technique in the concrete labor of painting as practiced by professional artists. Good technique is a sign both of professionalism and specialized vision, two elements that are bound together in a metaphorical painterly "language" which can be read in the surface of the art work.

Specialized artistic vision not only determines the construction and content of art itself, it is also fundamental to appreciation. Artistic appreciation is therefore restricted to a select group of perceptive individuals, possessing an ideal gaze; as MacColl argues, "it is impossible to reveal to anyone who has not an eye for the language of painting, where the pictorial element comes in."<sup>40</sup> Predictably, this group consists of artistic and adept critics. The adept critic is cast in the role of translator, "whose humble but necessary office it is to avert public wrath from fine painting."<sup>41</sup> While the critic can potentially mediate between artist and public, the conventionally negative characterization of "the public" prevents this from succeeding.<sup>42</sup> With their "wrath" at "fine painting," the public are characterized by MacColl as unknowing, aggressive and unappreciative. Restriction of appreciation is the central issue. There is no opportunity for the layman to learn how to understand painterly language. At best, the average viewer "is prepared to enjoy his own sensation before one painter as he did another," but "to suppose that he, therefore admires the art ... is an illusion."<sup>43</sup> MacColl's "language of painting" is neither universal nor teachable, but inherently legible only to the privileged viewer. This stratification of appreciation is imbedded in his conception of painting, evidenced in the idea of "imagination," which for him is centered on observation. He displays a hierarchal understanding of painting where observation and imagination are successfully transcribed into artistic visual expression via subject and technique, a process he terms "conception." This form of art is of higher importance than work which is simply technically adept: bad painting "is all technique and no observation."<sup>44</sup> There are echoes here of a Ruskinian hierarchy of painting where technique is subservient to concept, particularly given the reference to imagination, which, as I have previously mentioned, comprises part of Ruskin's definition of the painterly act. While MacColl has a clear aversion to moralism in art, the positioning of an artistic "language" in a hierarchy of painting qualities shows a debt to earlier nineteenth-century aesthetics.

The notion of a "language of art," as developed in the earlier writings of Ruskin and MacColl, contributed to art-critical practice in a number of ways. Firstly, it provided a useful analogy for discussing how art is constructed, and how it can and should communicate to the viewer. Secondly, it facilitated discussion about the role and value of the formal and technical components of paintings. In MacColl's writing, parallels were beginning to be suggested between the conventional apparatus of painting, and

the systematic conventions of language, although, as I have shown, this was not fully developed. Finally, the notion of an artistic language was used to debate the exclusivity of art, with ideas of “fluency” and “understanding” providing the means for artist-writers to limit access to appreciation. By the turn of the century, the phrase had clear potential for further critical development and adaptation. First, it presented an opportunity to discuss in greater detail the varying components of painterly practice, an important issue given the increasing focus, since the rise of Impressionism, on form, technique and material. Secondly, in light of its newly established elitist connotations, it could provide ammunition for writer-critics who wished to challenge the notion of a singular privileged vision. In this context, it could be assimilated into debates between artist-writers and writer-critics, the latter of whom could use it to present an alternative, democratized approach to art appreciation and simultaneously challenge the authority of artists. These potential avenues were seized upon and explored by Edwardian writers such as Ross and Sickert (and later Fry), all of whom used the idea of a “language of art” to define their view of art, and as a means to convey their ideas about appreciation.

### **Sickert and Ross’s “Language of Painting”**

While New Art Criticism provided the immediate context for Sickert’s practice (he was a contemporary of MacColl), by the time he turned to the phrase “language of painting” in the 1900s he had progressed beyond the bounds of a nineteenth-century hierarchical model of painting. In his conception of a “language of painting” in “A New Life,” he outlines a systematic structure where components such as treatment, technique, style and subject are understood to be, by custom, linked, arranged and comprehended. By casting painting as language, he is not simply highlighting the communicative function of art; he takes account of, and also looks beyond, the iconic and indexical nature of visual representation. At the same time, he distinguishes the notion of a language of art from linguistics, stating that “nothing is less literary than the language of the arts.”<sup>45</sup> As such, visual language is presented as a distinct concept, comparable to yet separate from written or verbal language (“if a subject could be stated in words, there’d be no need to paint it”), and possessing an essential structured, communicative and conditioned nature.<sup>46</sup>

