

HENRY A. MILLON

The Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts: a research community within The National Gallery

The subject to be discussed will be divided into three parts – first the history of the Center, second the function and structure of the Center, and finally some factors considered in the planning of the Center.

The idea of the Center goes back to, I'm told, a conversation between David Finley, John Walker and Paul Mellon, in which the image of creating a new library of Alexandria, with a collection of works of art, a great library, with resident scholars, became a model for the National Gallery, then quite new. By the mid-1950s this idea had evolved with the consultation of Millard Meiss, into a center for the study of Renaissance art and conservation, perhaps to be a part of Harvard University in Washington as was the Hellenic Center and Dumbarton Oaks for Byzantine Studies.

When J. Carter Brown came to the National Gallery as Assistant Director under John Walker he undertook a lengthy study of the graduate study of art history in the United States. There were a few, notably John White, who was then at Johns Hopkins University, who urged the formation of a graduate department of art history linked administratively to a university. The majority of the art historians consulted, not unpredictably, I think, felt, however, that there were enough graduate departments of art history. What was needed instead they said was a center for post-doctoral study with funds for the support of scholars and appropriate facilities for study. Further, it was felt that such a center, in conjunction with a major collection of works of art, would represent a logical intersection of interests. The report recommended the establishment of such a center.

When planning for the new East Building began ten or more years ago, space was assigned to the Center. In anticipation of the needs of the Center, J.M. Edelstein was appointed to head the library. Both the library and the photo archive began to acquire at an accelerated rate. The Center was inaugurated in the summer of 1980 with the first arrivals of three Visiting Senior Fellows. During the first academic year, which concluded in the middle of last month, there were four Senior Fellows and eight Visiting Senior Fellows.

Museums have, over their growth period, amassed remarkable resources: the objects, artifacts and works of art gathered, and the libraries, other collections and facilities thought to be essential to proper curatorial care. The libraries and photo collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Frick Museum, the Ryerson in Chicago or the Freer in Washington or the library here at the Brera attest to their value for research in the field. These collections developed by museums can provide the basis for advanced study. They could and should be utilized. For many years, as we have heard this afternoon, the fortunate universities with collections of works of art have been able to offer graduate and undergraduate study of art history with direct reference to their own objects. Some universities — New York University, Columbia and Harvard would be examples from among a number

— and museums have developed cooperative programs in graduate studies. Graduate departments have obtained from the curatorial staff faculty in fields or areas they might otherwise be unable to obtain. Post-doctoral studies can be a natural outgrowth of these cooperative programs.

Post-doctoral studies are undertaken by individuals in university faculties and museum curatorial staffs as a part of their normal on-going research effort. Some of the more enlightened faculties and museums allow or encourage research through reduced demands on the scholar's or the curator's time. Few universities or museums have been able to sponsor much research beyond the Ph.D. level. Sponsorship is usually obtained from the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fulbright Program, or other sponsoring institutions. None of these sponsors has wished to determine where a scholar would work, nor have they been interested in the formation of a community of scholars for whatever might be gained through association. In post-doctoral study, that activity has been the concern of those who felt association to be important. A few institutions, notable among them in the fields of history of art and archaeology, are the American School in Athens, the American Academy in Rome, Villa I Tatti, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Dumbarton Oaks, and the ten or so centers for advanced study overseas, such as the Oriental Institute, the American Research Centers in Egypt, Istanbul, Amman, Yemen, Damascus, Hong-Kong, and so forth. With the exception of the Institute in Princeton and Dumbarton Oaks, all the study centers mentioned in history of art and archaeology are abroad at locations near the sites where scholars and excavators need to be for their work. One question addressed by those who considered a possible Center at the National Gallery was "is there a need for a residential center in art history in the United States?,". It seems there was a need for a center that would provide individuals with the time to write up material gathered on site, and also, and perhaps more importantly, provide the possibility for discussion and exchange about questions that arise as material is prepared for publication. Discussion of current work with colleagues often suggests modifications or alterations in research approaches and methods, and equally often calls into question existing theory. Time for reflection, questioning and discussion of data and opinion in the light of theory and method appear to be needed, which was the conclusion of the report prepared by Carter Brown. Those who have taught in universities know that the university unfortunately does not seem to provide a forum for ideas, nor do museums as those who have worked in museums know.