His sustained use of the “language” metaphor suggests that painting’s components are habitually linked, implying an arbitrary aspect to this language that looks beyond mimesis. That is to say, the conventions of painting result in formal and material expressions that have purpose and value apart from the representation of subject matter. In this way, Sickert develops a definition of painting which sees the material composition of painting as equal to, and potentially subsuming, the subject. Referencing and then departing from a hierarchical understanding of subject and treatment, as in the writing of Ruskin and MacColl, his model of painting conflates the two components: “criticism set in opposition the words subject and treatment. Is it not possible that this antithesis is meaningless, and that the two things are one, and that an idea does not exist apart from its exact expression?”<sup>47</sup> Subject and treatment are subsumed by “the plastic facts expressed,” where the emotive effects of a work are elicited through “the

suggestion of the three dimensions of space, the suggestion of weight, the prelude or the refrain of movement, the promise of movement to come or the echo of movement past."<sup>48</sup>

Sickert's rejection of a hierarchical relationship between subject and treatment suggests that treatment, that is to say the formal and material construction of the painting, in itself carries meaning. His "language" of painting refers to all aspects of visual representation and allows for an empirical analysis moving away from a stratified model of painting. While his criticism here precedes structural theories of linguistics, and so must remain separate from subsequent investigations into the use of the metaphor (notably Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*, 1968), it does follow the general trend of empiricism and scientific influence on art from the nineteenth century which encouraged systematic analysis.<sup>49</sup> He himself cites Ruskin's empiricism as a significant influence on his critical practice, praising him for "his insistence on deliberation, on concentration, on singleness of aim in each separate material and at each separate stage."<sup>50</sup> Whistler's appropriation of scientific methodology for art theory is an equally clear precedent, as I go on to discuss. For Sickert, painting does not comprise a hierarchy of ingredients forming an autonomous whole; rather it is a configuration of relating parts and referents. His understanding of the structure of painting de-prioritizes and lends equal weight to its components, constructing a particular form of analysis that allows for, but does not privilege, either a formalist reading (one driven by technical and material content) or non-formalist readings (those driven by subject matter or beauty).

As with MacColl's earlier article, Sickert's conception of a painterly language raises the question of legibility. This is seized on by Ross, whose central contention is that artists aim to restrict the appreciation and interpretation of art works, rendering them "unintelligible" to a general audience. His deliberate misreading, his literal interpretation of Sickert's use of the "language of art" phrase, allows him to challenge the perceived exclusivity of this proposed language, and so challenge the authority of Sickert as an artist-critic. By his refusal to engage with the idea of an artistic language, Ross is rejecting the systematic and structured approach to painting appreciation seen in the writings of the artist. He never employs empirical methodology to analyze a painting's composition, rather he focuses in a subjective or intuitive manner on the process of appreciation, specifically concentrating on the sensory experience of art objects, on beauty and pleasure as opposed to systematic analysis. This is evident in Ross's *Morning Post* article, through his reference to art as "sensuous or aesthetic aspiration." As such, Ross's response to the idea of an artistic language serves not simply to challenge the authority of artist-critics and their perceived elitist restriction of appreciation, it also allows him to suggest an alternative and more democratic method for appreciating art, centered on personal response.

## The Nature of Appreciation

Ross's focus on sensory experience aligns his approach with the late nineteenth-century Aesthetic Movement, and the theories of Wilde and Walter Pater (1839–94) in particular.<sup>51</sup> Mirroring their interest in pleasure and the perception of beauty, Ross proposed

a form of appreciation based on “a natural perception,” while elsewhere identifying “the desire for beauty” as an admirable component of appreciation.<sup>52</sup> The fusing of perception and pleasure across Ross’s criticism is a result of a tactical selection and adaptation of preceding Aesthetic theories. The writings of Pater provide one source for Ross’s writings. With reference to Matthew Arnold, Pater argued that beauty, being relative, could only be defined by our own response to it:

the first step towards “seeing one’s object as it really is,” is to know one’s own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly ... What is this song or picture to me? What effect does it really produce on me?<sup>53</sup>