Structured and casual exchange became a central part of the developing idea of the Center. Additional concerns, such as the relationship of the curatorial and

educational staff to departments within the Gallery, to the trustees, local universities and other research institutions came into consideration as the Center began to take form. Fundamental was the need for the independence of the Center within the Gallery, a subject to which we will return. The Center came into being first to encourage post-doctoral study of the history, theory and criticism of art, architecture and urban form in an environment that placed value on specific works of art, and secondly, to establish a scholarly community and provide a forum for ideas about the subject matter, theory, methods, criticism and historiography of art.

The Center is interested in the study of the production, use, and cultural meaning of artifacts from pre-historic times to the present by historians, critics and theorists of art as well as by scholars in related disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. The Center supports a Kress Professor, a number of Senior Fellows and Visiting Senior Fellows, Associates and one

National Gallery of Art Curatorial Fellow. The Curatorial Fellowship enables a curator to obtain a leave of absence and spend a period of time on research at a site of their choice. Also supported by the Center are pre-doctoral fellows and research assistants.

The activity of the Center includes four programs — the Fellowship program, meetings, publications, and research. All programs are privately funded. Funds from the Federal government provide for the heat, light, and space occupied by the Center, some funds for supplies and equipment, and salaries for four secretaries and the assistant dean.

The Fellowship program provides for the members of the Center, its core. Senior Fellows are chosen through application by a Selection Committee drawn from the Advisory Board of the Center. Senior Fellows who are awarded fellowships receive roundtrip travel to Washington, a stipend that includes an allowance for housing in Washington, a study, expenses for research



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materials, a subsidy for meals, and travel funds for attendance at a professional meeting.

There were three Visiting Senior Fellows in the summer of 1980, five Senior Fellows during this academic year, six Visiting Senior Fellows this summer, and eight Senior Fellows next academic year. There are no fixed ideas as to the numbers or mix of fellows. The beginning years will be experimental.

The range of topics awarded fellowships by the Selection Committee during this academic year included the following: the water systems of Greek colonies in Sicily; Christine de Pizan's *Epistre d'Othea* and its relationship to 15th century French royal history; the political significance of the depiction of the crude, boisterous peasant in late 15th-century northern painting; and the relationship between photography and surrealism.

In addition to the Senior Fellows and Visiting Senior Fellows, who may be there during an academic year, there is also the Kress Professor, who is not chosen by the Selection Committee, but by an internal Gallery committee. Also sponsored by the Gallery are a number of pre-doctoral fellows, about eight each year. Most of them are awarded a two-year fellowship, some for one, one a three-year fellowship. Most of these pre-doctoral fellows spend their fellowship time at the location of the archives or materials or works of art they are studying. Some spend time at the Center; four were in residence last year. There are at present about 12 to 15 people who gather at any one time as members of the Center.