His theories are underlined by subjectivism, and through his writing an intense personal response to art became a legitimate theoretical approach. As Harold Bloom has argued, rather than stressing the history or historiography of specific art works, Pater provided a methodology, an aesthetic attitude for engaging with art.<sup>54</sup> The experiential context of art gained in precedence over the historical context, and aesthetic experience became the primary object of analysis. By referencing Pater’s approach, Ross was both seeking to formulate an alternative approach to appreciation and joining the many Edwardian writers, including Fry and the poet T.S. Eliot (1888–65), who sought to re-evaluate Pater’s contribution to art studies.<sup>55</sup>

Ross was most explicit in his praise of Pater’s notion of “contact with comely things.”<sup>56</sup> This aligned with his interest in Wilde’s writing, in particular the frequent focus on beautiful surroundings.<sup>57</sup> Discussing the sensory experience of such environments indicates the potential for an aesthetic approach that includes aspects of synesthesia. The ability to produce and enjoy art is dependent on the viewer or artist’s willingness to enter the “serene House of Beauty”: i.e. to be surrounded by beautiful conditions.<sup>58</sup> In outlining his ideas, Wilde drew frequent analogies between various forms of art, notably music, poetry and painting. With painting, the “satisfying beauty of design” is linked to “musical impulse” and the “symphony of color,” and is equivalent to the Romantic English poet John Keats’s (1795–1821) notion of the “sensuous life of verse.”<sup>59</sup> In Wilde’s writings, the association of visual and aural pleasures combine to create an environment where beauty is perceived in a multi-sensory manner. As Ross references the approach of both Wilde and Pater, he is essentially adapting a sensory approach to aesthetic experience. Beauty (in variable forms) is the basis of a pleasurable aesthetic encounter, an encounter that is based on personal sensory engagement, rather than a learned or innate ability to perceive.

In his effort to validate a form of appreciation based on sensory engagement, Ross is essentially promoting an accessible approach to art viewing. For example, in his essays on Blake he formulates a model of appreciation that centers on personal taste, and so is available to those without a “wide knowledge” of art. This alternative form of experience is based on the idea that “a natural perception, a taste ... is inherent in many people without education or cultivation.”<sup>60</sup> For Ross, this “natural perception” is exercised through sensory engagement with beautiful objects. Adapting the approaches of Wilde and Pater, he emphasizes the importance of sensuous (and sensory) pleasure as this form of appreciation is not restricted to learned viewers. At

the same time, therefore, Ross is also challenging the restrictions imposed by artist-critics advocating informed appreciation. Crucially, however, Ross's mode of appreciation is facilitated by the support of an informed educator, i.e. the writer-critic, whose role it is to "reveal the misunderstood artist to the public."<sup>61</sup> The skill and authority of this interpreter-educator is confirmed by his association to the comparable role of the artist, who "reveals newly-found forms of beauty in man or nature."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, while Ross works to promote wide access to art appreciation, his need to establish critical authority means he is unable to escape an essentially hierarchical model. This is evident in his writings on Blake, where, in addition to identifying a "natural perception," he also claims that on occasion the viewer "requires a certain amount of culture before [the artist] can be appreciated," asserting that there do exist "those gifted with an exquisite perception and wide knowledge of art," who are able to do so. Here, Ross suggests that certain forms of art are more readily appreciated by those with a wider knowledge. Overall, he formulates a two-tier system of experience, the first centered in appreciation (intellectual or sensory), and the second in taste. This allows him to both promote egalitarian access to appreciation and continue to promote his own critical authority.

In contrast to Ross's focus on sensory engagement and taste, Sickert's emphasis on the "reading" of the language of painting reveals a model of appreciation based on understanding. For him, the "language" of painting must be learned in order for works to be understood and experienced, albeit through a capacity to learn which is innate. This involves not just learning the basics of this language but also remaining exposed to it by continually "hearing it spoken." In practical terms, Sickert is highlighting the importance of context: a painting and our experience of it is not isolated and autonomous, but dependent on its association with particular artistic groupings, by inference its presence within a group of similar or comparable works. He illustrates this elsewhere in "A New Life" by explaining how he was able to appreciate Whistler's work due to exposure to French painting in his youth.<sup>63</sup> This concept is borne out in the text by a similar comparison: "[Camille] Pissarro is in no way lessened if a student is told ... 'You may consider him a kind of Courbet grafted on to a Corot.' We are only by this means inducted into a sympathetic comprehension."<sup>64</sup> The assertion that a viewer must hear this language "spoken around them" allows for the suggestion that understanding is reliant not solely on canonical contextualization (i.e. a work's presence in a group of similar works), but also on critical contextualization through the viewer's exposure to sources of informed critical authority (i.e. those doing the speaking). His model of informed appreciation implies that artists are in a privileged position to understand the technicalities and traditions of art by which works may be appreciated.

For Sickert, the "language of painting" is not universally comprehensible. However, while he limits the ability to read art (on his terms) in a manner which preferences artists, this is complicated by his assertion that "there are persons born with a natural gift for reading this language. I am not now talking of artists."<sup>65</sup> This shows his apparent belief in the existence of an innate capacity for learning. Those excluded from "reading" art include those without such capacity: a number of artists, young men, women (for whom the language of art has "very little" meaning) and also "those whose minds are muddled with the dirt of politics or heated with the vulgar clatter

of society.”<sup>66</sup> Robins has identified chauvinism in Sickert’s exclusion of women; however, his general elitism does not focus solely on women and often functions as hyperbole. His apparent prejudice should be read as territorial posturing and part of the dramatic rhetoric he developed in order to promote his own critical authority; as such, it forms part of the wider debate about critical authority conducted by artists and writers.

Sickert’s approach here takes some influence from Whistler, whose writing set conventions for asserting the perceptive superiority of artists. The longstanding idea of the artist as “visionary” was utilized by Whistler, who aimed both to validate the artist’s genius through the appropriation of scientific theories of optics, and also to underline the exceptional nature of the artist by mystifying his own artistic practice. As Robins has demonstrated, he was influenced by studies on perception and psychological optics, specifically those formulated by Hermann von Helmholtz in the 1870s and 1880s, and aimed to lend weight to his aesthetic approach by basing his drawing and coloring methods on theories of binocular vision and complementary colors.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, he went to great lengths to mystify his practice, for example through poetic assertions of the critical and interpretive supremacy of artists: for him, art is “seeking and finding the beautiful in all conditions, and in all times ... but the artist is born to pick and choose and group with science, these elements, that the result may be beautiful.”<sup>68</sup> Correspondingly, the artist is “completely severed from [his] fellow creatures ... a designer of the beautiful ... a dreamer apart.”<sup>69</sup> For Whistler then, it is impossible for the writer or layman to share or understand the artist’s vision. In his writings, the artist assumes a privileged, prophetic role as his practical activities are veiled by a process of mystification. Art is personified as a “goddess of dainty thought,” loved by the male artist who “knows the happiness untasted by other mortals” when producing art: “and art seeks the artist alone. Where he is there she appears, and remains with him – long and fruitful ... with man then and not with the multitude, are her intimacies.”<sup>70</sup> Art becomes part mythical muse part divine inspiration, and above all, exclusive. The artist is then a “dreamer apart”: individual, visionary and elite.

While Sickert shared Whistler’s territorial hostility to writer-critics, he was eager to distance himself from such mystification and the idea of the visionary nature of the artist. At the same time, he was equally ready to adopt a practical and quasi-scientific approach to explaining painterly practice in his role of “craftsman as witness.” For Sickert, the artist’s vision was privileged not because of his innate genius but due to a carefully fostered practical ability that led him to understand the material qualities and successes of an art work. Arguing that “a master is a craftsman who knows how to conduct any work he undertakes, through its stages, to the foreseen consummation,” Sickert presents technical skill and controlled innovation as the marker of good artists, and in effect characterizes the artist-craftsman as informed, competent and professional.<sup>71</sup>

With his focus on professionalism over mystification, Sickert was not only distancing himself from Whistler’s Aestheticism, but also associating himself with what Julie Codell has identified as a rise of professionalism in the arts originating in the Victorian period.<sup>72</sup> Charting the changing market conditions of the Victorian era, Codell has demonstrated the link between professionalization and artists’ increased involvement

in commercial activities such as selling, promotion and membership of formal artists' societies, with their commercial goals in these areas "mark[ing] them as professionals."<sup>73</sup> Equally, historians such as Robert Jensen have acknowledged a tension between the professional economic activities of artists and their status as creative, perceptive individuals, idealistically distanced from everyday concerns such as sale and profit.<sup>74</sup> Sickert's critical activities successfully negotiate this tension. His published art writing serves in part to promote his own aesthetic brand (thus serving as a marker of his own professionalism within the art field), while maintaining the illusion of the artist as a creative, privileged individual through the idea of the "artist-craftsman." In this way, his criticism indicates the emergence of a different approach to critical authority, which, departing from the work of his predecessors, draws on both economic and technical competence.