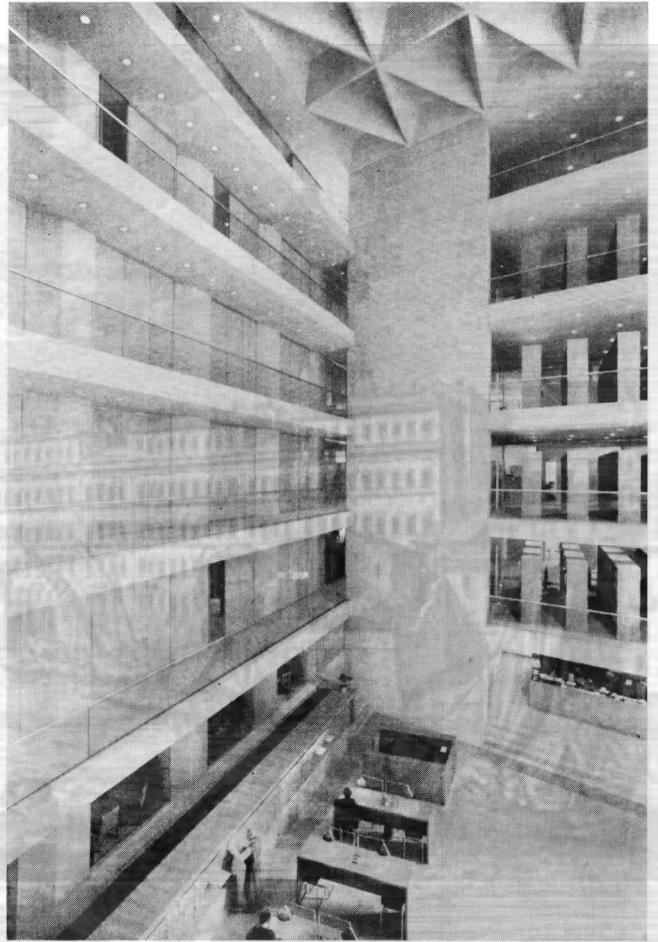
The meetings program is designed to gather a variety of art historians and critics to discuss a range of issues of art historical interest. The Gallery has an active education program that deals with the public. The Center directs its attention to the interests and concerns of art historians. The Center's meetings range from small gatherings of 15-25 persons at a seminar to 200-300 attending a symposium. The gatherings include colloquia, shop-talks, seminars, symposia, conferences and lectures.

Papers in colloquia are presented by Senior Fellows. Faculty members in departments of art history of nearby universities, members of the senior curatorial staff of local museums and fellows of local research institutions are invited. A paper is presented after tea and is followed by a reception and dinner. Thirty to fifty individuals usually attend.

Shop-talks enable presentation of material relating to a dissertation by pre-doctoral fellows for criticism and comment by other members of the Center and the curatorial staff of the Gallery. Normally about 25 attend.

Seminars are gatherings of 15-25 individuals all of whom are knowledgeable in a specific field or area, usually the province of one of the members of the Center who assists in the definition of the theme and organization of the gathering. As the topic is defined, several readings that raise significant issues will be suggested to participants as initial foci for discussion. No formal presentations are made nor is there any recording of the discussion.

This year one seminar was devoted to recent changes in Picasso studies. Autobiography and texts have now become important, when ten or fifteen years ago they meant little. All of the individuals invited had worked on Picasso and related issues. The new approaches were examined and criticized by their advocates and opponents. A second seminar was devoted to medieval manuscripts,



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Islamic, Western Medieval and Byzantine. Normally scholars in these three areas do not talk to each other. The seminar sought to find out if there was anything they could learn about codicological questions or about illustrations or the relationships between text and illustration from one another.

Symposia are usually multi-day — two, three, four days — addressed to a large group, 200-300 people, in a field. The Center has sponsored two this year — one was related to the Search for Alexander Exhibition and focused on Macedonian art and architecture of the late 4th century. A second symposium, cosponsored with the Freer Gallery, was also related to an exhibition sponsored by the Freer on Mamluk Art and Architecture, called the Renaissance of Islam. The symposium examined Mamluk art and architecture. The papers resulting from these presentations are gathered and published for wider dissemination.

Conferences, in Center parlance, are daylong gatherings devoted to a single topic and directed to a professional audience that may range from 75 to several hundred. Lectures are addressed to a wider audience drawn from local universities, museums, libraries, and research

centers. They may occur in tandem with a seminar. Meetings are intended to reinforce the interests of the members. They may involve themselves to the degree they wish.

The Center intends to publish the results of some of its activities. Each year the Center will publish *Research Reports*, which will report on the work of the members of the Center. In addition it will list sponsored research in art history supported by grants from other institutions, such as the American Council of Learned Societies, the Guggenheim Foundation, Kress Foundation, the National Endowment. It is our intention to produce a quick reference guide to research under way in art history and related fields. In addition to *Research Reports*, a working document, the Gallery has an annual publication called *Studies in the History of Art*. It is being modified to contain three different series. One of the series will continue to be a *mélange*, including papers on a variety of issues. A second series will be devoted to monographs or lectures or series of lectures or publications of documents possibly including topics that commercial or university publishers cannot undertake because they are too costly and unproductive. A third series, will be the papers from symposia and conferences.