### **Conclusion: Legacies**

As I have argued, the critical interactions between Sickert and Ross reveal some of the key concerns of Edwardian art writing, in particular how art can and should be appreciated, and who has the authority to govern this process. The notion of a "language of art" becomes a tool in these debates: it facilitates discussions about form and technique (as in the writings of Sickert), and at the same time directs attention towards experience and personal engagement (as in the writings of Ross). As such, it resonates across Edwardian art writing, as critics sought to adapt their approaches to changing conditions in art practice and dissemination. It influenced Fry, who used "The Language of Art" as the title for a series of lectures in 1909 from which was drawn his seminal "Essay in Aesthetics" (1909); it therefore plays a role in the development of formalism.<sup>75</sup> The phrase also has a place in discussions about nationalism and transnationalism in the arts, a key concern in current surveys of the Edwardian art world.<sup>76</sup> For historians such as Grace Brockington and Anna Gruetzner Robins, the idea of a "language of art" provides an insight into the cosmopolitan or transnational contexts and potentials of Edwardian art practice.<sup>77</sup> As this article has argued, references to a "language of art" serve to indicate the variety of critical positions that developed and coexisted during the Edwardian period, and reveal the level of heterogeneity within the art world at this time. The writings of Sickert and Ross show how the Edwardian art world developed and diverged from previous Aesthetic approaches rather than simply continuing in line with Victorian tradition, or breaking from it entirely. They also show the level of debate and divergence between artists and writers, each seeking to consolidate their critical authority. Amid increasing stylistic changes, the idea of a language of art continued to provide a way to investigate responses to art. Significantly, it provided a locus for discussion about access to art appreciation and the ways in which different viewers are encouraged to engage with a work, issues that became ever more pressing with the advent of new styles and new aesthetic possibilities in the early twentieth century.

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- 1 In Anna Gruetzner Robins, *Walter Sickert, Complete Writings on Art* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2000), 182.
- 2 In Margery Ross, *Robert Ross, Friend of Friends* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 158.
- 3 In Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 209–10.
- 4 See Tate's *Camden Town Group in Context*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group> (accessed February 2016); Adrienne Rubin, *Roger Fry's "Difficult and Uncertain Science"* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013). For a discussion of the diversity of British modernism in the period, see Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life, Modern Subjects* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000) and Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Roger Fry's Early Criticism 1900–1906," in *Art Made Modern: Roger Fry's Vision of Art*, ed. Christopher Green (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999), 31–44.
- 5 See the essays in Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, eds., *The Rise of the Art Market in London 1850–1930* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).
- 6 Publications such as Morna O'Neill and Michael Hatt, eds., *The Edwardian Sense* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Angus Trumble and Andrea Wolk Rager, eds., *Edwardian Opulence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013) with its accompanying exhibition; and Samuel Shaw, Sarah Shaw and Naomi Carle, eds., *Beyond the Garden Party: Rethinking Edwardian Culture* (Routledge, forthcoming), along with the activities of the Edwardian Culture Network, have all recently engaged in debates about the characterization of Edwardian culture.
- 7 Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London, 1908) was the third biography to be published since Whistler's death in 1903. Sickert's article is one of a few pieces of criticism, and certainly the most extensive, written by him during the Edwardian period. For a discussion of Sickert's role at this time, see Wendy Baron, *Perfect Moderns: A History of the Camden Town Group* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2000).
- 8 For a discussion about the critic as professional, see Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Into the Twentieth Century: Roger Fry's Project Seen from 2000," in Green, *Art Made Modern*, 31–44. For a wider survey of Edwardian art writing, see Stella K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism 1900–1920: The Visual Arts in Edwardian England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).
- 9 Sophie Hatchwell, "Robert Ross: Criticism, Commerce and Networking in the Edwardian Art World," in Shaw, Shaw and Carle, *Beyond the Garden Party*; Samuel Shaw, "The New Ideal Shop: Founding the Carfax Gallery 1898–1902," *The British Art Journal* 13 (September 2012): 35–41; Barbara Pezzini, "More Adey, the Carfax Gallery and the Burlington Magazine," *The Burlington Magazine* 153 (November 2011): 806–14; Barbara Pezzini, "New Documents Regarding the Carfax Gallery," *The British Art Journal* 13 (September 2012): 19–30.
- 10 For example, Robert Ross, "The Place of William Blake in English Art," *The Burlington Magazine* 9 (June 1906): 150–67; Robert Ross, "Rossetti, an Observation," *The*