Finally, there is the research program. Each of the fellows at the Center works on the research he proposed. The Center will have an accumulative effect, however, only if it undertakes continuing research, research that cannot be accomplished by a single individual in a year, more than can be accomplished by a single person over a number of years. Collaboration or team work is almost unknown in art history, or architectural history. The sciences have led the way in collaborative effort for generations. The Center would like to accord priority to research proposals that require teamwork, a team within the discipline, or with members from other disciplines. Art historians tend to select tasks that they can do as individuals, often issues and problems are ignored if they require two or three people with different views. Individual work has limited the nature of research in art history. The Center would like to encourage team work, in art history.

Museums in the next decades can become principal centers for advanced study in history of art, but only under certain conditions. These conditions deal with governance, the scope of the centers, and the financial support. A research facility within a museum needs to have more independence than a division or a department of a museum. Research will be carried on in many departments of the museum usually related to collections and exhibitions. While research interests within a center

for advanced study may interact with those of other divisions of the museum, the center's goals should be broader and more general. The research center should not be a service center, and it should engage in no more than a limited amount of applied research. The center should generate research topics rather than respond to the initiatives of other divisions of the museum. A separate advisory board made up of individuals within the field may be advisable. Independence may help to establish the identity needed for a center to work towards the formation of a character that may arouse an expectation. Those who come to the center may anticipate activities of the center, know something of the interests of the center, what the center will support and encourage, and the modes of exchange the center advocates. Programs developed by the center should certainly complement any relationship between university and museum and the interests of the museum. But it must also do more than complement. The interests of centers extend beyond the collections of the institution. Only with a balance of relatedness and independence can a center form a community with a sense of purpose, continuity, and expectation — a perceived mission different from, while related to, that of the museum.

Research centers will be costly. To support scholars in an adequate research environment is expensive. A half-dozen to a dozen people with support facilities and programs, not including cost of space or library, means an annual budget between half a million and a million dollars a year. Support at that level and beyond will be necessary if centers for advanced study are to be developed in museums. Priorities need to be assessed and resources committed before a center is established.

Once they begin functioning, the centers and museums become a possible place for international advanced study for scholars during the period between the completion of formal education and the assumption of a university or a museum post. A scholar benefits most from research time while forming his own independent position at the initiation of a career. If museums, and centers within museums, can develop bi-national exchange programs for research, not indentured service, thereby enabling scholars to follow their own research interests, scholars would be provided with support for research which is difficult to find elsewhere. A center will provide professional exchange at the early stage of a scholar's development which is rewarding and useful for the remainder of a career. Exchanges between centers might lead eventually to international cooperation between centers/museums in bi-national sponsorship of research and centers of research in the field of art history.

SERGIO ROMANO: Grazie, signor Millon, della sua interessante esposizione. Il centro da poco costituito presso la National Gallery va assumendo una fisionomia accademica molto interessante. Da quanto lei ha detto esso sembrerebbe essere per metà collegio, per metà convento. Sarà bene ricordare a questo proposito che la National Gallery è la sola istituzione museale americana a carattere federale.

Un altro elemento che emerge dalla relazione del signor Millon, in parte, dalla relazione di stamane del signor Edelstein, è che la National Gallery sta assumendo un carattere centrale. Ha un'attività conservativa, conoscitiva, educativa, di promozione culturale e di formazione scientifica ad alto livello. Occupa spazi quindi che sono stati tradizionalmente occupati da altre istituzioni e assume per l'appunto un carattere di centralità. La relazione del signor Millon inoltre è molto interessante perché si ricollega anche a quanto ci è stato detto dalla signorina Parsons su una certa incomprensione che è parsa esistere per un certo periodo in America fra lo storico dell'arte di estrazione accademica e il curatore o connoisseur.

Dò la parola al signor Koshalek con cui ritorniamo all'arte contemporanea in un contesto, la California, che è per certi aspetti il 'contemporaneo' della nostra epoca.

Il signor Koschalek ci parlerà di The challenge of the future.