- Burlington Magazine* 13 (May 1908): 116–19; and Robert Ross, *Aubrey Beardsley* (London: John Lane, 1909).
- 11 Codell characterizes nineteenth-century New Journalism as “sensationalising news, interviewing and promoting celebrity, and intending... to influence readers, markets and government officials.” Julie Codell, “From English School to British School: Modernism, Revisionism and National Culture in the Writings of M.H. Spielmann,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2015), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/summer15/codell-on-modernism-revisionism-and-national-culture-in-the-writings-of-spielmann> (accessed September 30, 2016).
  - 12 Sickert mentions the article in private letters to Ross (cited in Margery Ross, *Robert Ross*). He also refers to it again in the articles “Open Letter to Robert Ross,” *Art News*, March 31, 2010; “Encouragement for Art,” *The New Age*, April 7, 1910; and “Idealism,” *Art News*, May 12, 2010. See Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 209–10, 213–15 and 228–29 respectively. In addition, Sickert retained Ross’s article in his scrapbook collection of newspaper cuttings. It can be seen in the Sickert Family Collection at the Islington Local History Centre.
  - 13 Sickert, “Stones from a Glass House,” *Art News*, January 27, 1910, in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 191.
  - 14 Sickert believed Ross had written a favorable review of paintings by Emma Ciardi. Informed of his mistake, he published a letter of apology in *Art News* on April 14, 1910 under the heading “A Correction.” Cited in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 217.
  - 15 Where “Aesthetic” appears as a proper noun, I refer to the Aesthetic movement of the nineteenth century.
  - 16 Wilde wrote extensively about art, criticism and the role of both artists and non-artists in art writing. A prime example is Oscar Wilde, *The Artist as Critic* (1891 repr., New York: Mondial, 2015).
  - 17 The spat between Whistler and Wilde, comprising articles and letters to the press, was privately published as *Whistler vs Wilde, an Acrimonious Correspondence* (London, 1906). Ruskin of course never corresponded with Whistler, but their conflict was publicly and dramatically restated by Whistler in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (London: Heinemann, 1904), 23–35.
  - 18 Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1992), 2.
  - 19 “Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics,” cited in Whistler, *The Gentle Art*, 33.
  - 20 Whistler, *The Gentle Art*, 25.
  - 21 In particular, Whistler targeted Tom Taylor of *The Times* and Harry Quilter, his successor. His letters also found targets in aesthetes such as Wilde and the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909).
  - 22 Although Sickert’s letter is undated, it is clear from his reference to Ross’s celebration dinner (at which he was present) that the letter was sent just after the event.
  - 23 Notably in “Mr La Thanges Paintings,” *Art News*, May 7, 1914; “The Language of Art,” *The New Age*, July 28, 1910, both cited in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 363 and 264–7 respectively.
  - 24 See Moshe Barasch, *The Language of Art: Studies in Interpretation* (New York: University of New York, 1997).
  - 25 For a discussion of *ekphrasis*, see Stephen Cheeke, *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).
  - 26 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Volume I*, in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin, Vol. 3*, ed. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903), 9.

- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Technique is synonymous with treatment. The material act of painting is a “vehicle of thought”; see Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 87–91.
- 29 Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 10.
- 30 Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Volume III* (New York: John Wiley, 1885), 101.
- 31 For a full discussion of the New Art Critics, see Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).
- 32 Cited in *ibid.*, 162–3.
- 33 The New Art Critics were also critical of the Royal Academy. Robins cites MacColl’s “The Logic of Painting” in the *Albermarle Review* (1892), as a key text for outlining the New Art approach to criticism and technique. See Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 162.
- 34 D.S. MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” *Spectator*, March 25, 1893, 15–16. MacColl took over the role of art critic at the *Spectator* from R.A.M. Stevenson in 1892.
- 35 MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” 16.
- 36 Conversely, “the art of conversation is of prime necessity and universal practice.” MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” 16.
- 37 MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” 15. The opening line of the article reads “the dignity of the performance does not depend on the dignity of the subject.”
- 38 MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” 15.
- 39 The idea of an “innocent eye” is explored, and famously challenged, by Gombrich and Goodman. Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1962); and Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art; An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (1968; repr., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976). For a discussion of nineteenth-century approaches, see also Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 40 MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” 16.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 For an exploration of negative characterizations of “the public,” see John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber, 1992).
- 43 MacColl, “Art: Subject and Technique,” 16.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Cited in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 237.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 “The Language of Art,” *The New Age*, July 28, 1910, reprinted in *A Free House or the Artist as Craftsman: Being the Writings of Walter Sickert*, ed. Osbert Sitwell (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd, 1947), 89.
- 48 Sickert in Sitwell, *A Free House*, 89.
- 49 Goodman, *Languages of Art*.
- 50 Sickert, “The Spirit of the Hive,” *The New Age*, May 26, 1910, in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 237.
- 51 Ross often referenced both Pater and Wilde in his art writing and the idea that occurred most often was that of Pater’s “contact with ‘comely things’.” Ross, “Art and Artists,” *The Morning Post*, August 21, 1909.
- 52 Ross, “The Place of William Blake,” 150 and “Art and Artists.”
- 53 Walter Pater, “Preface to The Renaissance,” in *Walter Pater, Essays on Literature and Art*, ed. Jennifer Uglow (London: Dent, 1973), 79.
- 54 Harold Bloom, *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (New York: Columbia University, 1982), viii.

- 55 For a full discussion of the reception of Pater during the *fin-de-siècle* and Edwardian periods, see Lene Østermark-Johansen's "Enshrined in a Library Edition, and an Incubus to Get Rid Of: Walter Pater's Renaissance around 1910," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2015), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/summer15/ostermark-johansen-on-walter-pater-s-renaissance-around-1910> (accessed September 30, 2016).
- 56 Ross, "Art and Artists."
- 57 See, for example, the beginning chapter of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) or Oscar Wilde, "House Decoration" (1882), in *Art and Decoration: Being Extracts from Reviews and Miscellanies* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1920).
- 58 Oscar Wilde, "L'Envoi," in *Art and Decoration*.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ross, "The Place of William Blake," 150. His use of the term "taste" is a problematic referent for an "uninformed" experience of art. "Taste" here has degenerated from its associations with rational judgment. Its Edwardian connotations reference the fashionable desire for beauty as practiced by those of the Aesthetic movement. See Roger Fry, "Watts and Whistler," *The Quarterly Review* 202 (1905): 607–23.
- 61 Ross, "Art and Artists."
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Sickert, cited in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 180.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., 265.
- 66 Ibid., 265–6.
- 67 Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 18–23.
- 68 Whistler, *The Gentle Art*, 143.
- 69 Ibid., 137 and 139.
- 70 Ibid., 136 and 157.
- 71 Sickert, "Where Paul and I Differ," *Art News*, February 10, 1910, cited in Robins, *Walter Sickert*, 195.
- 72 Julie Codell, *The Victorian Artist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 48.
- 73 Julie Codell, "The Art Press and the Art Market: The Artist as 'Economic Man,'" in Fletcher and Helmreich, *The Rise of the Art Market*, 134; and Julie Codell, "Artists' Professional Societies: Production, Consumption and Aesthetics," in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 169–87.
- 74 Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 40–41.
- 75 For a discussion of Fry's 1909 lectures, see Sophie Hatchwell, "Collective Action, Individual Vision: Varieties of Aesthetic Experience in Edwardian Painting" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Bristol, 2015). For a wider discussion of Fry's aesthetic theories, see Rubin, *Roger Fry's "Difficult and Uncertain Science"*.
- 76 See, for example, Mark Cheetham, *Artwriting, Nation and Cosmopolitanism in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012); Meaghan Clarke, "Critical Mediators: Locating the Art Press," *Visual Resources* 26 (Winter 2010): 226–41; Codell, "From English School."
- 77 See the essays in Grace Brockington, ed., *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin de Siècle* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), and especially, therein, Anna Gruetzner Robins, "Walter Sickert and the Language of Art," 27–48.